



Pro-Russian Protesters in Ukraine Declare “People’s Republic”

Pro-Russian protesters in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk are reported to have declared a “people’s republic.” The separatists seized the Security Service of Ukraine building in Donetsk this past weekend and raised a Russian flag over it on Monday, proclaiming the creation of the independent People’s Republic of Donetsk.

The takeover of the government building began on Sunday as demonstrations against Ukraine’s new leadership escalated and about 200 separatists broke off from a crowd of a thousand or more and took control of the first two floors of the building, which was occupied by only a few security guards.



Interim President Oleksandr Turchynov blamed the protests on Russia, calling the unrest a Russian attempt to “dismember” Ukraine.

In an address on national TV, Turchynov said it was “the second wave” of a Russian operation to destabilize Ukraine, overthrow the government, and disrupt the planned elections in May.

Speaking in a televised address from Kiev, Turchynov said, “Anti-terrorism measures will be adopted against those who took up weapons.” The AP reported that Turchynov also said that parliament would convene on April 8 to consider tougher penalties for separatist actions and even ban parties that engage in separatism.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk also accused Russia of being behind the unrest to create a pretext for sending troops across the border. “The plan is to destabilize the situation, the plan is for foreign troops to cross the border and seize the country’s territory, which we will not allow,” he said, noting that those taking part in the seizure of the government building had distinct Russian accents.

A BBC report observed that while the separatists’ actions in Donetsk may resemble what happened in Crimea in February and March — when pro-Russian forces, many of which were widely believed to be Russian military without insignia, began to take control of the Crimean peninsula. However, there are major differences, the BBC noted:

As an autonomous republic in Ukraine, Crimea had its own parliament that voted for independence and an administration that could organize the referendum [on joining the Russian Federation]. However, the 100 or so men who voted in Donetsk had just broken into the building and have never themselves been elected to anything. Also, while Donetsk is majority Russian-speaking, opinion polls suggest many people there still believe in a united Ukraine.

Even though the BBC ascribes some legitimacy to the Crimean referendum, on March 27, the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding Resolution, 68/262, that declared the Crimean referendum



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invalid and the incorporation of Crimea into Russia illegal.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Deshchytsya told Russia's Ekho Moskvu news agency that his country would go to war with Russia if it sent troops into eastern Ukraine.

Moscow has said that it has no intention of invading Ukraine but reserves the right to protect the rights of ethnic Russians.

The main focus of the protests leading to the separatists' declaration of independence has been the nation's new government. Turchynov — an ally of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko — was selected by Parliament on February 23 to carry out the duties of the president until a new presidential election is held on May 25.

Ukraine's Parliament removed former President Viktor Yanukovich from power on February 22 and two days later issued a warrant for his arrest, accusing him of "mass killing of civilians" during violent anti-government protests. Yanukovich fled to Russia, after which he declared himself to still be "the legitimate head of the Ukrainian state elected in a free vote by Ukrainian citizens."

Yanukovich's fall from power began in 2013, when, under pressure from Russian President Vladimir Putin, he rejected a pending EU association agreement, choosing instead to pursue a Russian loan bailout and closer ties with Russia. This led to mass "Euromaidan" protests and the occupation of Kiev's Independence Square by young pro-European Union Ukrainians. The protests spread across the Ukraine as Ukrainian citizens confronted the Berkut and other special police units, and by February 2014, just before Yanukovich's ouster, Ukraine appeared to be on the brink of civil war. Or so the mass media reported the story.

Despite the picture of almost overwhelming popular support for the pro-EU, anti-Yanukovich position, however, multiple polls conducted by Ukrainian polling organizations, as well as European and U.S. media, have shown that Ukrainians have been fairly evenly divided on whether or not to join either the EU or the Moscow-led Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, with many Ukrainians unenthusiastic about either choice.

Furthermore, observed William F. Jasper in his report for *The New American* entitled "Ukraine: Unraveling the Planned Chaos," the protests that eventually led to Yanukovich's removal were not of the spontaneous, home-grown variety. Noted Jasper:

Many of the participants in Kiev's "Euromaidan" demonstrations that toppled President Viktor Yanukovich were members of [George] Soros-funded NGOs and/or were trained by the same NGOs in the many workshops and conferences sponsored by Soros' International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) and his various Open Society institutes and foundations. The IRF, founded and funded by Soros, boasts that it has given "more than any other donor organization" to "democratic transformation" of Ukraine.

The above assertion was documented by the International Renaissance Foundation's Annual Report for 2012, which, states: "IRF provided UAH 63 million in funding to civil society organizations — more than any other donor organization working in this field in Ukraine."

This point was further bolstered by a February 26 column that Soros wrote for Project Syndicate, in which the internationally influential billionaire argued that the EU and the IMF must initiate a new Marshall Plan for Ukraine, i.e., transfers of money from EU and U.S. taxpayers to the politicians, organizations, and institutions approved by the internationalists running the EU and IMF. A revealing



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point in Soros's essay, entitled "Sustaining Ukraine's Breakthrough," stated: "Ukraine will need outside assistance that only the EU can provide: management expertise."

This latest crisis in Ukraine, like the one in Crimea, demonstrates the vulnerability of the former Soviet republic to outside forces. In a March 4 *Bloomberg/Businessweek* article entitled "How Russia Is Pushing Ukraine Into the West's Arms," Neil Shearing, chief emerging-markets economist for the London-based consultancy Capital Economics, observed: "In a perverse way, the more aggressive the posturing by Russia, the more likely it is that the West will stump up the cash needed to prevent Ukraine's economy from spiraling into a crisis."

"Essentially," Shearing continued, "if the geopolitical tug of war becomes more polarized — and Putin becomes more bellicose — the more likely it is that the West will answer by coming to the rescue of Ukraine."

As Jasper noted in the above-cited article:

Russia's response to Ukraine's upheaval is pushing reluctant Ukrainians into the arms of EU/IMF/NATO, as well as providing U.S.-EU-IMF leaders with the political and moral cover they need to "rescue" Ukraine with billions of dollars extracted from U.S. and EU taxpayers.

Calls to "rescue" Ukraine have come from both sides of the political aisle. The *New York Times* reported that Secretary of State John Kerry visited Kiev on March 4 "with an offer of \$1 billion in an American loan guarantee and pledges of technical assistance." *Time* reported on February 28 that in an interview with the news magazine, Arizona Senator John McCain declared, "We are all Ukrainians," before calling for swift U.S. economic aid to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Senators Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Ted Cruz (R-Texas) have stated their intention to block such aid unless Senate Majority Harry Reid (D-Nev.) removes part of the aid package funding the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The senators told Reid they "intend to object to any floor consideration of Ukraine aid legislation" until the IMF language is pulled from the bill.

During a speech at CPAC in March, Paul presented his reasons for not sending aid to Ukraine: "We should also suspend American loans and aid to Ukraine because currently these could have the counterproductive effect of rewarding Russia. Ukraine owes so much money to Russia that America would essentially be borrowing from China to give to Russia."

However, Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, supports the bill with the IMF provisions. "We're all looking to the IMF to be that organization that really moves Ukraine along and I just don't know how we cannot honor the commitments to the IMF that we have," Corker said in an interview with the *Daily Beast*.

Considering that George Soros, in his Project Syndicate article, called for the EU and the IMF to initiate a new Marshall Plan for Ukraine, Corker's defense of using the IMF to send aid to Ukraine seems to fall right into place in the internationalists' worldview.

Photo of anti-Euromaidan rally: Andrew Butko

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