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## Imperialist hypocrisy on Crimea

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Sunday's referendum in Crimea has been accompanied by a torrent of denunciations from the Obama administration and the American media. It is being seized upon to escalate the imperialist offensive in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, whose ultimate aim is regime change or war against Russia.

In the conduct of its foreign policy, the United States operates on the principle spelled out by Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels that if a lie is big enough and repeated often enough, it will be accepted.

Anticipating that the vote would favor secession from Ukraine and incorporation into the Russian Federation, the US and the European Union declared beforehand that it was illegitimate and "illegal." A statement released by the White House said the vote was "administered under threats of violence and intimidation from a Russian military intervention that violates international law."

What hypocrisy! The United States has staged elections in countries it blasted into submission and militarily occupied, with tens of thousands of American guns, tanks, war planes and missiles pointed at the local population—e.g., Iraq and Afghanistan—and hailed the votes as models of democracy.

Following a vote at the UN Security Council Saturday on a resolution condemning the referendum, which was vetoed by Russia, US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power declared, “The reason only one country [Russia] voted no today is that the world believes that international borders are more than mere suggestions.”

There is no country that so brazenly violates international borders as the United States. In dealing with regimes it deems a hindrance to its global geostrategic and economic aims, US imperialism treats the principles of national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of nations—which it is presently invoking against Russia—not as suggestions, but as irrelevancies.

More than a decade ago, Washington officially adopted the policy of preemptive war—banned under international law as a form of aggression—and maintains as a matter of state policy that it has the right to launch drones and kill people in any country without the permission of the government—a position that a top UN official declared illegal in 2013. Under Obama, assassinations and mass killings by such means have been vastly expanded, taking thousands of lives, including those of American citizens, in a number of countries.

US Secretary of State John Kerry declared in a phone conversation over the weekend with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that “disturbances” in eastern Ukrainian cities had been “encouraged by Russia, even guided by Russian intelligence officers...as a way to undermine the new Ukrainian government and possibly create a pretext for further Russian military intervention.”

American imperialism has written the book on stoking internal conflicts to create the pretext for “human rights” interventions for the purpose of toppling governments and installing client regimes—a policy it has pursued most recently in Syria and Libya. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Washington set about dismantling Yugoslavia as part of its strategy of bringing the former Eastern Bloc countries and former Soviet republics into the US sphere of influence.

It backed wars in Bosnia and Croatia in the mid-1990s and led a 78-day air war against Serbia in 1999 that killed thousands in order to separate Kosovo from Serbia, subsequently recognizing the longtime Serb province as an independent state.

Kerry accuses Moscow of encouraging “disturbances” and undermining the government in Ukraine, having overseen the manipulation of protests in Kiev and their takeover by fascistic forces in order to bring down the elected, pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich and install a pro-US regime stocked with neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic ministers.

In the Ukraine crisis, it is the US and its European allies that are the aggressors. They have intervened in order to dramatically alter the balance of forces in the region to the disadvantage of Russia. They seek to turn Ukraine into a forward staging post for US and NATO military forces and endless provocations aimed at weakening and ultimately dismembering Russia.

US warships have been transferred to the region. Countries in the region allied to the US and Europe—including Lithuania and Poland, which Vice President Joseph Biden will be visiting

this week—are receiving increased aid. Those more closely aligned with Russia, such as Belarus and Kazakhstan, are targeted next for regime change.

Acknowledging these facts does not imply any political support for the Putin regime or its actions in response to Western provocations. The Russian government represents criminal oligarchs who enriched themselves from the dissolution of the Soviet Union by stealing former state property. It is deeply hostile to the working class. In advancing its interests, it relies on the promotion of Russian chauvinism both in Ukraine and Russia. It is incapable of making an appeal to the broad and deep antiwar sentiment in the working class of Russia, Ukraine, Europe, the US and the rest of the world.

As the crisis in Ukraine proceeds, it becomes increasingly clear that the aim of the US is to deliver Russia a humiliating defeat and permanently alter the relationship of forces between it and American imperialism. In an editorial published Sunday, the *Washington Post* declared that “the West must also embrace the goals of punishing and, over time, weakening Mr. Putin’s regime.”

US Senator John McCain, currently part of a bipartisan delegation of senators visiting Kiev, outlined the basic strategy of dominant sections of the American ruling class in a comment published Saturday by the *New York Times*. “[Putin’s] regime may appear imposing, but it is rotting inside,” McCain wrote. “[E]ventually, Russians will come for Mr. Putin in the same way and for the same reasons that Ukrainians came for Viktor F. Yanukovich.”

He went on to call for more and harsher sanctions against Russia not simply for its actions in Crimea, but for abusing the “human rights” of Russian citizens—an open-ended call for an Iran-style quarantine. He further called for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova to be admitted to NATO.

McCain and other senators, including Democratic Party Whip Dick Durbin, have called for the immediate provision of arms to the new Ukrainian government.

The Ukrainian “revolution” was aimed at eliminating Russian influence in a country on its border. Either the American ruling class expected that Russia would not react, and has responded with fury at the Putin regime’s attempt to preserve control of Crimea, or the Crimean action was anticipated and has been used as an opportunity for escalating threats and intimidation.

How far is the United States prepared to go? Whatever its immediate intentions in relation to Ukraine, the actions of imperialism have a definite logic.

In Ukraine, the US and the European Union have promoted ultra-right and fascistic paramilitary forces who are now in positions of state power. They are bent on provoking a Western war against Russia and repressing all opposition within the country. A National Guard established by the new government is set to transform the shock troops of the “revolution” into state-sanctioned forces. The extreme volatility of the situation is such that any number of actions could quickly spiral into a direct war between the major powers.

Will the current crisis spark a nuclear world war? That is a real possibility. One thing is certain: imperialism, if not disarmed and defeated by the united, international action of the working class, will create endless crises, any one of which could plunge the world into the horrors of a nuclear holocaust.

The American ruling class does not recognize a public opinion outside of the one that it manufactures through sound bites, dutifully echoed in the television and print media. However, to the extent that the working class in the United States is aware of what is taking place, it is deeply hostile. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have not passed without leaving a deep imprint on the consciousness of the American people.

This opposition must be mobilized and given conscious political form, as part of an international movement of the working class against the warmongering of the ruling class and its political representatives, and the capitalist system they defend.