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Obama v. Putin: Their Debate on Crimea (I)

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The Source of the ‘New Cold War’: The Basic Disagreement Between Obama and Putin

INTRODUCTION

The basic disagreement between U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the source of the economic sanctions against Russia, and ‘the new cold war,’ concerns the question of whether the process by which Crimea separated from Ukraine and joined Russia was, as Obama says, «aggression» by Russia, an illegal «seizure» of Crimea by Russia; or, on the other hand, as Putin says, a thoroughly legal and democratic act by the people of Crimea, to exercise their right of self-determination, via a referendum.

Many of the points that will be referred-to, along the way here, are going to be opposite to the views that are widespread in the West; and, so, wherever that is the case, clicking onto the linked

source will enable you easily to check what's being said, if it conflicts with what you 'know' or have previously been told. All of the sources linked-to here are either primary evidence such as videos of the actual events, or else articles which link through to similarly high-quality primary evidence. In «politicized» and other controversial matters like this, the quality of the evidence is especially important to making a rational determination as to where the truth actually is; and this (plus the heavy prevalence of propaganda surrounding this matter) is the reason for the extensive and high-quality documentation that's cited here. These links provide ready evidence regarding any allegation that might seem doubtful.

The alternative to such extensive and high-quality documentation would be to offer here only statements that are either bland and/or undocumented; and, regarding the present topic «Obama v. Putin», any such article on so controversial a matter would, frankly, be a waste for readers, hardly enlightening at all — just more 'confirmation' of what you already 'know,' or else not even a credible article. The subject here is worth the trouble to understand *accurately*. (Or, if it's not, then you probably wouldn't have read even this far.)

OBAMA'S SIDE

In addition to charging Russia with «aggression» regarding Crimea, Obama also accuses Russia of «aggression» against Ukraine in Ukraine's former Donbass region (which is basically the dark purple area on this map), such as by saying, «Russia's aggression in Ukraine makes clear that European security and the international rules and norms against territorial aggression cannot be taken for granted. In response, we have led an international effort to support the Ukrainian people as they choose their own future and develop their democracy». However, he has never cited the justification for his overthrowing (look at that video evidence of it, but there's lots more) the democratically elected President of Ukraine in February 2014 (Obama's *type* of «as they choose their own future and develop their democracy»). The head of the «private CIA» firm Stratfor admits that this was actually «the most blatant coup in history». (Like I said: there's lots more evidence of the coup.) Obama has never cited any justification for imposing in Ukraine instead a rabidly anti-Russian regime next-door to Russia, replacing the then-existing *and democratically elected* Ukrainian government that had existed. He has always alleged that the source of the new cold war was Crimea's transfer to Russia, not the transfer of Ukraine to the U.S. (the coup, shown here being prepared), which had immediately preceded, and precipitated, the breakaway of Crimea.

However, did this decision by Obama, to overthrow Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich, really «develop their democracy», as Obama phrased the matter? Or did it instead *end* that democracy, and cause some parts of Ukraine, which had voted overwhelmingly for the man whom Obama overthrew, to separate themselves from Obama's newly coup-imposed government of Ukraine? Crimeans had voted over 75% for Yanukovich; Donbass had voted over 90% for Yanukovich. With the coup, Ukraine's new national government was anything but a 'democracy' for *them*. It was instead their government's being stolen by the United States. Obama's rhetoric, alleging his desire to help «develop their democracy», is a blatant lie, which is something that's actually routine for him. (Please click onto that link there for the evidence on the matter, if you disagree that he routinely lies.) To say that he rampantly lies is just a statement of fact, not one of opinion. Obama is remarkably similar to George W.

Bush — though far more articulate, and though he uses rhetoric that appeals to a broader global audience.

Just because something (such as what was just documented here) is not generally reported in the press doesn't necessarily mean it's not true. The meaning of that might instead be: the American press, on all sides of it, lies in the same direction about certain things on which *all sides of the aristocracy* (since the same aristocracy controls *both* the government *and* the 'news' media) agree, such as, itself, the lie that America is a democracy, *not* an aristocracy. When the national press and the national government are controlled by the same group, it's no democracy. The nation's aristocracy naturally don't want the public to recognize that their government is, in fact, not a democracy. Not a republic («republic» being another name for the system of government in any large democratic nation). It represents instead only a narrow group. It's a dictatorship, not a democracy. For example: see this and this. Aristocrats rule here, behind the scenes. They don't want the public to see it; so, the things that I've just linked to regarding Russia and Crimea, they have refused to report, and instead demonize Russia and its leader Putin. The public won't favor this new cold war if they know it's based instead upon their aristocracy's grasp for expanding their own empire, at the public's expense (in money for the military, if nothing else, to use the nation's armed forces as their personal group's armed international gang).

But, just because Obama has been lying about the Crimean situation doesn't necessarily mean that the transfer of Crimea to Russia was in accord with international law. Was it? Obama says it wasn't.

Crimea is the specific issue on which Obama imposed sanctions against Russia, saying that it was «illegal». He has never even considered, publicly, that Crimea's breakaway from Ukraine was actually sparked by that coup — his coup. Nor has the Western press discussed any of these things — the actual cause of that breakaway, by Crimea, from Ukraine. (It was, in fact, sparked directly by Obama's thugs butchering busloads of Crimeans who were escaping from Obama's Kiev coup. And, here is a quick summary I recently did of that butchery.) However, Obama insists that Crimea must be restored to the Ukrainian government, in order for the sanctions against Russia to end.

This is like George W. Bush's «Saddam's WMD» excuse for «regime change», except that Obama's «regime change» is occurring in Libya (Gaddafi), Syria (Assad), Ukraine (Yanukovych), and other countries that have supported Russia — all aimed ultimately to replace Putin himself. Obama paints Putin as being a modern version of Stalin.

Only Obama's side has been presented in the West — his Administration's lies — and the economic sanctions were imposed against Russia on that false basis, and without challenge from the Western press. But is his *legal* case valid? If the *legal* case is valid, even though the history of the conflict has been misrepresented, then international law itself would need to be changed. The results of Obama's lies would then be essentially permanent. (Changing international law would take too long, if it happens at all.) But those results affect the entire world's future. We're heading toward a possible nuclear war. So, the legal issue needs also to be accurately understood, in order to see whether there's any case at all to be made for continuing on this course (toward a

nuclear war).

These economic sanctions constitute Obama's punishment of Russia for that breakaway of Crimea from Ukraine; this is the foundation of the «new cold war», entailing not just the anti-Russia sanctions but all of the military exercises on both sides with tit-for-tat training operations by each side's military regarding the possible use of nuclear weapons in the event that one side or the other decides to be the first one to pull the nuclear plug.

Where, then, does the legal case stand?

Obama has not publicly provided any legal analysis in order to back-up his view that the breakaway of Crimea from Ukraine was illegal, but Andrei Illarionov of the libertarian billionaire Koch brothers' Cato Institute has already done that for him, in Illarionov's — which thus-far is the *only* — coherent statement regarding why Obama's view, the West's view, on this, is legally correct, and why Putin's view on it is legally wrong.

Illarionov's 10 November 2014 article, «Annexation of Crimea Is a Litmus Test for Russian Opposition», said that indeed the first among «the crimes that have been committed or are being committed by the Kremlin — stealing Crimea» can be rectified only by terminating Russia as we know it, totally *rejecting* «Russia's aggression in Crimea», which, to him, means replacement of the current Russian government by «a free democratic state with the rule of law»: i.e., overthrowing it, in order to establish that very thing, «a free democratic state with the rule of law». (His concept of «democracy» is, however, as you will see here, the opposite of the usual meaning of that term.) His case that today's Russia has fundamentally violated «the rule of law» in the Crimean instance, and so needs not only sanctions, but much more severe treatment, will now be presented and discussed here:

He said that, «The issue of Crimea's jurisdiction is within the competence of only one subject of international law — the owner of that territory, namely Ukraine. Only this subject, and no one else, has necessary legal rights to change this territory's jurisdiction». And, since Ukraine did not *sell* Crimea to Russia, Russia «stole» it from Ukraine. That's his argument.

He sees the issue of Crimea as being not an issue of people, but of land: the land-area of Crimea, which Russia «stole» from Ukraine — that Russia stole the land and everything in it, and under it, and on it, including its residents.

According to Illarionov, Crimea's residents are simply human property there. They belong to Ukraine, no matter what they think, *because they reside on Ukraine's land*.

Illarionov's article doesn't even so much as discuss whether the 16 March 2014 popular vote of Crimeans, in which 97% voted to rejoin Russia (note: the Soviet Union's dictator Khrushchev had donated Crimea from Russia, to Ukraine, in 1954, without even asking anyone in Crimea their opinion of the matter — Crimea had been part of Russia for hundreds of years prior to 1954) — whether this vote reflected accurately the public sentiment among Crimeans. It actually did reflect that (which is why Obama can't argue on that basis — self-determination), but this question is simply ignored by Illarionov.

However, he goes further, to condemn: «bashful populism hiding behind unlimited (non-liberal) democracy. ‘Whatever the majority desires is right.’ People who hold these beliefs might admit that all possible laws and norms have been violated, that a crime has been committed, and even condemn the crime; but if the majority wants the crime’s results to be preserved, they will not do anything to stop it, protect the victim, return what was stolen, [nor] punish the criminal. This is the principle of recognizing the *fait accompli* resulting from the crime, the principle of subordinating one’s actions to the mob’s instincts». In other words: he condemns «unlimited democracy» and «the mob». (Obama himself has used similar imagery in order to state privately his support of America’s aristocratic crooks, when he told Wall Street’s CEOs who had administered and profited from the MBS and other frauds that had crashed the world’s economy, these men who were assembled together inside the White House, early in his Administration: «My administration is the only thing between you and the pitchforks [the ‘mob’]... I’m protecting you... I’m going to shield you from public and congressional anger». And he did.) And, by «non-liberal», Illarionov is using the term for libertarianism that’s used outside the United States: «liberal». He favors *only* «liberal» «democracy», which he thinks is a «limited» form of «democracy». Whoever rules there, it’s certainly not «the mob», his term for *the public*. (It’s Obama’s «pitchforks».)

Furthermore, Illarionov goes on to say: «The fact that most of the peninsula’s population are ethnic Russians does not matter either».

In other words: the residents of Crimea should be *entirely ignored*, he says. Not only the residents’ opinions, but the possible reasons for those opinions, have nothing whatsoever to do with the legality of Crimea’s transfer, he says. Those people live on Ukraine’s land, and so are Ukraine’s property — and Russia stole this property, from Ukraine. The people there are only property.

That’s the only coherent legal theory upon which Obama’s case against the transfer of Crimea back to Russia makes sense.

(This argument of Illarionov would apply equally to Donbass — if valid at all — though Putin has refused to accept the urgings of the residents there that they too be allowed to join Russia. Obama and Ukraine say he’s trying to grab that region, but Putin only wants the people there to be able to protect themselves from the government that’s trying to kill them, and he sends them multi-truckloads of foods and medicines so that they can survive. Those people are therefore establishing their own government, and the question now is whether that government will become accepted as constituting an «oblast» or district within a federal Ukraine. Ukraine so far has rejected that, federalism. But if Ukraine accepts, then the issues will arise of what, if any, property-rights will be restored to Ukraine, in Donbass, by the residents there, and of how those residents can be compensated for the Ukrainian government’s bombing of them — including destruction of their houses and apartments and businesses.)

(All Ukrainians except the U.S.-backing oligarchs have also been suffering enormously from America’s takeover of Ukraine. The pro-Western Razumkov Center’s periodic polling of Ukrainians finds that the latest percentage of them who think Ukraine is going «in a right direction» is 14.3%; the highest score in the past 10 years was 41.3%, in June 2010, right after

the man whom Obama overthrew in 2014, Viktor Yanukovich, was elected President in 2010. The second-highest such score was 26.1%, in December 2013, which was their first poll taken after Yanukovich had turned down the EU's offer, and was when the U.S.-planned coup and its «Maidan» demonstrations were already under way. This is the actual result of Obama's 'democracy.')

Here is how Obama himself phrased his case, to the extent that he has done so at all:

Since Mr. Putin made this decision around Crimea and Ukraine — not because of some grand strategy, but essentially because he was caught off-balance by the protests in the Maidan and Yanukovich then fleeing after we had brokered a deal to transition power in Ukraine — since that time, this improvisation that he's been doing has gotten — has gotten him deeper and deeper into a situation that is a violation of international law, that violates the integrity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, has isolated Russia diplomatically, has made Europe wary of doing business with Russia, has allowed the imposition of sanctions that are crippling Russia's economy at a time when their oil revenues are dropping. There's no formula in which this ends up being good for Russia. The annexation of Crimea is a cost, not a benefit, to Russia. The days in which conquest of land somehow was a formula for great nation status is over.

He made this statement on 1 February 2015, only a few months after the 18 September 2014 Scottish referendum on independence had been held, in which not only Britain but most of the world accepted without question the right of the people in a district of a nation to self-determination; but, he didn't even mention that referendum, and his interviewer, CNN's Fareed Zakaria, failed to ask him about it. (It's like the U.S. press had failed to challenge George W. Bush's allegations about «Saddam's WMD», etc.)

Similarly, Obama said on 3 September 2014 (with links added here by me):

It is a brazen assault on the territorial integrity of Ukraine — a sovereign and independent European nation. It challenges that most basic of principles of our international system — that borders cannot be redrawn at the barrel of a gun; that nations have the right to determine their own future.

By «a sovereign and independent nation», he was referring to the «nation» Ukraine possessing a right to impose whatever type of government it wishes in any region of it that it wishes — and *not at all about the rights of the people in Crimea.*

At the very start of his sanctions against Russia, Obama said this, on 6 March 2014, as constituting his legal case (and the AP subsequently posted the video of him saying it):

This morning I signed an executive order that authorizes sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, or for stealing the assets of the Ukrainian people... And that includes standing up for the principle of state sovereignty. The proposed referendum on the future of Crimea would violate the Ukrainian constitution and violate international law. Any discussion about the future of Ukraine must

include the legitimate government of Ukraine. In 2014, we are well beyond the days when borders can be redrawn over the heads of democratic leaders.

«Stealing the assets of the Ukrainian people» is short-form for Illarionov's argument, but doesn't mention what those «assets» consist of. Illarionov honed in on the land; he filled in that detail, which would have seemed too ugly to too many people if the President himself were to have stated it publicly. Few in the public would agree with Obama's view that property takes precedence over people, so Obama ignored this detail. He didn't make clear that he was treating «the legitimate government of Ukraine» (which he had actually just installed) *as if* the people of Crimea were that government's property, to rule as they wish. Obama's real mental world is hereditary kings and their subjects — *not* actually elected heads-of-state and their citizenry, whom *no one* owns. It's an imperial world, in Obama's mind; but he's smart enough not to say it publicly. He even hypocritically pontificates: «In 2014, we are well beyond the days when borders can be redrawn over the heads of democratic leaders».

But what about «over the heads of democratic voters»? To him, voters in a foreign country don't even count, so he refers instead to the «leaders» as the ones who possess rights in a foreign country, to decide yea or nay for their — subjects, *not* citizens. And that's the point here: Obama cares only about «leaders», not about such mere «pitchforks» (the citizenry). He rejects the fundamental principle of revolution: that the thing separating it from *being* a coup (regressive instead of progressive) is that it must be bottom-up, not top-down (not «*a coup*», but instead a type of democratic expression, an authentic representation of the public's sentiment). He's in the business of squashing revolutions (the real thing), and of imposing coups (the fake version).

The aristocracy that placed Obama into the White House want only to control the land, and that's what he is interested in (for examples: oil, gas, minerals, and strategic positions for gas-pipelines etc.). The people can just drop dead, for all he cares, if he's not in fact (as in Ukraine) sending in trainers and troops to help to kill or otherwise get rid of them. (Refugees here — anybody want to take them? Oh, Russia?) And, like Obama's competitor in 2012, Mitt Romney said, Russia «is without question our number one geopolitical foe», so, the objective to conquer Russia is clearly bipartisan; the only difference between Obama and Romney is that Obama wasn't so stupid as to assert a thing like that in public during the general-election phase of a Presidential campaign.

Internationally, too, Obama was hardly alone in his stance favoring property rights over human rights; he actually had the backing of most European leaders. For example, in a 9 February 2015 joint press conference with President Obama, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel said:

One particular priority was given to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia this morning. We stand up for the same principles of inviolability of territorial integrity. For somebody who comes from Europe, I can only say if we give up this principle of territorial integrity of countries, then we will not be able to maintain the peaceful order of Europe that we've been able to achieve. This is not just any old point, it's an essential, a crucial point, and we have to stand by it. And Russia has violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine in two respects: in Crimea, and also in [Donbass, which consists of] Donetsk and Luhansk. So we are called upon now to come up with solutions, but not in the sense of a mediator, but we also stand up for the interests of the European peaceful order.

She, too, was implicitly denying the democratic right of the Scots in UK, and of Catalans and others in Spain, etc., to self-determination — to separate their region into a new and democratic country, if they have come to find terminally unacceptable the country of which they have been and are a part. She, too, was starting from the ideological position that had become internationally popular under Reagan and Thatcher: the view that property rights take precedence *over* human rights (rather than, as before, *being subordinate to* human rights).

PUTIN'S SIDE

So: here, then, is Putin's case on the matter, in an interview:

English: Exclusive ARD interview with Russian President Putin | Günther Jauch | ARD. 17.Nov.2014 [Jauch of ARD — German public television — interviews Putin regarding Crimea]

[10:55] *J: For the West, this was a clear breach of international law.*

PUTIN: What's the question? J

AUCH: The question is, did you underestimate the reaction of the West?

PUTIN: We find this reaction absolutely disproportionate. ... When we're confronted with the accusations that Russia has violated international law, I can hardly feel anything but astonishment. What is international law? First and foremost, it's the charter of the United Nations. ... A vivid and fresh precedent was set in Kosovo. J

A: You mean the judgment of the International Criminal Court, with respect to Kosovo [and here is the link to that], which said that Kosovo had the right to self-determination, and that the people of Kosovo could vote on whether they wanted to have their own state or not?

PUTIN: Exactly so, but there's more to it than that. The most important thing mentioned there was that in terms of self-determination, people populating a certain area are not obliged to ask the opinion of the central authorities of the state where they are resident. There's no need to have permission from the central governmental authorities, in order to take the necessary steps to self-determination. This is the most crucial point, and nothing that transpired in Crimea was any different from that which happened in Kosovo. I am deeply convinced that Russia has not violated any international laws. I am very open about this. It's a fact, and we've never concealed it. ... Besides, what is democracy? You and I know very well, what does demos mean, it means people. Democracy means the rule by the people. In our case, it's the people's right to be independent.

Regarding Putin's allegation, in the same interview, that the evidence is clear that the Crimean population were «mind-blowing» in their support of joining Russia, that evidence is so conclusive that Washington can't challenge it, and instead avoids even referring to it; but, here it is. Just click onto the links there, and the links in those articles, and you'll see the evidence itself: the results of the polls that were taken in Crimea, even by Western polling organizations. Obama's pretense to being a supporter of democracy is, in a sense, even worse than Hitler's

supporting «The Big Lie» technique, because Hitler at least *acknowledged* that he despised democracy (which is what Obama, but only in private, contemptuously called «the pitchforks»).

(Please note that, though the Donbass case can't even be alleged to constitute any attempt by Russia to seize that former region of Ukraine; Putin's argument, and the ICC's decision, would apply also in Donbass: self-determination. The *only* type of case where it would *not* apply would be one like the U.S. Southern Confederacy in 1860: the breaking-away of a region in order to enable slavery to exist under the law — the type of separatism that's intended to allow something so blatantly vile that the laws virtually everywhere do not allow it. The ICC's ruling does not enable any separatism which violates basic human rights. It does not allow, for another example, a separatism which would enable extermination of a people. Nor would it allow a separatism which would legalize husbands raping their wives. The ICC's ruling instead *enforces* basic human rights. That's what it was/is all about.)