

Crimeans Vote on Joining Russia

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Global Research, March 16, 2014

Ahead of the vote, John Kerry and Sergei Lavrov met in London. US pressure to get Russia to accept US demands failed.

Both nations are geopolitical opposites. Washington demands its way or else.

Kerry called Russia's endorsing the right of Crimeans to secede "a backdoor annexation of Crimea." He demands it remain part of Ukraine.

He ignores the right of sovereign people to choose their future freely. He wants Washington rules enforced.

Lavrov said Russia respects "the declaration of the will of the Crimean people in the coming referendum of March 16."

"We have confirmed our stance...repeatedly," he stressed. Ukraine's crisis is not Russia's doing, he added.

On Saturday, Russia vetoed a Security Council resolution on Crimea's referendum. UN envoy Vitaly Chirkin said:

"It's a secret to no one that the Russian Federation" intended to do so.

"We cannot go along with (its) basic assumption that is declaring illegal the...planned referendum."

Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov called it "unacceptable" to Moscow.

"Americans have submitted this resolution and our attitude towards it is most negative, he said. "We do not support such a resolution."

It "talks about things that the UN Security Council shouldn't discuss as international peace and security are not the issue here."

"The main thing that the draft resolution contains is an appeal not to recognize the results of the referendum in Crimea. Therefore such a resolution is of course unacceptable for us."

It "totally ignored the objective realities that have emerged."

“We think the right of people who are frightened of a repeat of the Cyprus scenario to express their will must be taken into account.”

Russia “will of course respect decisions that referendum participants vote for.”

“We do not think that the Security Council ought to interfere in the decision by the legitimate authorities of Crimea regarding the organization of a referendum as this is not prohibited by the UN Charter or other international law.”

Lavrov said Crimea “means immeasurably more” to Russia than the Comoro Islands to France or the Falklands to Britain.

If Kosovo’s independence was “a special case,” he added, he’s “convinced that...Crimea is...no less special.”

Days earlier, Vladimir Putin stressed the legitimacy of Crimea’s referendum.

A Kremlin statement said he “underlined in particular that the steps taken by Crimea’s legitimate authorities are based on international law and aimed at guaranteeing the legitimate interests of the peninsula’s population.”

This article is written ahead of referendum voting. A follow-up one will discuss results and reactions to them.

It bears repeating what earlier articles explained. Crimea’s referendum is legal. Sovereign people have the right to choose their own future.

UN Charter provisions affirm it. “The organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members” and free people everywhere.

It promotes “friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.”

On September 18, 2014, Scottish citizens vote up or down on independence. It’s their choice. Opponents don’t claim illegality.

Under provisions of the October 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law, Crimeans may legally secede.

The World Court’s July 2010 advisory opinion on Kosovo’s declaration of independence affirms their right to do so.

It said “the adoption of (Kosovo’s) declaration of independence of the 17 February 2008 did not violate general international law because (it) contains no ‘prohibition on declarations of independence.’ ”

Crimeans may opt out of Ukraine. They can declare independence. They can vote to join Russia. It’s their legal right. Claims otherwise are false.

Moscow has every right to welcome them. Odds strongly favor it. US threats won’t stop it.

On July 4, 1776, 13 American colonies declared independence from Britain.

They said everyone has “certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

“That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

“That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government...”

“(W)hen a long train of abuses and usurpations (establishes) absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government.”

Resisting tyranny is a universal right. Illegitimate putschists control Ukraine. Crimeans overwhelmingly reject them.

Don't expect The New York Times to explain. Misinformation rubbish substitutes for full and accurate reporting. On March 14, it [headlined](#) “Pressure and Intimidation Sweep Crimea Ahead of Secession Vote,” saying:

Moscow “recreat(ed) the constrained conditions of (its) own civic sphere in Crimea.”

Times reporters, commentators and editors misinform. They lie. They do so repeatedly. They claim Russia invaded Crimea.

No invasion occurred. None exists. Moscow's only Crimean-based forces relate to its Black Sea Fleet. Russian/Ukrainian 1997 Friendship Treaty terms authorize numbers up to 25,000.

About 16,000 are present. They're deployed legitimately. Claims otherwise are false.

Crimean self-defense forces are duplicitously called Russian ones. The Big Lie repeats ad nauseam. So do numerous others.

Russia bashing is intense. Putin is public enemy number one. The Times lied claiming “dissent (in Crimea is) suppressed by the implicit use of force.”

It claims a nonexistent “military occupation by unmistakably elite Russian units and many of the trappings of the election-season carnivals that have long accompanied rigged ballots across the old Soviet world”

No evidence whatever suggests election-rigging. Or intimidation. Or suppression of freedom. Or threats against Crimean Ukrainians and Tartars.

Crimeans overwhelmingly reject Kiev Putschists. Independent polls show over 80% favor joining Russia.

Don't expect The Times to explain. Managed news misinformation substitutes. Readers are systematically lied to. It's longstanding Times policy.

It gave feature op-ed space to John McCain. He's ideologically over-the-top. He's hardline neocon.

He's an embarrassment to legitimate governance. He's an unindicted war criminal. He supports lawless aggression against nonbelligerent countries.

On March 14, he [headlined](#) "Obama Has Made America Look Weak." He blamed Putin for "invad(ing) Crimea. He lied claiming it.

He represents lunatic fringe politics. He supports hardball US policies. He favors toughness over diplomacy. He nonsensically said Crimea "exposed (Obama's) disturbing lack of realism..."

He wants NATO expanded to Russia's borders. He wants so-called missile defense intended for offense targeting its heartland.

He favors clash of civilizations recklessness. Perhaps he wants WW III. Why Arizonans support him, they'll have to explain.

He lied claiming Putin wants former Soviet republics "brought back under Moscow's dominion by any means possible."

He maliciously accused him of "aggression in Crimea." He urged "sanctioning Russian officials." He wants Moscow isolated internationally.

He wants "increasing NATO military presence and exercises" near Russia's borders. He wants Sochi's scheduled G-8 meeting "boycott(ed)."

He wants G-7 countries (sans Russia) convening elsewhere. He calls Ukrainian neo-Nazi putschists "patriots."

Ronald Reagan called Afghan mujahideen fighters (today's Taliban) "the moral equivalent of our founding fathers."

McCain wants Ukraine "anchored firmly in Europe." He wants its resources stolen. He wants its people exploited.

He wants Crimeans denied the right to choose their own future. He wants Russia eliminated as a rival power.

Perhaps he favors war to achieve it. Why Times editors published his belligerent diatribe, they'll have to explain.

On March 16, Crimeans voted. They were asked two questions:

(1) "Do you support reunification of Sevastopol with Russia as its constituent member?"

(2) "Do you support the restoration of the Constitution of 1992 and Sevastopol's to Ukraine?"

The outcome is a foregone conclusion. Only the certified majority remains to be determined.

According to Referendum Commission chairman Mikhail Malyshev, 135 observers from 23 countries monitored voting. Over 600 journalists from 169 media outlets covered the process.

International observers from America, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria, Latvia and other countries came.

So did European parliamentarians, international law experts, and 1,240 Crimean organization representatives. Human rights activists were involved.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was invited. It declined. It issued a statement saying:

“In its current form, the referendum regarding Crimea...is in contradiction with the Ukrainian Constitution and must be considered illegal.”

Observers “have a red certificate,” said Malyshev. “Representatives of other organizations will have certificates of green and blue colors.”

“We want as many observers as possible,” he said. He wants confirmation of a free, fair, open process. On Monday, results will be announced.

Ahead of Sunday’s vote, observers visited all Crimean regions. They did so to determine if voting procedures complied with local law and international standards.

European Geopolitical Analysis Centre’s Mateusz Piskorski said observers are experienced in electoral monitoring.

According to international standards, Crimean media, including television, abstained from campaigning for independence or joining Russia.

At the same time, Crimeans were urged to vote. Nothing suggested which way. No pressure was applied. A Simferopol resident likely spoke for most others, saying:

“We made our choice long ago. Ukraine has given us nothing, so we will try to live in Russia.”

A Kerch resident called what’s happening in Ukraine “horrible. They won’t let us live, it’s clear.”

Foreign journalists arrived in droves. A British reporter expressed surprise. Each taxi driver he asked gave “an approving nod when hearing the word ‘Russia.’ ”

Other foreign journalists are surprised at how many cars display Russian flags. Popular sentiment overwhelmingly is pro-Russian.

Moscow’s Simferopol consul general, Vyacheslav Svetlichny, said:

“We are in constant contact with the leadership of Crimea and feel all necessary measures to ensure security at the referendum are being taken.”

“We think there are no grounds for anxiety and hope the referendum will be held in an atmosphere of stability and calm.”

“The authorities of Crimea (and) self-defense units fully control the situation.”

On Saturday, illegitimate Kiev putschist legislators voted to dissolve Crimea's lawful parliament. Effective immediately, they said.

Crimeans reject their authority. On Monday, we'll know how overwhelmingly.

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