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DON'T BEAT A DEAD HORSE!

TOP 5 world politicians who recognize the Russian Crimea

Text: Oleg Stepanov

You would think the President of Russia has dotted all the i's on the point, **saying: "Crimea is Russian, and it's not debatable!"** However, neither the United States with its satellites, nor Europe are willing to recognize the choice of the peninsula residents. **But there are not a few influential politicians and statesmen** in the world who support the landmark decision of the Crimean people but are often subject to criticism and persecution.

One recent example – the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, a member of the Presidium of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Dodik, stated in his interview with media: “I have a question: shouldn’t Crimea be a part of Russia? For me it is Russia. Crimea should never have been withdrawn from Russia. I would very much like to come to Crimea – I will choose the time for a visit, and I see no reason why it should fail”.



Aleksandr Lukashenko

Official Minsk withholds recognition of Crimea as a part of Russia as there are objective reasons for that. Such a step would result in serious economic problems for Belarus – putting strains on the partnership with the West and the deterioration in the business environment with Ukraine which is the second foreign trade partner of the country after Russia. But in fact, the highest-level leaders have long considered Crimea part of the Russian Federation. Belarus regularly votes down Ukrainian UN resolutions on the peninsula and actively supplies goods to the region under current sanctions regime. President Alexander Lukashenko previously emphasized that he “is of the same mind” with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on issues relating Crimea and Donbas. At a recent press-conference for the Ukrainian media, the Belarusian leader perfectly clear outlined his position regarding the peninsula and Kyiv’s claims to it.

“The issue is completely taken off the table, once and for all!” Always even-tempered and deliberate in articulation his thoughts, Sergei Lavrov (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation – editor’s note) and all the country

The Crimean magazine

leaders share the view. Consensus in Russian society: in no other question do the Russians support the government as much as in the Crimean one. They consider it to be the territory of Russia.”, he admitted.

According to Lukashenko, even if people who declaim against the accession of Crimea come to power in Russia, they will never transfer it back to Ukraine.

“Believe me, I know what I’m talking about. I can’t imagine what kind of circumstances should Russia be thrown into to renounce Crimea”, said the President of Belarus.



Matteo Salvini

Matteo Salvini, leader of the Italian party “League of the North”, visited Crimea twice – in 2014 and 2016. He repeatedly accentuated the legitimacy of the March referendum and reunification of the peninsula with the Russian Federation, as well as harmful effects of anti-Russian sanctions for the economy of Italy and the entire European Union.

“There (in Crimea – editor’s note) was held a referendum, and 90% of the voters supported

Politics *in focus*

the return to the Russian Federation... And now draw a parallel with the pseudo-revolution in Ukraine paid by foreign powers. This was determined by history that certain areas are Russian ones as concerns culture and traditions", he said in his interview with The Washington Post.

Salvini is one of the most ardent proponents of recognition of Crimea as Russia and lifting of sanctions not only in Italy but throughout Europe. In parliamentary elections of 2018, his "League of the North" won 73 out of 650 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 37 out of 315 in the Senate. Senior Matteo himself became the Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition government of Giuseppe Conte.

However, the political ambitions of the Deputy Prime Minister, his desire to seek early parliamentary elections and to rule the state single-handedly provoked a government crisis. As a result, Conte formed a new Cabinet of Ministers, but without Salvini and his alliance partners. Besides, as it has been proved, the leader of "League of the North" is more pro-Russian on paper than in real life. With Salvini on the helm, the Italian government agreed to extend sanctions against the Russian Federation three times. Prime Minister Conte himself noted this fact "with many regrets". But Rome has been continuing to support restrictive measures since it was more important not to ruin relations with EU leaders than to establish profitable cooperation with Russia.

Thus, Salvini's defeat and resignation can hardly be considered Moscow's foreign policy failure. Although the position of the supporters of strengthening relations with Brussels has become stronger in the new government, Rome will not radically change its foreign policy and cut ties with Russia. Italian statesmen and political leaders will continue to take stand against lifting of anti-Russia sanctions, but Italy will not take meaningful steps in this point and thus foist on the European Union.



Marine Le Pen

Unlike Salvini, the leader of the "National Alliance" of France has not visited Crimea. However, mending ties with the Russian Federation and the recognition of Crimea as Russian were the key points of foreign policy of Marine Le Pen's pre-election program in her struggle for presidency.

"After the referendum, which vividly showed the consent of the people to join Russia, I also recognize Crimea as part of the Russian Federation. Belonging of Crimea to Ukraine was only an administrative issue of Soviet times, the peninsula was never Ukrainian. Without any doubt, I will advocate the lifting of sanctions. They are senseless but not if their goal was to ruin the French farmers. What is more, sanctions are a rather stupid method in diplomacy", was Le Pen's answer to the journalist' question about her actions in case of electoral victory.

Le Pen went forward to a second round of voting but failed to win the future Head of State Emmanuel Macron. After that, the political force led by Marine Le Pen went through a certain "change of concept". The bellicose word "front" in the title "The National Front" was replaced by "alliance", the rhetoric became less radical, and the party adopted policies aimed at expanding its electoral base.

The results of the European elections in May, 2019 were successful for the "National Alliance". Le Pen's party got 23.3% of the French vote, beating the presidential "En Marche!" by 1%. Analysts note: this result does not show Le Pen's strength but rather the weakness of Macron's political force, as part of its electorate voted in favor of the environmental party "The Greens".