

Crimea: Putin's Triumph. Now the Confrontation Moves East to "New Russia"

Novo Rossia: The Eastern and Southeastern Mainland Provinces of Ukraine

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Nobody expected events to move on with such a breath-taking speed. The Russians took their time; they sat on the fence and watched while the Brown storm-troopers conquered Kiev, and they watched while Mrs Victoria Nuland of the State Department and her pal Yatsenyuk ("Yats") slapped each other's backs and congratulated themselves on their quick victory.

They watched when President Yanukovych escaped to Russia to save his skin. They watched when the Brown bands moved eastwards to threaten the Russian-speaking South East. They patiently listened while Mme Timoshenko, fresh out of jail, swore to void treaties with Russia and to expel the Russian Black Sea Fleet from its main harbour in Sevastopol.

They paid no heed when the new government appointed oligarchs to rule Eastern provinces. Nor did they react when children in Ukrainian schools were ordered to sing "Hang a Russian on a thick branch" and the oligarch-governor's deputy [promised to hang](#) dissatisfied Russians of the East as soon as Crimea is pacified. While these fateful events unravelled, Putin kept silence.

He is a cool cucumber, Mr Putin. Everybody, including this writer, thought he was too nonchalant about Ukraine's collapse. He waited patiently. The Russians made a few slow and hesitant, almost stealthy moves. The marines Russia had based in Crimea by virtue of an international agreement (just as the US has marines in Bahrain) secured Crimea's airports and roadblocks, provided necessary support to the volunteers of the Crimean militia (called Self-Defence Forces), but remained under cover. The Crimean parliament asserted its autonomy and promised a plebiscite in a month time. And all of a sudden things started to move real fast!

The poll was moved up to Sunday, March 16. Even before it could take place, the Crimean Parliament declared Crimea's independence. The poll's results were spectacular: 96% of the votes were *for* joining Russia; the level of participation was unusually high – over 84%. Not only ethnic Russians, but ethnic Ukrainians and Tatars voted for reunification with Russia as well. A symmetrical poll in Russia showed over 90% popular support for reunification with Crimea, despite liberals' fear-mongering ("this will be too costly, the sanctions will destroy Russian economy, the US will bomb Moscow", they said).

Even then, the majority of experts and talking heads expected the situation to remain suspended for a long while. Some thought Putin would eventually recognise Crimean independence, while stalling on final status, as he did with Ossetia and Abkhazia after the August 2008 war with Tbilisi. Others, especially Russian liberals, were convinced Putin would surrender Crimea in order to save Russian assets in the Ukraine.

But Putin justified the Russian proverb: the Russians take time to saddle their horses, but they ride awfully fast. He recognised Crimea's independence on Monday, before the ink on the poll's results dried. The next day, on Tuesday, he gathered all of Russia's senior statesmen and parliamentarians in the biggest, most glorious and elegant St George state hall in the Kremlin, lavishly restored to its Imperial glory, and declared Russia's acceptance of Crimea's reunification bid. Immediately after his speech, the treaty between Crimea and Russia was signed, and the peninsula reverted to Russia as it was before 1954, when Communist Party leader Khrushchev passed it to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

This was an event of supreme elation for the gathered politicians and for people at home watching it live on their tellies. The vast St George Hall applauded Putin as never before, almost as loudly and intensely as the US [Congress had applauded](#) Netanyahu. The Russians felt immense pride: they still remember the stinging defeat of 1991, when their country was taken apart. Regaining Crimea was a wonderful reverse for them. There were public festivities in honour of this reunification all over Russia and especially in joyous Crimea.

Historians have compared the event with the restoration of Russian sovereignty over Crimea in 1870, almost twenty years after the Crimean War had ended with Russia's defeat, when severe limitations on Russian rights in Crimea were imposed by victorious France and Britain. Now the Black Sea Fleet will be able to develop and sail freely again, enabling it to defend Syria in the next round. Though Ukrainians ran down the naval facilities and turned the most advanced submarine harbour of Balaclava into shambles, the potential is there.

Besides the pleasure of getting this lost bit of land back, there was the additional joy of outwitting the adversary. The American neocons arranged the coup in Ukraine and sent the unhappy country crashing down, but the first tangible fruit of this break up went to Russia.

A new Jewish joke was coined at that time:

Israeli President Peres asks the Russian President:

- Vladimir, are you of Jewish ancestry?
- Putin: What makes you think so, Shimon?
- Peres: You made the US pay five billion dollars to deliver Crimea to Russia. Even for a Jew, that is audacious!

Five billion dollars is a reference to Victoria Nuland's admission of having spent that much for democratisation (read: destabilisation) of the Ukraine. President Putin snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, and US hegemony suffered a set-back.

The Russians enjoyed [the sight](#) of their UN representative Vitaly Churkin coping with a near-assault by Samantha Power. The Irish-born US rep came close to bodily attacking the elderly grey-headed Russian diplomat telling him that "Russia was defeated (presumably in 1991 - ISH) and should bear the consequences... Russia is blackmailing the US with its nuclear

weapons,” while Churkin asked her to keep her hands off him and stop foaming at the mouth. This was not the first hostile encounter between these twain: a month ago, Samantha entertained a Pussy Riot duo, and Churkin said she should join the group and embark on a concert tour.

The US Neocons’ role in the Kiev coup was clarified by two independent exposures. Wonderful Max Blumenthal and Rania Khalek [showed](#) that the anti-Russian campaign of recent months (gay protests, Wahl affair, etc.) was organised by the Zionist Neocon PNAC (now renamed FPI) led by Mr Robert Kagan, husband of Victoria “Fuck EC” Nuland. It seems that the Neocons are hell-bent to undermine Russia by all means, while the Europeans are much more flexible. (True, the US troops are still stationed in Europe, and the old continent is not as free to act as it might like).

The second exposé was [an interview with Alexander Yakimenko](#), the head of Ukrainian Secret Services (SBU) who had escaped to Russia like his president. Yakimenko accused Andriy Parubiy, the present security czar, of making a deal with the Americans. On American instructions, he delivered weapons and brought snipers who killed some 70 persons within few hours. They killed the riot police and the protesters as well.

The US Neocon-led conspiracy in Kiev was aimed against the European attempt to reach a compromise with President Yanukovich, said the SBU chief. They almost agreed on all points, but Ms Nuland wanted to derail the agreement, and so she did – with the help of a few snipers.

These snipers were used again in Crimea: a sniper shot and killed a Ukrainian soldier. When the Crimean self-defence forces began their pursuit, the sniper shot at them, killed one and wounded one. It is the same pattern: snipers are used to provoke response and hopefully to jump-start a shootout.

Novorossia

While Crimea was a walkover, the Russians are far from being home and dry. Now, the confrontation moved to the Eastern and South-Eastern provinces of mainland Ukraine, called Novorossia (New Russia) before the Communist Revolution of 1917. Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his later years predicted that Ukraine’s undoing would come from its being overburdened by industrial provinces that never belonged to the Ukraine before Lenin, – by Russian-speaking Novorossia. This prediction is likely to be fulfilled.

Who fights whom over there? It is a great error to consider the conflict a tribal one, between Russians and Ukrainians. Good old Pat Buchanan made this error saying that “Vladimir Putin is a blood-and-soil, altar-and-throne ethno-nationalist who sees himself as Protector of Russia and looks on Russians abroad the way Israelis look upon Jews abroad, as people whose security is his legitimate concern.” Nothing could be farther away from truth: perhaps only the outlandish claim that Putin is keen on restoring the Russian Empire can compete.

Putin is not an empire-builder at all (to great regret of Russia’s communists and nationalists). Even his quick takeover of Crimea was an action forced upon him by the strong-willed people of Crimea and by the brazen aggression of the Kiev regime. I have it on a good authority that Putin hoped he would not have to make this decision. But when he decided he acted.

The ethno-nationalist assertion of Buchanan is even more misleading. Ethno-nationalists of Russia are Putin's enemies; they support the Ukrainian ethno-nationalists and march together with Jewish liberals on Moscow street demos. Ethno-nationalism is as foreign to Russians as it is foreign to the English. You can expect to meet a Welsh or Scots nationalist, but an English nationalist is an unnatural rarity. Even the English Defence League was set up by a Zionist Jew. Likewise, you can find a Ukrainian or a Belarusian or a Cossack nationalist, but practically never a Russian one.

Putin is a proponent and advocate of non-nationalist Russian world. What is the Russian world?

Russian World

Russians populate their own vast universe embracing many ethnic units of various background, from Mongols and Karels to Jews and Tatars. Until 1991, they populated an even greater land mass (called the Soviet Union, and before that, the Russian Empire) where Russian was the *lingua franca* and the language of daily usage for majority of citizens. Russians could amass this huge empire because they did not discriminate and did not hog the blanket. Russians are amazingly non-tribal, to an extent unknown in smaller East European countries, but similar to other great Eastern Imperial nations, the Han Chinese and the Turks before the advent of Young Turks and Ataturk. The Russians did not assimilate but partly acculturated their neighbours for whom Russian language and culture became the gateway to the world. The Russians protected and supported local cultures, as well, at their expense, for they enjoy this diversity.

Before 1991, the Russians promoted a universalist humanist world-view; nationalism was practically banned, and first of all, Russian nationalism. No one was persecuted or discriminated because of his ethnic origin (yes, Jews complained, but they always complain). There was some positive discrimination in the Soviet republics, for instance a Tajik would have priority to study medicine in the Tajik republic, before a Russian or a Jew; and he would be able to move faster up the ladder in the Party and politics. Still the gap was small.

After 1991, this universalist world-view was challenged by a parochial and ethno-nationalist one in all ex-Soviet republics save Russia and Belarus. Though Russia ceased to be Soviet, it retained its universalism. In the republics, people of Russian culture were severely discriminated against, often fired from their working places, in worst cases they were expelled or killed. Millions of Russians, natives of the republics, became refugees; together with them, millions of non-Russians who preferred Russian universalist culture to "their own" nationalist and parochial one fled to Russia. That is why modern Russia has millions of Azeris, Armenians, Georgians, Tajiks, Latvians and of smaller ethnic groups from the republics. Still, despite discrimination, millions of Russians and people of Russian culture remained in the republics, where their ancestors lived for generations, and the Russian language became a common ground for all non-nationalist forces.

If one wants to compare with Israel, as Pat Buchanan did, it is the republics, such as Ukraine, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Estonia do follow Israeli model of discriminating and persecuting their "ethnic minorities", while Russia follows the West European model of equality.

France vs Occitania

In order to understand the Russia-Ukraine problem, compare it with France. Imagine it divided into North and South France, the North retaining the name of France, while the South of France calling itself "Occitania", and its people "Occitans", their language "Occitan". The government of Occitania would force the people to speak Provençal, learn Frederic Mistral's poems by rote and teach children to hate the French, who had devastated their beautiful land in the Albigensian Crusade of 1220. France would just gnash its teeth. Now imagine that after twenty years, the power in Occitania were violently seized by some romantic southern fascists who were keen to eradicate "800 years of Frank domination" and intend to discriminate against people who prefer to speak the language of Victor Hugo and Albert Camus. Eventually France would be forced to intervene and defend francophones, at least in order to stem the refugee influx. Probably the Southern francophones of Marseilles and Toulon would support the North against "their own" government, though they are not migrants from Normandy.

Putin defends all Russian-speakers, all ethnic minorities, such as Gagauz or Abkhaz, not only ethnic Russians. He defends the Russian World, all those russophones who want and need his protection. This Russian World definitely includes many, perhaps majority of people in the Ukraine, ethnic Russians, Jews, small ethnic groups and ethnic Ukrainians, in Novorossia and in Kiev.

Indeed Russian world was and is attractive. The Jews were happy to forget their shtetl and Yiddish; their best poets Pasternak and Brodsky wrote in Russian and considered themselves Russian. Still, some minor poets used Yiddish for their self-expression. The Ukrainians, as well, used Russian for literature, though they spoke their dialect at home for long time. Nikolai Gogol, the great Russian writer of Ukrainian origin, wrote Russian, and he was dead set against literary usage of the Ukrainian dialect. There were a few minor Romantic figures who used the dialect for creative art, like Taras Shevchenko and Lesya Ukrainka.

Solzhenitsyn wrote: "Even ethnic-Ukrainians do not use and do not know Ukrainian. In order to promote its use, the Ukrainian government bans Russian schools, forbids Russian TV, even librarians are not allowed to speak Russian with their readers. This anti-Russian position of Ukraine is exactly what the US wants in order to weaken Russia."

Putin in his speech on Crimea stressed that he wants to secure the Russian world - everywhere in the Ukraine. In Novorossia the need is acute, for there are daily confrontations between the people and the gangs sent by the Kiev regime. While Putin does not yet want (as opposed to Solzhenitsyn and against general Russian feeling) to take over Novorossia, he may be forced to it, as he was in Crimea. There is a way to avoid this major shift: the Ukraine must rejoin the Russian world. While keeping its independence, Ukraine must grant full equality to its Russian language speakers. They should be able to have Russian-language schools, newspapers, TV, be entitled to use Russian everywhere. Anti-Russian propaganda must cease. And fantasies of joining NATO, too.

This is not an extraordinary demand: Latinos in the US are allowed to use Spanish. In Europe, equality of languages and cultures is a *sine qua non*. Only in the ex-Soviet republics are these rights trampled - not only in Ukraine, but in the Baltic republics as well. For twenty years, Russia made do with weak objections, when Russian-speakers (the majority of them are not ethnic Russians) in the Baltic states were discriminated against. This is likely to change. Lithuania and Latvia have already paid for their anti-Russian position by losing their profitable transit trade with Russia. Ukraine is much more important for Russia. Unless the

present regime is able to change (not very likely), this illegitimate regime will be changed by people of Ukraine, and Russia will use R2P against the criminal elements in power.

The majority of people of Ukraine would probably agree with Putin, irrespective of their ethnicity. Indeed, in the Crimean referendum, Ukrainians and Tatars voted *en masse* together with Russians. This is a positive sign: there will be no ethnic strife in the Ukraine's East, despite US efforts to the contrary. The decision time is coming up fast: some experts presume that by end of May the Ukrainian crisis will be behind us.

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