

State of Emergency in Crimea

By [Roger Annis](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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Late on November, 21, right-wing extremists in Ukraine severed the four electricity lines which transmit electricity from Ukraine to Crimea. The terrorist attacks, using explosives, cut domestic electricity service to much of Crimea's population of 2.3 million.

Two of the transmission lines were damaged during the night of November 20-21. The coup de grace cutting all service to Crimea was delivered to the other two lines the following night. Photos of downed pylons with Ukrainian or Crimean-Tatar flags hanging on them have been posted online.

"Crimea has been completely cut off," Viktor Plakida director of Crimea's state energy company, Krymenergo, told TASS Russian news service.

A state of emergency has been declared in Crimea. Reserve electricity production using portable gas turbines and diesel generators is assuring electricity service to public institutions, including the national airport at Simferopol, bus and train service and television and radio broadcasting. But most Crimean citizens were left without power at home.

Extremists supporting the blasts blocked crews from conducting repairs in the days following. In Kyiv, hundreds of right-wing protesters gathered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (police) on the evening of the 21st, demanding that a full electricity blockade be instituted against the people of Crimea ([video report here](#)).

The Ukrainian National Guard did secure at least one of the damaged lines, during the day on Nov 20. Guardsmen confronted violent protesters; a [five-minute video](#) on the right-wing, ATR YouTube channel shows some of the confrontation that took place. But the government soon bowed to the extremists and backed off.

The government refused offers of assistance from Russia to restore electricity transmission, even though the blasts deprived the Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Nikolayev in Ukraine of electricity and Yuriy Katich, deputy director of Ukraine's energy company Ukrenergo, said that the interruptions have placed two of Ukraine's nearby nuclear energy stations in "very dangerous" territory. Nuclear and coal each generate approximately 40 per cent of Ukrainian domestic electricity production.

On Nov 23, the Ukrainian government declared a total ban on cargo traffic to and from Crimea. The [Wall St. Journal reported that day](#) that the measure was a concession to extremists in exchange for them standing aside to allow repairs to the damaged electrical system. In other words, the government in Kyiv is now officially hostage to right wing and neo-Nazi extremists. The *Journal* cites President Petro Poroshenko its Nov 23 report:

"We are not satisfied with today's status quo, when an occupying power [Russia] neglects the basic rights of the Crimean Tatar people," said President Petro Poroshenko after a meeting with three European foreign ministers.

"Crimea is Ukrainian territory. We will defend the rights of the Crimean Tatar people and all Ukrainians who are living on occupied territory."

[According to the UK Telegraph](#), Ukraine's police (interior) minister, Arsen Avakov, wants the country's national security council to annul contracts for power supply to Crimea in response to Russia's decision to ban Ukrainian food imports as of January 1. Russia took that action when the European Union and Ukraine decided their "economic association" agreement would proceed on January 1. There have been no negotiations with Russia over the consequences, even though Ukraine and Russia presently have free exchange of food trade and the European agreement turns Ukraine into an uncontrolled transit point into Russia for food from anywhere in the EU.

The announced transport blockade by the Kyiv regime builds on a [food transport blockade](#) of Crimea which Ukrainian extremists have conducted with impunity since September 20.



One of the electricity pylons servicing Crimea sabotaged on Nov 20, 2015 (TV Rezda image on Twitter)

Consequences of the terrorist attacks

According to a report earlier this month [on Krymedia](#), there are four electricity routes from Ukraine to Crimea, respectively: Melitopol (Ukraine)-Dzhankoy (Crimea) (330 kV), Kakhovka-Ostrovskaya (330 kV), Kakhovka-Dzhankoy (330 kV) and Kakhovka-Titan (220 kV).

Ukraine's state-run energy firm, Ukrenergo, initially said it could repair the damaged lines within four days. Ukraine's Energy Ministry said one of the four damaged power lines could be repaired within 24 hours if workers were allowed safe and unfettered access to the site. But that was not to be.

Russia's Energy Ministry says emergency electricity supplies have been activated in Crimea. Mobile gas turbine generators as well as some 1,000 diesel generators have been mobilized

Crimea's first vice premier, Mikhail Sheremet, told journalists that Crimea can mobilize some 600 megawatts of electrical production whereas peak daily demand is 1,200 MW. Another Crimean news report said average daily consumption is 850 MW at this time of year.

The Crimean state utility Krymergo says the region's reserve fuel supply to operate generators could last up to 25 days. Deputy Crimean government chairman Dmitry Kozak is cited in the *Wall St. Journal* that Crimea is meeting 30 per cent of its normal electricity needs through its emergency generation.

Crimea is planning on energy independence from Ukraine. An [electricity cable](#) from mainland Russia to Crimea is under construction and due to begin full service in 2016, delivering app 800 MW of power. The first stage will begin to deliver 400 MW by the end of this year.

A state-owned gas pipeline capable of carrying four billion cubic meters of natural gas to Crimea from Russia is [under construction](#). It will power two gas generation stations under construction, which will bring Crimea's daily electrical production capacity up to 950 MW. A road and rail bridge connection, also under construction, will open in 2019 and be fully operational in 2020.

Crimean Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov has branded the destruction of the pylons "a terrorist act". He is reported in TASS news agency as saying, "Crimeans will not be brought to their knees or spoken to in the language of blackmail" ([reported in The Moscow Times](#)).

Aksyonov warned that Ukrainian electricity providers on whom Crimea currently depends can expect to lose access to the Crimean market as the territory is integrated into Russia's unified power grid, reported *RIA Novosti* on Sunday. "If the governing entities of Ukraine think they don't need the [Crimean] market, then they are going to lose it forever. Just as has happened with food imports."

The chairman of the of the Committee on International Affairs of the Council of the Russian Federation, Konstantin Kosachev, says the sabotage and the Ukrainian government response constitute "a gesture of final farewell" to Crimea. Noting the hanging of Ukrainian flags on destroyed electricity pylons, he said, "For the first time ever, I've seen state flags displayed as tokens of solidarity with terrorists."

Nonetheless, Kosachev says, he hopes that "Crimea, Ukraine and all of us" will now take a sober look at the situation.

Russia's *Kommersant* newspaper reported on Monday the results of a survey of Crimeans conducted November 13-16 by the Levada Center, an independent Russian pollster. It shows 87 per cent of respondents believe Crimea should be part of Russia, compared with 73 per cent in August this year. Only three per cent thought the peninsula should be part of Ukraine.

These latest survey results are consistent with [results published](#) by several Western-funded polls in late 2014.

The right-wing forces mounting the food blockade have been threatening for several months to cut Crimea's electricity supply. Last month, on October 6, an electricity pylon in Kherson was damaged by an explosive device ([photo and story](#)).

The attacks against Crimea's electricity supply coincide with increased violations of the Minsk-2 ceasefire in Donetsk and Lugansk regions of eastern Ukraine, as documented by the [daily reports](#) of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and in the [Novorossiia Today](#) news outlet.

Western media and government collusion in attacks on Crimea

Ever since the Maidan coup of February 2014, Western media and governments have all but incited violent actions by extremists against the Crimean people.

Unknown to people in the West is the aforementioned, food transport blockade, ongoing since September 20. Western media has self-censored reports of that, including the central role played by the neo-Nazi Right Sector group.

The food blockade is stressful and an inconvenience for the people of Crimea, but for farmers, truckers and traders on both sides of the border, it has dealt a harsh economic blow in a country already enduring near-to catastrophic economic hemorrhaging.

Last month, Ukraine withdrew takeoff and landing rights of Russian airlines, provoking Russia to respond in kind. Again, this was a measure far more detrimental to Ukrainian people and interests than to those of Russia.

On the rare occasion when the food blockade is mentioned in Western media, it is presented as an action waged by “Crimean Tatars”. For example, a [November 23 report](#) in *Bloomberg* writes, “Ethnic Tatars from [Crimea]... have blocked trucks from entering [Crimea] since last week.” The *Bloomberg* writer shows he is especially misinformed when he reports the Sept 20 food blockade as having commenced “last week”.

The “Crimean Tatars” referred to in *Bloomberg* and other Western news reports are Mustafa Djemilev and Refat Chubarov, Tatar figureheads who aligned themselves with the government in Kyiv years ago. Both have received appointments as deputies to the Rada (Parliament).

Lenur Islyamov, who served briefly as deputy premier of the Republic of Crimea following the March 2014 secession, has joined their ranks. He is identified in an interview on *112.ua* as the “coordinator” of the “Tatar” protests blocking repairs to the blown up transmission lines. Islyamov is a wealthy businessman. His holdings include the diminished ATR television and radio media network. Earlier this year, [a spectacle erupted](#) over broadcast license renewals of ATR. The network refused to apply through established channels for renewals of its licenses and then cried ‘censorship’ when its broadcast rights expired.

The West’s own embargo of Crimea

If the big imperialist governments of Europe and North America are concerned about extremists using food and now electricity as a political weapon against a civilian population, they haven’t said so. That’s not so very surprising because they operate their own food and economic embargo against Crimea. That was imposed in April 2014 after a large majority of the Crimean population voted to secede from Ukraine.

Last week at the G20 summit meeting in Turkey, Western leaders met briefly and [extended by another six months](#) their embargo against Crimea and sanctions against Russian political and business leaders. Reuters reports:

U.S. President Barack Obama, Germany’s Angela Merkel, Britain’s David Cameron, Italy’s Matteo Renzi and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who represented President Francois Hollande at the summit, attended the brief meeting near the conclusion of the G20 meeting in Antalya.

The story of electricity ties between Ukraine and Russia is more complicated than Western media bothers to report. Ukraine obtains a significant portion of its electricity and its coal for generating electricity from Russia.

According to an [agreement reached nearly one year ago](#), Ukraine sells electricity to Crimea and, in exchange, Russia sells electricity to Ukraine. Russia has done so at preferred prices, no less, the price of Russian-generated electricity being cheaper than what Ukraine

produces.

Earlier this month, Ukrainian Energy Minister Vladimir Demchishin announced that agreement had been reached to extend electricity supply from Ukraine to Crimea through 2016. He spoke against those advocating interruption to service or cutting it altogether. It seems his sentiments did not carry too far in the halls of power in Kyiv.

The latest attack on electricity transmission has sparked a *pro forma* statement of concern by the German government. [Sputnik News reports](#) German Foreign Office spokesman Martin Schaefer as stating, “Attacks on Ukraine’s public infrastructure, including that providing Crimea with electricity, are criminal acts. We expect them to be perceived as such and investigated by Ukrainian officials.”

Ukrainian terrorism and the West

The latest brazen action by Ukrainian extremists raises questions anew about their financial and military ties in the West. Western governments and media have backed, or turned a blind eye to, the prominent role which the extremists have been played in Ukraine’s military intervention in eastern Ukraine. Kyiv’s ‘Anti-Terrorist Operation’ has killed more than 8,000 people, severely damaged the economy and infrastructure of the entire country, and displaced more than two million people from their homes.

Significant fundraising is taking place in Canada, the U.S. and western Europe for the extremist cause. Earlier this year, two of Canada’s largest newspapers—the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*—[favourably reported such fundraising](#), singling out for praise and support the agency called ‘[Army SOS](#)’ which uses funds to purchase supplies for the Ukrainian army and paramilitaries.

This past summer, at the urging of Western governments and as a cautionary move to limit public relations damage, Ukraine began integrating into its National Guard entire units of the extremist paramilitaries. The measure was prompted by the [decision of the U.S. Congress](#) in June—and the media reporting which followed—to prohibit training or other support to one of the paramilitary units, the Azov Battalion.

The fundraising for Ukrainian extremists has eerie parallels to the [long history of covert backing](#) and financing by Western governments and regional allies of extremist forces in the Middle East. One week before the attacks against Crimea’s electricity supply, vigilantes of the Daesh (so-called ISIS) movement based in Iraq and Syria killed 130 people in a murderous attack in Paris.

Like Daesh, many extremists in Ukraine hold to arcane, pseudo-religious views. These views are also deeply racist, advocating a ‘white’ Ukraine that could lead the rest of Europe out of a political and moral “degeneracy” caused by the presence of large numbers of non-Caucasian citizens.

Canada’s new, governing Liberal Party has been a strong backer of the government in Kyiv and the civil war it has waged in eastern Ukraine. The new minister of international trade, Chrystia Freeland, is one of the most vocal ideologues in Canada of the Kyiv regime and its allied, paramilitary ‘freedom fighters’.

Freeland and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with a delegation of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress last month on October 13, six days before the national election won by the

Liberals. The UCC advocates that Canada increase its military support to Ukraine, including advanced, heavy weaponry.

The UCC [reported on the October 13 meeting](#), “We were pleased to be able to have a full, frank and productive exchange with Mr. Trudeau and are pleased to have had the opportunity to hear Mr. Trudeau address the issues and explain the Liberal Party position in person. Following this meeting, I am pleased that Mr. Trudeau and his candidates Borys Wrzesnewskyj, Chrystia Freeland, Arif Virani and James Maloney have committed to ensure that Ukraine is a top policy priority for the Liberal Party of Canada,” said [UCC President Paul] Grod.

“We are pleased that the Liberal Party will press for increased sanctions against Russia including the SWIFT payments system for its illegal occupation of Crimea and ongoing terrorist war in eastern Ukraine.”

Trudeau made brief, [ill-informed comments](#) about Crimea to Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G20 summit meeting earlier this month in Turkey. Trudeau signalled that the harsh, anti-Russia, pro-Kyiv policies of the previous Conservative government would continue. And in a similar foreign policy vein, Canada’s new defense minister said on Nov 22 that Canada would remain part of the U.S.-led [‘regime change’ chorus](#) for Syria.

Three days ago at the United Nations, Canada and three other countries—the U.S., Ukraine and Palau—voted against a [resolution condemning racism in all its forms](#), including the ideology of neo-Nazism. The resolution was approved by 126 countries, including India and China. Fifty three countries abstained, including all the member countries of the European Union.

The myth of a Russian “annexation” of Crimea in March of 2014 is an inaccurate but powerful narrative underlying the ongoing aggression against the Crimean people. Large swaths of liberal and [even left-wing opinion](#) in Western countries have bought into this myth. This latest chapter in Ukraine-Crimea relations will hopefully serve to open new eyes as to who are the aggressors in Ukraine-Crimea relations.

The Crimean people have the right to live free of threats and aggression. Crimea’s vote to secede from Ukraine in March 2014 was conducted by the elected, constitutional government of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and was approved overwhelmingly. Kyiv’s war in eastern Ukraine and now against Crimea, on the other hand, is being waged by an illegal coup regime. The Crimean people’s right to self-determination should be respected and the provocative and dangerous embargo against them by Western powers should end.

Roger Annis is an editor of the website [The New Cold War: Ukraine and beyond](#). On June 12, he gave a talk in Vancouver, Canada reporting on his visit to Donetsk, eastern Ukraine in April 2015 as part of a media tour group. A video broadcast of that talk is here: [The NATO offensive in eastern Europe and the class and the national dynamics of the war in eastern Ukraine](#).

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