

Crimean crisis: The Smell of American Hypocrisy in the Air

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The war of words between Russia and the United States is soaring these days over the sovereignty of the Crimean peninsula, and the White House officials are constantly directing accusations and excruciating verbal attacks against Kremlin in what seems to be the most serious dispute between Moscow and the West in the recent years.

The United States has pulled out all the stops to defeat and isolate Russia diplomatically, and has even gone so far as to impose economic sanctions against the Russian individuals and companies, and excluding Russia from the G8 group of the industrialized nations. The 40th G8 summit was slated to be held in Sochi, Russia on June 4-5, but following the suspension of Russia's membership in the G8, the summit relocated to Brussels, Belgium, and it would be the first time that a G8 leaders' convention is going to take place in a non-member state country. Some of the Western media outlets have even started to refer to G8 as G7, implying that Russia does not have any position in this influential group of the affluent, developed nations.

But as always, when it comes to flexing the muscles and showing political prowess, the United States and its partners are behaving in an intolerant, duplicitous and hypocritical manner. In a statement, the newly-termed G7 leaders reaffirmed that Russia's "occupation of the Crimea" was against the principles of the G7 and contravened the United Nations Charter.

It's interesting that the innumerable violations of the international law, the UN Charter and Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in time of War by the United States in the recent years have never caught the attention of the G8 leaders and never compelled them to at least consider warning the United States to behave more responsibly and respect the internationally recognized conventions and regulations or refraining from destroying and annihilating other nations through its "humanitarian" missions!

If Russia should be punished for sending troops to Crimea, while it's legally entitled to do so, and if its military intervention in Crimea represents a violation of the UN Charter in the eyes of the Western leaders, then it will be taken for granted that all violations of the international law and the United Nations Charter should be reprimanded and responded appropriately and the wrongdoers should be penalized in a fair manner. If Russia has occupied a sovereign entity - which is of course not the case, and should bear the burden of sanctions and diplomatic isolation, it's ok, but why shouldn't the United States be castigated and prosecuted for the same reason? What makes the military intervention of Russia different from the wars the U.S. offhandedly wages across the world?

For those of us who willfully ignore the historical facts, it's noteworthy that the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet signed between Russia and Ukraine on May 28, 1997, permits Russia to lawfully maintain up to 25,000 troops, 24 artillery systems, 132 armored vehicles and 22 military planes on the Crimean peninsula. This agreement will be effective until 2017, and so it can be the most convincing logical justification for Russia's military action in Crimea.

So, what has happened is not an "occupation" as the U.S. leaders claim, but that Russia has exercised its legal right for sending troops to a geographical area where the majority of inhabitants are ethnic Russians and don't want to remain under the Ukraine autonomy and are overwhelmingly inclined to join Russia.

What every neutral and unbiased observer of the international political developments can easily note is that it's the United States which is renowned for its hegemonic policies and its imperialistic modus operandi, not Russia. Russia's intervention in Crimea took place after it felt that its national interests are being seriously endangered on its borders, where 58% of the population is consisted of indigenous Russians who prefer to be reunited with Russia, rather than being seen as an asset and prize for the United States under the leadership of a new government in Ukraine which has neo-fascist backgrounds.

The prominent American syndicated columnist and journalist Ted Rall has recently written on his website that there are traces of neo-fascism and neo-Nazism in the government of Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk who has just come to power: "There's no doubt that a Ukrainian nationalist strain runs deep in the new regime. It has been estimated that roughly 1/3 or more of the supporters of the new government come out of xenophobic, anti-Semitic, neo-fascist movements that draw much of their ideological heritage from the Nazi puppet regime that governed Ukraine under German occupation during World War II."

So, on March 16, the Crimean parliament and the local government of Sevastopol held a public referendum in Crimea to give the citizens two choices for the future of their territory; either to remain associated with Ukraine or reunite with Russia. With a high turnout of 83.1% of the eligible voters, 96.77% of the participants in the plebiscite voted in favor of joining the Russian Federation. The United States and its allies didn't hesitate to call the referendum as rigged and invalid, as they usually does with the elections in countries with which they are at odds. Washington even drafted a resolution in the United Nations Security Council to call the referendum null and void, but Russia used its veto power, while China abstained, and the United States simply pushed the General Assembly member states to pass a non-binding resolution, declaring the referendum invalid, which doesn't seem to have any certain impact on the future of Crimea.

The policy of de-Russanization was long underway in the Crimean peninsula, and many other former Soviet Union republics, as Ted Rall elaborately details. Perhaps the fact that the Ukrainian Parliament Verkhovna Rada voted on February 23 to repeal the 2012 language law that had declared Russian an official language in Ukraine and allowed it to be used in the schools, media and official correspondence, was a driving force for the Crimean people to rise up and call for independence from Ukraine that they believed didn't respect their cultural and lingual background.

The future of Crimea and the prospects of the marred relations between Russia and the West remain blurred and unknown, but the United States' accusations that Russia is

“occupying” Crimea and exerting military aggression and so should be punished with economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation sound gravely outrageous and entirely hypocritical. The United States has the biggest war machinery in the world, has been directly or indirectly involved in more than 50 wars and military strikes on other countries without the approval of the UN Security Council, and has incontestably perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As the prominent American lawyer and legal expert Marjorie Cohn has noted in a recent article, the United States is the largest user of unconventional and forbidden chemical weapons in the illegal wars it has waged across the globe. “The U.S. militarily occupied over 75% of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques for 60 years, during which time the Navy routinely practiced with, and used, Agent Orange, depleted uranium, napalm and other toxic chemicals and metals such as TNT and mercury. This occurred within a couple of miles of a civilian population that included thousands of U.S. citizens,” wrote Prof. Cohn.

“The use of any type of chemical weapon by any party would constitute a war crime. Chemical weapons that kill and maim people are illegal and their use violates the laws of war,” she added.

She also goes on to explain the use of chemical weapons by the United States in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria and also underlines that the majority of wars in which the United States has taken part were not ever approved by the Security Council. Aren’t these crimes a contravention of the UN Charter? Why don’t the G7 leaders and European Council and European Commission officials ever react to these violations? Does the United States have the prerogative to attack other countries and maim their people without any legal or moral justification and then get away with its crimes?

The United States is imparting a clear message by adopting this insincere and hypocritical approach toward Russia, which is also a message to other countries: We can invade your countries, we can kill your citizens, we can rule you tyrannically, we can behave in any way we desire, but if you do something which doesn’t please us, we will impose sanctions on you, we will banish you from international organizations, and we will come down on you like a ton of bricks. This is how the American hypocrisy works...

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