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Crimea, Constantinople, and Fracking

We are confronted with the Russian President acting out the historic intentions of Russian Czars, occupying relatively defenseless neighboring non-Russian civilian populations to provide Russia with a warm-water seaport so Russia may support a navy with which to threaten other non-Russian civilian populations farther away from Russia.

Russia and Ukraine signed the Budapest Accord in 1994, also signed by the United States and United Kingdom, which provided that Russia would respect Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity, that the Soviet naval ships based in Ukrainian territory would be divided between Ukraine and Russia, that Russia would be permitted to lease a naval base at Sevastopol from Ukraine until 2017 (subsequently extended to 2042), and that Ukraine would deliver the thousand Soviet nuclear warheads based in its territory to an international commission to be deactivated. Ukraine complied with this treaty. Over the past few days, Russian troops from the Sevastopol base have occupied military positions in Ukraine and contained or disarmed Ukrainian police and military forces in those areas.

The United States, the United Nations, NATO, the European Union and its member nations, all announce how much they disapprove of the Russian occupation of part of Ukraine. They also note that there is no "military" action that any of those entities can take to force the Russian military to withdraw, any more than there was any effective military response available in 2008 when Russia occupied part of Georgia so as to prevent an alternate gas pipeline from Baku to the Mediterranean, or any more than Russia would have an effective military response if the United States decided to occupy eastern Cuba from the U.S. base at Guantanamo.

A possibly effective response by NATO is suggested by history and geography, with significant economic effects. This requires existential commitment from two of NATO's front-line states, Turkey and Poland; significant military commitment by the United States, France, Germany, UK, and the rest of NATO; economic commitment by much of Europe and possibly wealthy Muslim states; and economic opportunities for US and European energy companies.

Step 1. Significantly reinforce NATO combat troops in Turkey and Poland, including U.S. Navy ships to Istanbul.

Step 2. Close the Bosphorus / Dardanelles outlet of the Black Sea to all Russian flag vessels until Russian forces are withdrawn from Ukraine. Turkey announces that it takes this action to protect minority Tatars in Crimea from Russian aggression.

Step 3 (if no favorable response to Step 2). NATO troops, possibly with a Polish commander, are invited into western Ukraine to protect Polish-speaking residents in the event of further Russian aggression, and to ensure the security of natural gas pipelines from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to western Europe.

Economic repercussions.

1. In Algeria and Libya, European and U.S. energy companies increase production and facility security so as to replace natural gas supplies to Europe disrupted by Russian supply and transmission issues.
2. Saudi and Gulf states contribute to NATO (Turkish) expenses under cover of protecting Tatar minority in Crimea, so as to disrupt Russian energy exports with prospect of long-term

disabling Russian position as major energy exporter.

3. U.S. natural gas exports to Europe increase to substitute loss of Kazakh and Azeri gas through Russian transmission pipelines.

Possible outcomes:

1. Russian President acknowledges that occupying Ukraine is not worth another war over access to the Mediterranean and withdraws.

2. Russian President decides this is an opportunity to re-establish Russian position as World Power, occupies more of Ukraine, cuts off natural gas supplies to Europe. A situation similar to the 1962 U.S. blockade of Cuba develops as Russian Black Sea Fleet faces NATO forces closing the Bosphorus at Istanbul.

3. Russian oligarchs decide loss of revenue from natural gas sales and Black Sea trade is unacceptable, disquiet arises in Russian power structure.

4. Chechen and other Muslim guerrillas in Russian-occupied Caucasus are re-characterized in NATO media as Freedom Fighters rather than terrorists.

5. All Hell breaks loose.

One hundred sixty years ago, Czar Nicholas became involved in a war in Crimea focused on the Russian navy base at Sevastopol, in which the Ottoman Empire, British Empire, and French Empire allied to invade and defeat the Russian Empire.

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