

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد بدين بوم وېر زنده يک تن مېباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهيم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهيم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2015/10/02/obama-v-putin-their-debate-on-crimea-ii.html>

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

Eric ZUESSE
10/2/2015



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

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE TWO SIDES

Whereas Obama’s case (though it’s unstated, only implicit) presumes that this is essentially a dispute about property, and enforcing property-rights, Putin’s case presumes the exact contrary: that this is fundamentally a dispute about people, and human rights (versus property, and property-rights). Putin is saying simply that the people who reside in Crimea should determine the government in Crimea, and that owners of the land there (whatever and whomever those owners might happen to be) should not.

That constitutes a fundamental ideological dispute between them. Instead of a dispute between communism versus democracy, this «new cold war» is thus a dispute between libertarianism versus democracy, where Obama takes the libertarian (or in Europe, the «liberal») position; and Putin takes the democratic position. Instead of America's being on the side of democracy this time around, Russia now is for, and America now is against, democracy (because, among other reasons, democracy in Crimea would inevitably defeat Obama's aim here — his aim being to coerce the Crimeans to accept Ukraine as being their government, or else die).

For further discussion of the property-focused ideology of libertarianism, one might read the writings of Hans-Hermann Hoppe, who has presented the most thorough defense of libertarianism. (But similarly, market-absolutist economists, or «neo-liberal» economists, take this extremist position.) He defines libertarianism as basing all human rights on the right to property. On page 200 of his *Democracy - The God That Failed*, he says, «the only social order that is just is a system of private property anarchy,» meaning, to him, 100% private property, no government at all — no elections, or at least no elections in any other than the corporate sense, in which the number of shares (politically, that would be the number of dollars in a person's net worth) determines the number of votes (the individual's political power). He repudiates one-person-one-vote politics. That's «The God That Failed». Since that's too extreme a position for any politician to support publicly, America's most influential libertarian political operative, Grover Norquist, has softened it: «I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub». That «size» would include only the police and the military — not quite as extreme as the libertarian purists. Norquist was a friend and protégée of Ronald Reagan.

Before the proud and self-proclaimed conservative Reagan became President, the Kochs' Reason magazine had interviewed the then-Governor Reagan in their July 1975 issue, headlining «Inside Ronald Reagan»; and he said: «I believe the very heart and soul of conservatism is libertarianism. ... The basis of conservatism is a desire for less government interference or less centralized [governmental – he wasn't talking about corporate] authority or more individual freedom [for property], and this is a pretty general description also of what libertarianism is». Hoppe wasn't saying anything new. But he was being bolder, less «politic» or diplomatic, about it, than Reagan or other politicians.

Ever since Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, that view has been the dominant direction of thinking in the West (protect property but nothing else), but Putin is standing firmly against it; Putin re-asserts the pre-Reagan-era democratic capitalist ideology — democratic capitalism (with one-person-one-vote instead of one-dollar-one-vote) — and Putin claims that the International Criminal Court (which was established on 17 July 1998 by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and about which wikipedia notes «The seven countries that voted against the treaty were China, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Qatar, the United States, and Yemen.[10]»; and America's rejecting it was a perfectly libertarian thing to do) produced the definitive (and only) legal precedent regarding Crimea. This decision made clear the supremacy of human rights over property rights. Concerning the Rome Statute itself, Russia signed the Statute on 13 September 2000, shortly after Putin came to power. By contrast, that Court has been and is repudiated by both George W. Bush (the invader of Iraq etc.) and Barack Obama (the invader of Libya and Syria, and the coup-perpetrator or coup-champion in Ukraine, Honduras, Venezuela, Ecuador,

etc.).

Actually, U.S. President Bill Clinton did sign the Statute, as he was leaving office (and just months after Putin had signed it), but then the U.S. immediately withdrew. Footnote 10 on the document itself states: «10. In a communication received on 6 May 2002, the Government of the United States of America informed the Secretary-General of the following: ‘This is to inform you, in connection with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court adopted on July 17, 1998, that the United States does not intend to become a party to the treaty. Accordingly, the United States has no legal obligations arising from its signature on December 31, 2000. The United States requests that its intention not to become a party, as expressed in this letter, be reflected in the depositary’s status lists relating to this treaty».

Bush had almost certainly decided by that time to invade Iraq, which might be subject to prosecution by this Court; so, he withdrew the U.S. from it, in order to protect himself; and Obama has continued that immunity — both for Bush and for himself.

Hoppe’s ideology is much closer to that of Bush and Obama than it is to that of Putin. However, Hoppe is more honest about it than is any politician. (And he is much more honest about it than is Obama.) (Obama even had his Solicitor General argue to the U.S. Supreme Court that lying in politics is a constitutional right in the United States that no state government may restrict or limit. Aristocrats can preserve their position in no other way than via lies. Obama is an expert liar, which helped him gain the financial backing from many of America’s aristocrats.)

An article by Hoppe at the libertarian website lewrockwell.com on 17 November 2000 was headlined «Down With Democracy» and opened by defending the current distribution of wealth (property), as follows: «Imagine a world government, democratically elected according to the principle of one-man-one-vote on a worldwide scale. What would the probable outcome of an election be? Most likely, we would get a Chinese-Indian coalition government. And what would this government most likely decide to do in order to satisfy its supporters and be reelected? The government would probably find that the so-called Western world had far too much wealth and the rest of the world, in particular China and India, had far too little, and hence, that a systematic wealth and income redistribution would be called for».

He condemned that. To him, the distribution of wealth is not a problem at all: the world’s richest 80 people own as much as the world’s bottom 50%, and the world’s richest 0.7% (35 million people) own \$115.9 trillion, while the poorest 99.3% (4,665 million people) own \$147.3 trillion; but, to libertarians, that’s no problem at all. The U.S. itself has one of the most extremely unequal wealth-distributions of all countries. But, Hoppe even invited Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn — the world’s leading proponent of returning to royalty, rule by hereditary monarchs, replacing all democracy — to write the third chapter in a book Hoppe edited, *The Myth of National Defense*. The closest that Obama has come to acknowledging his libertarianism publicly was when he said that inequality was a problem, but only inequality of economic opportunity is — not inequality of wealth.

If President Obama were sincere about his verbal opposition to increasing economic inequality, he wouldn’t deceive people by saying that, as The New York Times summarized his propaganda

in a headline on 3 February 2014, «In Talk of Economy, Obama Turns to ‘Opportunity’ Over ‘Inequality’». He would instead acknowledge that equality of opportunity cannot increase while inequality of incomes is increasing (as has been the case under his Presidency), because opportunity depends very largely upon income: the bigger a person’s income is, the more economic opportunities that person tends to have. Instead of acknowledging this basic crucial economic fact, Obama, and economists, hide it, and promote «equality of opportunity» as if that would cause more equality of wealth, instead of result from it.

Property is more important to them than people are, but they want to hide the beliefs that are actually driving their actions. When a nation’s leader has this belief, killing people to get their land can become policy. Whereas in Crimea, Russian protection has prevented that from happening, the people in Donbass, whose request to join Russia was declined, have suffered such slaughter and massive evacuations of refugees, most of them now living in Russia. Obama’s insistence upon subjecting the residents of Crimea to a similar fate is his intransigent requirement upon Russia, in order for him to halt economic sanctions. Obama continues to view the Crimean case as constituting a land-theft.

And yet, when Obama speaks to a global audience, as he did recently on 28 September 2015 at the United Nations, that public rhetoric affirms precisely the things that his actual policies are denying. He said, for example, «I believe that in today’s world, the measure of strength is no longer defined by the control of territory. Lasting prosperity does not come solely from the ability to access and extract raw materials. The strength of nations depends on the success of their people».

The lying permeates not only all of the Republican Party, but also the very top, the national, level of the Democratic Party.

This ideology also drives the international policies that have placed the Greek public on the hook for the hundreds of billions of dollars that local and foreign aristocrats took out of the Greek economy and which are now being demanded by the Greek government’s bondholders to be paid back to them on those bum loans to the Greek government — basically they’re demanding to be retroactively guaranteed to be paid, by the Greek citizenry (who benefited little if at all from those loans). As the great economist Michael Hudson put the matter in an article 28 September 2015, «Bondholders ... have managed to sell the idea that sovereign nations as well as individuals have a moral obligation to pay debts, even to act on behalf of creditors instead of their domestic populations».

The biggest part of the problem is that most of those loans to the government just got skimmed off and sent abroad. Part of the latest «bail out» of ‘Greece’ (actually of the aristocracy) is to be paid via privatization of practically all of the Greek government’s assets — auctioning them off to pay those bondholders. But even that won’t fully cover those debts; the rest will be paid to the bondholders by other taxpayers in the Eurozone. The Greek public will then be left paying exorbitantly high taxes, while receiving virtually no government services. (Other Eurozone taxpayers will simply have higher taxes to pay.) That’s libertarianism; that’s microeconomic theory as political Scripture. That’s political theory in which the distribution of wealth is ignored. Truth has nothing to do with it. All that matters is the dollars, not the people.

Vladimir Putin, for his part, has absorbed too much of Western economics for him to be entirely freed from the idea that a person's worth is his net worth. He's by no means a progressive, but he does reject outright fascism — he's no libertarian.

Back again to the specific case of Crimea: Some efforts have been made to provide a legal case against Crimea's return to Russia, such as [here](#) and [here](#), but no one has thus far been able to cite any legal precedents in support of that view. International law has not yet succumbed to the libertarian position, but Obama and most leaders in Europe and Asia are pressing hard for that to happen, such as via Obama's proposed international treaties: TTIP, TPP, and TISA.

In any event, the dispute over Crimea is part of a much larger debate regarding libertarianism versus democracy. (I am now trying to find a trade-publisher for my new book *Replacing a False Economic Theory*, which goes into detail documenting this understanding of libertarianism, or «neo-liberalism,» as the modern extension from fascism. The history of libertarianism is presented there, and libertarianism is shown to be the political theory that's based upon microeconomic theory — a false theory, for which an empirically true theory is proposed to replace it. Also, the reason why economics has settled upon that now blatantly false theory is explained. Any publisher who might be interested may reach me at the.eric.zuesse@gmail.com; however, obviously, no aristocracy will support publication of such a book; this will eliminate most publishers as prospects.)

The ideological difference in the new cold war is just as big as it was during the cold war; but, this time, America is anti-democracy, and its opponent, today's Russia, is pro-democracy — or at least not outright fascist. America has transformed just as much as Russia did, and they've switched sides. This doesn't mean that the USA's fascism is like the USSR's communism was, but instead that both fascism and communism are opposed to democracy. Ours is a different type of dictatorship than the USSR's was, that's all. That's the bottom-line.

And that's what the Crimea-issue is all about: it's an ideological dispute.