

Government work better, more efficiently, deliver better services and advance a broad-based growth agenda. But, man, it would be a lot easier if I had a Congress that was serious about America's future.

There are some things I can't do by myself. Congress has the power of the purse. We cannot deal with infrastructure on the levels we need to without Congress. I can do some things on immigration, but I cannot make sure that we have an immigration system that potentially could grow our economy by an extra trillion dollars without Congress's help.

And so that's why all of you are here today. My argument is very simple. Tony is right: We have all the cards we need for America to compete. And when you travel outside this country, what's always remarkable to me is the degree to which people view us still with envy with respect to our economy. They marvel at our resiliency. They marvel at our dynamism. They marvel at low natural gas prices. They really marvel at that. They marvel at the degree to which we can attract talent from around the world. They marvel at our university system, which is unmatched. But to realize all our potential that's sitting there right now we've got to have a Washington that functions better.

And the fact of the matter is that Democrats are not without our flaws. We have our blind spots, and we have our dogmas, and we've got our crazy folks. [Laughter] But as a whole, this is a party that is serious about making sure that

America is growing and offering opportunity to everybody. And the story many of you here in this room have lived, the success that you've lived out, what we're about is making sure a whole bunch of kids behind us can live out that same success. And if I have just a smidgeon of a cooperative Congress, think what we can do these next 2½ years.

So I need your help. Michael Bennet needs your help. And I hope you will all step up because, although I'm very optimistic about our long-term trends, the notion that we would waste 2 years in further inaction rather than move boldly on a path that I think all of us in this room agree on, we don't have time to waste. I don't have time to waste. The clock is ticking. There's less than 2 years left—less than 3 years left. I want to squeeze every last little bit of work that I can during the remainder of my term so that, looking back, I'm going to be able to say that we left everything on the field and every single person I could help in this office—which is such an incredible privilege—I helped.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:20 p.m. at the residence of Hamilton E. "Tony" and Amie James. In his remarks, he referred to Chirlane McCray, wife of Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City; and Susan D. Bennet, wife of Sen. Michael F. Bennet, and their daughters Caroline, Halina, and Anne.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk of Ukraine and an Exchange With Reporters

March 12, 2014

President Obama. It is a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Yatsenyuk to the Oval Office, to the White House.

I think all of us have seen the courage of the Ukrainian people in standing up on behalf of democracy and on the desire that I believe is universal for people to be able to determine their own destiny. And we saw in the Maidan how ordinary people from all parts of the country had said that we want a change. And the

Prime Minister was part of that process, showed tremendous courage, and upheld the principles of nonviolence throughout the course of events over the last several months.

Obviously, the Prime Minister comes here during a very difficult time for his country. In the aftermath of President Yanukovich leaving the country, the Parliament, the Rada, acted in a responsible fashion to fill the void, created a inclusive process in which all parties had input,

including the party of former President Yanukovich. They have set forward a process to stabilize the country, take a very deliberate step to assure economic stability and negotiate with the International Monetary Fund, and to schedule early elections so that the Ukrainian people, in fact, can choose their direction for the future. And the Prime Minister has managed that process with great skill and great restraint, and we're very much appreciative of the work that he has done.

The most pressing challenge that Ukraine faces at the moment, however, is the threat to its territorial integrity and its sovereignty. We have been very clear that we consider the Russian incursion into Crimea outside of its bases to be a violation of international law, of international agreements of which Russia is a signatory, and a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. And we have been very firm in saying that we will stand with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in ensuring that that territorial integrity and sovereignty is maintained.

I think we all recognize that there are historical ties between Russia and Ukraine, and I think the Prime Minister would be the first one to acknowledge that. And I think the Prime Minister and the current Government in Kiev has recognized and has communicated directly to the Russian Federation their desire to try to manage through this process diplomatically. But what the Prime Minister, I think, has rightly insisted on is, is that they cannot have a country outside of Ukraine dictate to them how they should arrange their affairs and that there is a constitutional process in place and a set of elections that they can move forward on that, in fact, could lead to different arrangements over time with the Crimean region, but that is not something that can be done with the barrel of a gun pointed at you.

And so Secretary Kerry is in communications with the Russian Government and has offered to try to explore with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Lavrov, a diplomatic solution to this crisis. We are in close communication with the Ukrainian Government in terms of how we might proceed going forward. But we

will continue to say to the Russian Government that if it continues on the path that it is on, then not only us, but the international community—the European Union and others—will be forced to apply a cost to Russia's violations of international law and its encroachments on Ukraine.

There's another path available, and we hope that President Putin is willing to seize that path. But if he does not, I'm very confident that the international community will stand strongly behind the Ukrainian Government in preserving its unity and its territorial integrity.

Let me just make two final points. Obviously, because of the political turmoil, the economic situation in Ukraine has become more challenging, not less. And that's why I'm very proud that not only as critical members of the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, we are working with the Prime Minister and his team in a package that can help to institute necessary reforms inside of the Ukraine, but also help to stabilize the situation so that people feel confident that in their daily lives, they can meet their basic necessities.

We're also asking Congress to act promptly to deliver on an aid package, including a \$1 billion loan guarantee that can help smooth the path for reform inside of Ukraine and give the Prime Minister and his government the capacity to do what they need to do as they are also organizing an election process. So I would just ask both Democrats and Republicans, who I know are unified in their support of Ukraine, to move quickly to give us the support that we need so that we can give the Ukrainian people the support that they need.

And then, finally, Mr. Prime Minister, I would ask that you deliver a message on behalf of the American people to all the Ukrainian people, and that is that we admire their courage, we appreciate their aspirations. The interests of the United States are solely in making sure that the people of Ukraine are able to determine their own destiny. That is something that here in the United States we believe in deeply. I know it's something that you believe in deeply as well. And you can rest assured that

you will have our strong support as you move forward during these difficult times.

So thank you.

Prime Minister Yatsenyuk. Thank you, Mr. President. And we highly appreciate the support that you have given to the Ukrainian people. And my country feels that the United States stands by the Ukrainian people.

Mr. President, it's all about the freedom. We fight for our freedom. We fight for our independence. We fight for our sovereignty. And we will never surrender.

My country has faced a number of challenges. The military one is a key challenge today, and we urge Russia to stick to its international obligations, to pull back its military into barracks, and to start the dialogue with no guns, with no military, with no tanks, but with the diplomacy and political tools.

On behalf of my government, I would like to reiterate that we are absolutely ready and open for talks with the Russian Federation. We adhere to all international obligations. And we as the state of Ukraine, will fulfill all bilateral and multilateral international treaties.

On the economic side, Mr. President, we highly appreciate the support of the United States and the decision to guarantee \$1 billion loans for the Ukrainian economy. You know that we resumed talks with the IMF. We do understand that these are tough reforms, but these reforms are needed for the Ukrainian state. And we are back on track in terms of delivering real reforms in my country.

As I already informed you, probably in the nearest future—next week or in 10 days—Ukraine is to sign a political part of association agreement with the European Union, and we want to be very clear that Ukraine is and will be a part of the Western world. And our Russian partners have to realize that we are ready to make a new type or to craft a new type of our relationship where Ukraine is a part of the European Union, but Ukraine is a good friend and partner of Russia.

So much will depend on whether Russia wants to have these talks and whether Russia wants to have Ukraine as a partner or as a subordinate. As I already indicated, we will never

surrender, and we will do everything in order to preserve peace, stability, and independence of my country. And we appreciate your personal support, support of your Government, support of the American people to the Ukrainian people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Obama. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much.

Ukraine/Russia's Intervention in Ukraine

Q. [Inaudible]

President Obama. Julie [Julie Pace, Associated Press], we completely reject a referendum patched together in a few weeks with Russian military personnel basically taking over Crimea. We reject its legitimacy. It is contrary to international law. It is contrary to the Ukrainian Constitution.

I know that we've heard from the Russian Federation this notion that these kinds of decisions are often made in other places, and they've even analogized it to Scotland or other situations of that sort. In each of those cases that they've cited, decisions were made by a national government through a long, lengthy, deliberative process. It's not something that happens in a few days, and it's not something that happens with an outside army essentially taking over the region.

As you just heard the Prime Minister indicate, the people of Ukraine recognize historic ties with the people of Russia. The Prime Minister you just heard say, repeat what he's said often, which is, they're prepared to respect all international treaties and obligations that they are signatories to, including Russian basing rights in Crimea. The issue now is whether or not Russia is able to militarily dominate a region of somebody else's country, engineer a slapdash referendum, and ignore not only the Ukrainian Constitution, but a Ukrainian Government that includes parties that are historically in opposition with each other, including, by the way, the party of the previous President.

So we will not recognize, certainly, any referendum that goes forward. My hope is, is that as a consequence of diplomatic efforts over the

next several days, that there will be a rethinking of the process that's been put forward.

We have already put in place the architecture for us to apply financial and economic consequences to actions that are taken. But our strong preference is to resolve this diplomatically. And as you heard the Prime Minister say, this idea that somehow the Ukrainian people are forced to choose between good relations with the West or good relations with Russia, economic ties with the West or economic ties with Russia, is the kind of zero-sum formulation that in the 21st century, with a highly integrated, global economy, doesn't make any sense and is not in the interests of the Ukrainian people.

I actually think, in the end, it's not in the interests of Russia either. Russia should be thinking about how can it work with Ukraine to further strengthen its economic ties and trade and exchanges with Europe. That will make Russia stronger, not weaker. But obviously, Mr. Putin has some different ideas at this point.

We do not know yet what our diplomatic efforts will yield, but we'll keep on pressing. In the meantime, the main message I want to

send is that we are highly supportive of a government in Kiev that is taking on some very tough decisions, is committed to law and order, inclusivity, committed to the rights of all Ukrainian people, and is committed to fair and free elections that should settle, once and for, all any questions that there may be about what's transpired since former President Yanukovich left the country.

And the most important thing to remember is, this is up to the Ukrainian people. It's not up to the United States. It's not up to Russia. It's up to the Ukrainian people to make a decision about how they want to live their lives. That's what all of us should support. And certainly that's the reason why I'm so pleased to have the Prime Minister here today. All right?

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine, who left the country after being removed from office in February by a vote in Parliament; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Joint Statement by Group of Seven Leaders on the Situation in Ukraine *March 12, 2014*

We, the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, call on the Russian Federation to cease all efforts to change the status of Crimea contrary to Ukrainian law and in violation of international law. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately halt actions supporting a referendum on the territory of Crimea regarding its status, in direct violation of the Constitution of Ukraine.

Any such referendum would have no legal effect. Given the lack of adequate preparation and the intimidating presence of Russian troops, it would also be a deeply flawed process which would have no moral force. For all these reasons, we would not recognize the outcome.

Russian annexation of Crimea would be a clear violation of the United Nations Charter; Russia's commitments under the Helsinki Final Act; its obligations to Ukraine under its 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership; the Russia-Ukraine 1997 basing agreement; and its commitments in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. In addition to its impact on the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea could have grave implications for the legal order that protects the unity and sovereignty of all states. Should the Russian Federation take such a step, we will take further action, individually and collectively.

We call on the Russian Federation to de-escalate the conflict in Crimea and other parts of Ukraine immediately, withdraw its forces