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Thousands Call for Secession from Ukraine in Crimea

By Jason Ditz

February 23, 2014

When the pro-Russia Yanukovich government was in power, it was fashionable to talk about the irreconcilable differences between east and west Ukraine, and the prospect of a split-up, with protesters in Western cities openly talking about splitting off and starting a new country centered around Lviv.



Governments change, and Yanukovich is now on the outs, with a pro-West government taking his place. The east-west split remains, however, and now it's protesters in the east and south that are talking about secession.

Thousands took to the streets of the port city of Sevastapol, in the Crimea today, calling for the Crimea to secede and potentially be returned to Russian control, as it historically was before Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev redrew the borders and put it in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Suddenly secession isn't looking so good to the US, who insists that Ukraine must remain unified at all costs and that any secession would be "unacceptable" to them.

Historically, the territory that is the modern Ukraine covers several distinct nations, though the largest split remains between the Ukrainian-speaking west and the Russian-speaking east.

The Crimea is the one portion of Russian-speaking Ukrainian territory that is most important to Russia, as Sevastapol has hosted the Russian Navy for centuries. Western officials have been keen to integrate Ukraine into NATO, forcing Russia to move its Naval infrastructure down shore to Novorossylsk.