

CRIMEA BEHIND THE CURTAIN

GUIDE TO THE OCCUPIED ZONE



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Crimea Behind the Curtain Guide to the Occupied Zone

Kyiv, 2019

This book is made by the Prometheus Security Environment Research Center in dedication to the fifth anniversary of the Russian occupation of Crimea. Packed with facts and illustrations, it is the laconic presentation of historical, political and social problems of Crimea. This book continues the series of compact guides about gray areas of security environment that has started with the book well-known in the expert community *Donbas in Flames. Guide to the Conflict Zone*. It is aimed at experts, journalists, public activists and diplomats working in Ukraine, and it will interest a wide range of readers trying to understand the precursors of the war between Russia and Ukraine and develop their own opinion on the Crimean problem. Published with the assistance of Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and the International Renaissance Foundation, the book contains exclusive materials about the occupation of Crimea compiled by the InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community.



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Introduction **PUSHING THE CURTAIN ASIDE**

Historically, Crimea must have been beyond the reach of the English-language press until the 1853–1856 war between the Western coalition and Russia, also known as the Crimean or Eastern War. The “discovery” of Crimea was a confluence of circumstances: technological advances in the form of railways and telegraph gradually erased the barriers between the Western general public and the theater of war in a faraway exotic land. Journalists of mainstream papers would venture the long trip to see it all with their own eyes and be able to keep the readers updated by sending the news right from the battleground. This is how the big world came to know Crimea, if only through newspapers which often sold rather their impressions rather than actual information to the subscribers.

War correspondents authored a legend of the Eastern War that kept manifesting itself in paintings, poetry, names of towns and household items. Ostensibly, during the siege of Sevastopol, British troops camped in *Balaklava* wore knitted masks to protect themselves from the bitter cold wind. Ever since, the headgear is known under the name of the ancient settlement.

One hundred and sixty years later, armed people in balaclavas arrived in Crimea once again. The soldiers hid their faces not from the wind but rather to prevent recognition. They also tried to keep the world unaware of what they were doing on the peninsula. Crimea found itself behind the dark curtain of occupation. Same as during the Eastern War, English-language media started writing about it. However, as the years go by, one finds it increasingly harder to keep track of the events.

The importance of the Crimean problem is often underestimated. The annexation that happened in Europe undermines fundamental principles the continent has been abiding by after the Hitler and Stalin era. There is still more to it. Crimea has become the epicenter of international tension in the vast Black Sea region. The Kremlin regime is totally obsessed when it comes to the annexed territory. The problem does not seem so bad from afar, because the events in Aleppo and Donetsk appear to be more dangerous than in Sevastopol and Kerch. The quiet is deceptive. The responsible international community has no right to shy away from the Crimea problem behind the curtain of indifference. The new, hybrid Eastern War goes on and Russia is hell-bent on revenge.

Chapter 1. TIGHT KNOT OF CRIMEAN PROBLEMS

ON THE BLACK SEA CROSSROADS

General Information

Crimea is the largest peninsula bordered by the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. With the area of 27,000 sq. km, it is slightly bigger than Sicily. Shaped as an irregular diamond, Crimea stretches out from west to east for over 300 km, and over 200 km from north to south. Crimea is mostly made up of the arid steppe (63%) flanked with low Crimean mountains (maximum height—1545 m) from the south.

The Isthmus of Perekop (8 km wide) connects Crimea to mainland Ukraine. Crimea and mainland are also linked by bridges: over the Syvash—to Kherson Oblast (Ukraine) and over the Kerch Strait—to Russia.

Under the laws of Ukraine, the Crimean Peninsula is divided into three administrative territories. Established on February 12, 1991, the **Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC)** covers the biggest area (current name adopted on September 21, 1994). On March 17, 1995, the city of **Sevastopol** got its special status, thus it is not a part of the ARC (*de facto*, a separate region of Ukraine). Despite being geographically part of the Crimean Peninsula, the northern part



Typical scenery on the South Coast of Crimea Sevastopol, Cape Aia

of the Arabat Spit is administratively part of Henichesk Raion in Kherson Oblast with **Shchaslyvtseve-** and **Strilkove village councils**. They were segregated from the Crimean Oblast and made part of Kherson Oblast on march 3, 1955.

In march 2014, the ARC and Sevastopol were occupied by the Russian Federation. The occupied area covers 4.5% of the territory and approx. 5% of the inhabitants of Ukraine. The occupation government is acting in the name of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation—“the Republic of Crimea” and “the federal city of Sevastopol”. Ukraine still controls the Crimean territories belonging to Kherson Oblast.

Historical Background

To some extent, the geographical position of Crimea protected its local communities from the turbulent tides of history in the Ukrainian steppe north of the Isthmus of Perekop. Even though most of the Crimean states were founded by foreigners coming from the north or overseas, they usually outlived their prior metropolitan countries. For quite a while, Crimea was home to the relics of Scythia, Hellas, Gothia, Byzantium and the Golden Horde. Early in the 20th century, Crimea was one of the last strongholds to make a stand against the Bolsheviks, and after the decline of the USSR it preserved rudiments of the Soviet Army and ideology.

One more curious thing about Crimea is that its rulers were intent on expanding their powers over to the adjacent mainland territories. With their limited lands, meager human and material resources, the Crimean states could not afford isolation, voluntary or otherwise. Tatar khans, Russian governors and the successive Crimean governments in the turbulent years from 1917 to 1920 controlled or sought to establish control over the resource and buffer zone north of the peninsula.

The **Crimean Khanate** with its capital city in Bakhchysarai emerged in mid-15th century. Its ruling dynasty—the Girays—were descendants of Genghis Khan line. The Crimean Khans' rule spread outside the peninsula and into the steppes of *Cisazovia*—from the Dnieper and to the Kuban. The population of Crimean Khanate was most diverse in terms of ethnicity and religion: the descendants of several waves of colonists who have been coming to Crimea since the classical antiquity. Eventually, the majority of Crimean population became Turkic muslims.

This is how the Crimean Tatar ethnicity began to emerge. The Crimean Khanate existed for over three centuries, going through the periods of rise and decline.



Palace of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchysarai. Historical monument

Annexation by the Russian Empire in 1783 put an end to the extremely weakened Crimean Khanate and sovereignty of the Crimean Tatars. **Catherine the Great** played a considerable role in taking over Crimea and her figure still remains symbolic for both the proponents and the opponents of the Russian control over the peninsula.

Being part of the Russian Empire, Crimea underwent a number of profound changes. Simferopol became the administrative center of the newly established Taurida Governorate. Colonization of Crimea by the imperial subjects, mostly Russians and Ukrainians, commenced. The Crimean Tatars were discriminated, which led to their **mass exodus to the Ottoman Empire**.

In the 1800s, the Crimean Tatars accounted for over 80% of the Crimean population, but in 1860s their share went down to approx. 50% and in 1900s they became second largest ethnic group, now outnumbered by Russians. There

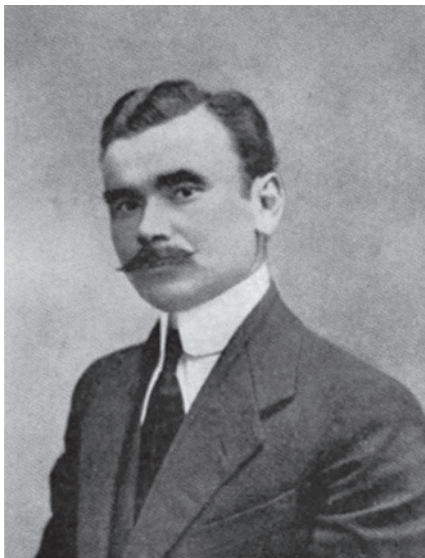
were two big reasons why Crimean Tatars earned negative attitude from the Russian administration. Firstly, after a long history of confrontation between Russia and the Crimean Khanate, Russians developed strong anti-Tatar bias. Secondly, Crimean Tatars were suspected of loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, with which the official St Petersburg remained at odds. Eminent persons of the Russian Empire tended to see the conquered Crimea as the heirloom of the Orthodox Christian Byzantium rather than a Turkic muslim country. This attitude manifested itself, *inter alia*, in revival of the former Greek-Byzantium name *Taurida* (hence the Taurida Governorate) which was used along with *Krym* (Crimea)—the name of Crimean Tatar origin. Contemporary pro-Russian and pro-empire circles still tend to use the name Taurida instead of Krym.



Monument to Catherine the Great in Sevastopol

Sevastopol—the major naval base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet—was founded in 1783. Crimea turned into a place where the empire made preparations for an expansion toward the mediterranean Sea. Russian emperors were hell-bent on taking the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles over from the Ottoman Empire. Although their plans never came true, Sevastopol has become a symbol of military glory in Russian historical memory. Two protracted campaigns spawned a heroic cult: defense against the allied forces of Great Britain, France, Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire in 1854 and 1855 and against Hitler in 1941 and 1942.

After the February Revolution of 1917, the former Russian Empire became the battlefield for numerous political parties and national movements. Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians and Russians representing various political movements vied for power in Crimea. The *Qurultay* (national assembly) of the Crimean Tatars assembled in Bakhchysarai and appointed the national government. The Bolsheviks put an end to any further developments: they defeated the Crimean Tatar forces and asserted their power in Crimea. National governments in Kyiv also addressed the issue of **making Crimea a part of Ukraine**. The Ukrainians initially agreed to the idea of a sovereign Crimea run by the friendly government of Crimean Tatars.



Noman Celebicihan, mufti, the head of the Crimean Tatar national government. Executed by Bolsheviks on February 23, 1918 in Sevastopol

However, the power was seized by the hostile Russians (Bolsheviks and anti-Bolsheviks) and, for reasons of strategy, *the independent Ukrainian state* began aspiring to take Crimea under its control. Ultimately, Bolsheviks won the so-called *Civil War* of 1917–1922. Crimea and Ukraine fell to their power. Instead of *independent democratic republics*, there emerged *Soviet republics* under the control of the Russian Communist Party. Bolsheviks also pondered over the issue which of the two Soviet republics—Russia or Ukraine—should have Crimea. After a short dispute, the Crimean autonomy was established in 1921 as part of the Soviet Russia, later named **the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Crimean ASSR)**.

Crimea was part of the Soviet Russia (Russian SFSR) for **33 years**, after which it was made part of the Soviet Ukraine (Ukrainian SSR). For

the next **37 years**, Crimea was a regular oblast of the Ukrainian SSR. By 2014, when Crimea was invaded by Russia, the authorities of independent Ukraine had been in charge for **25 years**. For the most part of the modern history of Ukraine, Crimea made an administrative part of this country.

The population growth and development of agriculture and industry on the peninsula were boosted by the ties with mainland Ukraine. **North Crimean Canal**, the longest canal in Europe (405 km) was commissioned in 1963 to start water supplies from the Dnieper river to the arid Crimean steppe. By 2014, the canal covered from 80% to 87% of the freshwater needs of the peninsula. Crimea is also dependent on supplies of gas, electric power, food products and other vital resources. About 64% of the Crimean budget outlays were covered by the state budget of Ukraine.

Being a part of the Ukrainian SSR, Crimea retained a special significance to the entire Soviet Union. It became the site of strategic facilities and forces (Black Sea Fleet, infrastructure for the Soviet space program). Thanks to its recreational appeal, the South Coast of Crimea became the most favorite spot for the **state villas** for the highest ranking Soviet officials and top generals of the army and intelligence agencies. Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the

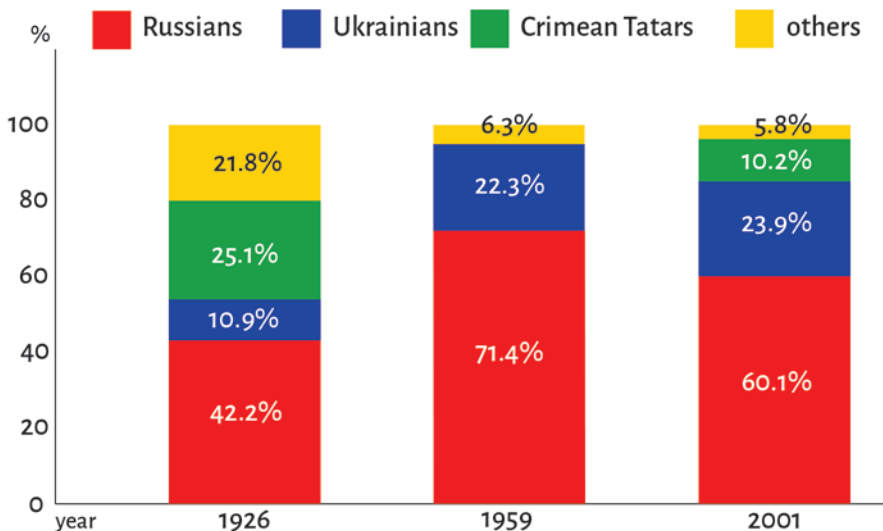
USSR, was held hostage in one of such villas in Foros (a place between Yalta and Sevastopol) during the coup in August 1991.

ORDEALS OF THE REPUBLIC

Crimean Autonomy 1921–1945

Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (name adopted in 1937) was established on October 18, 1921 as part of the Soviet Russia. Following the foundation of the USSR in 1923, the Crimean ASSR became an element of hierarchic administrative and territorial division of the new state. *Crimea was an Autonomous Republic*—a status below *the Soviet (or Union) Republic* but above an *Autonomous Oblast* and a *regular oblast*. Every Autonomous Republic in the USSR was made part of a Union Republic. Union Republics and most of the Autonomous Republics and Autonomous Oblasts in the Soviet Union were of a national variety, i. e. a form of a national self-determination of a *titular* ethnic group. There also used to be *territorial* autonomies created on the basis of the

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF CRIMEAN POPULATION BASED ON CENSUS DATA



regional rather than national specifics (Adjar, Nakhichevan), *multinational* (Turkestan, mountain, Dagestan), and *dual national* Autonomous Republics (Chechen-Ingush, Kabardino-Balkarian, Karachay-Cherkessian).

The type of Crimean autonomy is still an issue of academic and political debate. Crimean Tatars today lean toward the opinion that it was their national autonomy. The opponents claim that Crimea was a territorial autonomy. Then there are the opinions that combine territorial and national interpretation.

The very name of the autonomous region derived from the toponym (*Crimea*) rather than the ethnonym (*Crimean Tatars*) speaks in favor of territorial or multinational autonomy. It should be noted that in the Soviet times some peoples were given new names and it took time for the system of these names to become logical and complete. Back then, Crimean Tatars were often referred to as *the Tatars*—same as the people living mostly in the Volga Region and having their own autonomy. The name of the Crimean national autonomy could not include the word *Tatar*, as it had already been designated to another entity—*Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic*. On the other hand, names of peoples were also changed so as to identify them with the region. This is exactly how the people, formerly known in the Russian Empire as *the Caucasian Tatars*, evolved into the Azerbaijanis. Today, Crimean Tatars tend to refer to themselves by their native name *Qirimlar* (Crimeans) which, however, was not widely used at the time of creation of the Crimean ASSR.

Crimean Tatars were not even a relative majority in the Crimean ASSR. However, in some national Autonomous Republics, native people were a minority as well, e. g. in the Abkhazian, Bashkir, Karelian, and moldavian ASSR.

Even in the national Autonomous Republics where the native people were a minority the establishment of separate *national raions* for the native people was not a widespread practice. A national raion is yet another form of meeting the cultural needs of an ethnic community residing in a “foreign” Republic or Autonomous Oblast. In the 1930s, the Crimean ASSR created six national raions in the areas of compact settlements of Crimean Tatars: Balaklava, Kuibysheve, Bakhchysarai, Yalta, Alushta and Sudak. There were also Jewish and German raions in Crimea, as well as one Ukrainian raion. Dagestan ASSR experienced a similar situation where there were national raions of various peoples, none of which represented the titular ethnic group.

However, certain facts also count in favor of the Crimean ASSR being a national autonomy of Crimean Tatars. Bolsheviks considered the idea of its creation in consultation with the activists of the national movement of Crimean Tatars. members of *milliy Firqa* (the political party of Crimean Tatars) suggested

that Crimea should be given the most extensive autonomy, including the authority to conduct its own foreign policy (this suggestion was rejected). Three Crimean Constitutions (1921, 1929 and 1937) mention Russian and *Tatar* as the languages of the autonomy; the Crimean flag and coat of arms had writings in the Russian and the *Tatar* (i. e. Crimean Tatar) languages. The republican leaders were mostly Crimean Tatars: 5 out of 7 governmental leaders and 4 out of 6 heads of legislative authorities represented this ethnic group. The status of Crimea was reviewed and the Autonomous Republic was downgraded to an ordinary *oblast* after the deportation of Crimean Tatars from the peninsula. Then again, by the date of the decision to abolish the Crimean ASSR, there were no other peoples left in Crimea save for the Russians and Ukrainians.



Flag of the Crimean autonomy in 1921 Crimea Constitution. Upper left corner—abbreviated name of the republic in the Russian and Crimean Tatar (in Arabic script) languages

For Crimean Tatars, the period of Crimean ASSR marked the resurgence of the national self-awareness after almost a hundred and fifty years of oppression in the Russian Empire. It was the time of considerable cultural advancement and emerging group of executives and administrators. However, it all ended in a tragedy. The Stalin's regime launched continuous repressions under the motto of fighting the local "nationalism". National intellectuals of the Crimean Tatars were exterminated almost entirely.

In 1941–1944 Crimea was occupied by the Nazi Germany. The Nazis carried out the Holocaust on the peninsula. But before Wehrmacht reached Perekop, Stalin had ordered to deport the entire German population to the East of the USSR. The Nazis played on the anti-Soviet feelings of the Crimean Tatars and other nations of the USSR alike. Same as in the occupied Europe, *collaboration* was widely practiced in Crimea. After the Nazis were expelled, the Stalin's regime started deporting smaller nations on charges of collaboration. In 1943 and 1944, the Karachays, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingushis, Balkars and Crimean Tatars were uprooted and exiled. Deportations of the peoples went along with the abolishment of their national autonomies.

Over 200,000 Crimean Tatars were exiled, the biggest wave of deportation happened on 18–20 May 1944. On 27–28 June of the same year, they were followed by the Crimean Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks. On 30 June 1945, the Crimean ASSR was downgraded to Crimean Oblast of the Russian SFSR. Liquidation of the republican attributes was accompanied by cleansing of other

ethnic symbols. By 1948, the Crimean authorities renamed about 90% of the Crimean Tatar settlements all over the peninsula.

Transfer of Crimea to Ukraine

Hereinafter, we will be using the Russian word **Soviet** and the Ukrainian word **Rada** in the meaning of “council” or rather “parliament” to refer to some legislatures. “*Supreme Soviet*” will refer to the higher legislative authorities of the USSR, as well as the Union Republics and Autonomous Republics within the USSR. The term “*Verkhovna Rada*” (literally “Supreme Council”) will refer to the parliament of Independent Ukraine. The Supreme Council of the autonomous Crimea was also named “*Verkhovna Rada*”, in accordance with the 1998 Constitution.

The issue of transfer of Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR was raised at the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) held on 25 January 1954 under the chairmanship of Georgy malenkov.

Opponents of territorial integrity of Ukraine are actively cultivating a myth that the peninsula was transferred to Ukraine solely on the reckless whim of **Nikita Khrushchev**. This allegation fits nicely with the common perception of Khrushchev as an impulsive and incompetent “voluntaristic” politician. In fact, at the time of the decisions regarding the transfer of Crimea, Khrushchev did not hold the kind of absolute power he gained later on. The death of Stalin on 5 March 1953 left the Soviet Union without a leader and the power was distributed among his closest associates. In 1954, Khrushchev was the First Secretary of the Communist Party. The Government (Council of ministers) was headed by Georgy malenkov. Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (the legislative authority), Kliment Voroshilov was formally the leader of the USSR. All decisions regarding Crimea were made collectively.

The events that followed are the evidence of consensus of the Soviet leaders on the matter of advantages of Crimea being part of Ukraine. After the ouster of Khrushchev in 1964, a lot of his novelties were canceled but not the decision to transfer Crimean Oblast to Ukraine. Until the very demise of the Soviet Union, the legality and reasoning of such transfer were never questioned.

Quite likely, the matter of transfer of Crimea to Ukraine and drafting of the appropriate decisions commenced way back when Stalin was still alive. For instance, the North Crimean Canal project of supplying water from the Dnieper river to Crimea was approved in 1950.

The documents accompanying the transfer of Crimea emphatically point out the economic aspects and confirm the need to take into account close economic ties between the peninsula and Ukraine.

The transfer of Crimean Oblast involved a number of decisions approved by the governments of the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR, as well as by the general leadership of the USSR. On February 5, 1954, the Russian government approved the decree on feasibility of transfer of Crimean Oblast to Ukraine and asked the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR to consider this issue. On the same day, the Presidium approved the decree on the transfer and submitted its decision to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for approval. On February 13, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR filed with the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR a request to transfer Crimean Oblast. On the all-Union level, decisions on the transfer of Crimean Oblast to Ukraine were made on February 19 (Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR) and April 26 (the Law of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR). The Law of April 26 also makes amendments to the 1936 Constitution of the USSR to the extent applicable to administrative structure of the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR. Finally, in June of the same year, the republican parliaments held their respective sessions and made the appropriate amendments to their Constitutions. References to Crimea were removed from the Russian SFSR Constitution on June 2 and added to the Ukrainian SSR Constitution on June 17.

Therefore, Russia and Ukraine settled the changes to their own territories, acting in line with the Constitution effective at the time of changes and stipulating that no territory of a Union Republic can be changed without the consent of the latter.

Opponents of territorial integrity of Ukraine question the legitimacy of the decision dated February 19, 1954, since the change of the borders of the Union Republics was within the competence of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR rather than its *Presidium*. Some would claim that no one bothered to ask the opinion of population by way of a *referendum* or in any other manner.

These accusations are groundless. According to the Soviet administration practices, in between the sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, its functions were performed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Supreme Soviet did not work continuously but convened from time to time. As a rule, it would convene twice a year for a session, to pass the laws in approval of the *Decrees* adopted by the Presidium. This is exactly how it went with Crimea:

TRANSFER OF CRIMEA 1954

Handover procedure of Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR

INITIATIVE OF COMMUNIST PARTY'S LEADERSHIP

- 25.01.1954
Protocol of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee



DECISIONS ON THE LEVEL OF RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN REPUBLICS

- 05.02.1954
Decree of the Council of Ministers (government) of the Russian SFSR
- 05.02.1954
Decree of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium (parliament) of the Russian SFSR
- 13.02.1954
Decree of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium (parliament) of the Ukrainian SSR



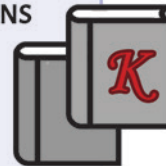
DECISIONS ON THE LEVEL OF SOVIET UNION

- 19.02.1954
Decree of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium of the USSR
- 26.04.1954
Law of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR



CONSTITUTIONAL ENTRENCHMENT OF THE DECISIONS

- 02.06.1954
Law of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian SFSR
- 17.06.1954
Law of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR



JANUARY

FEBRUARY

APRIL

JUNE

the relevant Decree of the Presidium dated 19 February was approved by the Law dated April 26.

Throughout the existence of the Soviet Union (1923–1991), the Union Republics transferred their territories time and again. As a rule, the decision was made by none the other but the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (until 1938—the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR) and no referendums were ever held.

Transfers of Territories between the Union Republics of the USSR

- ◆ 1924, 1926—expansion of the Byelorussian SSR at the cost of the Russian SFSR;
- ◆ 1925—territorial exchange between the Ukrainian SSR, Russian SFSR and Byelorussian SSR, resulting in transfer of vast territories from Ukraine to Russia (Taganrog and Eastern Donbas);
- ◆ 1932—expansion of the Turkmen SSR at the cost of the Russian SFSR;
- ◆ 1936—expansion of the Uzbek SSR at the cost of the Russian SFSR (transfer of Kara-Kalpak ASSR to Uzbekistan);
- ◆ 1943, 1944—expansion of the Georgian SSR at the cost of the Russian SFSR (transfer of the territories of the North Caucasus autonomies liquidated after deportation of the peoples);
- ◆ 1944—expansion of the Russian SFSR at the cost of the Estonian SSR and Latvian SSR (borderline territories that belonged to independent Estonia and Latvia in 1920–1940 are still remaining in the Russian Federation);
- ◆ 1955, 1957—expansion of the Russian SFSR at the cost of the Georgian SSR (return of the territories transferred in 1943–1944);
- ◆ 1956—expansion of the Uzbek SSR and the Russian SFSR at the cost of the Kazakh SSR.

Transfers also happened in the course of formation of most of the new Union Republics—Uzbek SSR (1925), Turkmen SSR (1925), Tajik SSR (1929), Kazakh SSR (1936), Kirghiz SSR (1936), Karelo-Finnish SSR (1940), Moldavian SSR (1940) and Lithuanian SSR (1940), which expanded at the cost of the territories transferred by other Union Republics (Russian SFSR, Uzbek SSR, Ukrainian SSR and Byelorussian SSR).

The Karelo-Finnish SSR was downgraded in 1956 from the Union to Autonomous Republic and it returned to being part of the Russian SFSR.

Decisions on all these territorial changes, same as the decision on the transfer of Crimea in 1954, were adopted by the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and formalized through decrees of the Presidium and the laws of the Central Executive Committee or the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. **Therefore, considering the legal system of the USSR, the decision on the transfer of Crimea was lawful, whereas the transfer procedure was in accordance with common applicable practice.**

Second Crimean Autonomy

The first autonomy of Crimea existed from 1921 to 1945 until it was abolished after deportation of the Crimean Tatars. Crimea ceased to be a republic and turned into a regular oblast. Crimean Oblast was part of the Ukrainian SSR from 1954 to 1991. After the end of the communist era, the matter of Crimean autonomy once again made it to the current agenda.

Second declaration of the autonomous republic in Crimea was a manifestation of the broader tendency in the later period of development of the Soviet Union. The relations between Moscow and the Union Republics, including the *Russian SFSR*, sunk deep into the all-out crisis. Soviet republics were seeking more extensive rights and were driven by the movements pushing for secession from the USSR. The *Parade of Sovereignties* has begun. To prevent the collapse of the state, Communist leaders suggested to make **the New Union Treaty**.

Among other things, there was an idea of increasing the number of parties to the Treaty through upgrading the status of the Autonomous Republics. All or some of the 20 *Autonomous Republics* of the USSR were expected to get equal rights with the 15 *Union Republics*. This kind of the status upgrade was expected to somehow cement the hold over the Union Republics where any such Autonomous Republics made part of. In this manner, Moscow intended to counterbalance the drive of the Union Republics toward sovereignty by using their own weapon. In the event of a secession of a Union Republic, the Autonomous Republic would be able to decide whether or not it wanted to remain part of the Union.

In anticipation of the signing of the New Union Treaty, certain regions expressed the desire to have their status upgraded. Some of them were *Autonomous Oblasts* (South Ossetia), others had no status of autonomy at all (Transnistria, Gagauzia, Crimea). Leaders of the older and the new Autonomous Republics were usually opposed to the movements seeking secession of the Union Republics from the USSR.



Flag and Coat of Arms of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea adopted in September 1992. Symbols of the second republic do not single out the Crimean Tatars. Instead, they emphasize the ancient heritage and unity of the peoples inhabiting the peninsula. Russian administration of Crimea is still using these same symbols

The Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopted the **Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine** on July 16, 1990—after the adoption of similar declaration by the Congress of the People’s Deputies of the Russian SFSR (June 12, 1990). Declaration of State Sovereignty did not mean a declaration of independence and secession from the Soviet Union, however it was an important step toward independence. movement for upgrade of the Crimean Oblast to an Autonomous Republic should have been a warning to the proponents of independent Ukraine and was further fueled by the phobias of some Russian inhabitants of the peninsula scared of *the Ukrainian nationalism*.

The history of the new Crimean autonomy started with the **all-Crimea Referendum of January 20, 1991**.

The ballot had a single question, “*Are you in favor of restoring of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as the subject of the Soviet Union and Participant of the Union Treaty?*” and 93.3% of voters said “Aye”. The wording of the question was a clear indication of the goal to restore autonomy: the ability to sign the Union Treaty on equal terms with Ukraine and be independent from Kyiv thereafter. Acquisition of autonomy through the “restoration” of the Crimean ASSR was, in fact, a very secondary matter and the profound difference between the new and the prior autonomy is the proof of this assumption.

The primary goal of the 1921–1945 autonomy was to serve the national aspirations of the Crimean Tatars. **The initiative to “restore” the autonomy in 1991 originally came from the pro-Russian (and pro-communist) majority in the Crimean Oblast Council.** The referendum took place way before the campaign for the return of the exiled Crimean Tatars was over. The referendum immediately sparked a conflict between its organizers and the national movement of

Crimean Tatars. Leaders of the Crimean Tatars called their people to boycott the poll.

In response to the poll results, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR on February 12, 1991 recognized the upgrade of Crimean Oblast to the Crimean ASSR with a reservation that the restored autonomy remains part of Ukraine. Lenient attitude of the official Kyiv to the establishment of *de facto Russian autonomy* in Crimea spawned quite a number of problems in the years to come. However, this compromise served to prevent an *armed conflict of a separatist kind* that sparkled in moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

The signing of the New Union Treaty was disrupted by the *August 1991 coup* in moscow, whereas the failed attempt of the *State Committee on the State of Emergency* to seize power only accelerated the collapse of the USSR. On August 24, 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopted the **Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine**. Decision of the parliament was approved by 90.3% of votes at the All-Ukrainian Referendum on December 1, 1991.

In Crimea, the idea of independent Ukraine was supported by 54.2% of voters. On the same day, Ukraine elected its President. The majority of Crimean voters supported Leonid Kravchuk who won the election. On December 8, 1991, leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the agreement to establish the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (the so-called *Belovezha Accords*) and declared the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The goals of pro-Russian forces in Crimea changed under the new circumstances. Crimean ASSR chose a new name without any mention of socialism and Soviet power—the **Republic of Crimea**. The Supreme Council of Crimea set about secession from Ukraine and building an independent state. On may 5, 1992, the Crimean parliament adopted the Decree on the Act of Declaration of the State Independence of the Republic of Crimea, ostensibly effective from the date of approval on the future All-Crimea Referendum. Formerly, the Crimean powers-that-be intended to build the relationship with Kyiv on the basis of a *de facto* confederation. On **may 6**, the day after the Act, the Crimean parliament adopted the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea. Under this document, Crimea was to be treated as part of Ukraine and would build the relationship with the latter on the basis of a treaty. Crimean authorities were to exercise all the powers within the republic, excepting however the powers it would delegate to Ukraine of its own free will.

In fact, preparations for annexation of Crimea have been going on since 1991. my husband's father is one of the key figures who prepared the annexation of Crimea. Before that, they had gathered a group of associates who wanted Crimea to be part of Russia. There were talks and propaganda, and there were actions (e. g. motor rallies with Russian flags on weekends). We never took them seriously, though.

Interview with a physician from Crimea

Parliament of Ukraine abolished the unconstitutional decisions of the Crimean authorities. For open confrontation with Kyiv, the Supreme Council of Crimea lacked both the internal and the external support. Within the republic, a number of legislators at diverse levels declared the need for unconditional compliance with the laws of Ukraine and the laws of Crimea that are consistent with the Constitution and the laws of Ukraine. According to mykola Savchenko, author of a book about the division of the Black Sea Fleet, Yevpatoria and Feodosia city councilors, as well as members of Krasnoperekopsk, Dzhankoi and Chornomorske Raion councils resolved to found Tauric Oblast belonging to Ukraine, if proponents of independent Crimea won. *Curiously enough, one of the active proponents of the territorial integrity of Ukraine was none other but Vadym Kolesnichenko, member of the Supreme Council of Crimea, later to become a pro-Russian politician and participant of events accompanying the occupation of Crimea in 2014.*

Moscow did not support the Crimean separatists, because it wanted to keep the whole Ukraine within its sphere of influence, focusing rather on the issue of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea. Russian politicians offered some harsh statements but would go no further. The most substantial of such statements was the Decree of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation dated may 21, 1992 *On Legal Assessment of Decisions of the Supreme Bodies of State Authority of the Russian SFSR on the Change of Status of Crimea made in 1954*. Russian lawmakers called the **decision of their predecessors on the transfer of Crimean Oblast to Ukraine void from the date of its adoption**. The day after, however, the Russian parliament specifically pointed out that it had no intention of presenting territorial claims to Ukraine. It should be noted that the Russian Supreme Council did not act in sync with the presidential office and had no considerable influence on foreign policy decisions in Russia.

The Supreme Council of Crimea backed off and revoked its “Act of Independence”. On September 25, 1992, *amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea formalized the distribution of powers between the state authorities of Crimea and Ukraine suggested by Kyiv.*

The next flare-up between Simferopol and Kyiv happened in 1994 on the day after the Supreme Council of Crimea adopted a law establishing the position of *the President of the Republic of Crimea*. **Yuriy meshkov**, a pro-Russian politician, won the race for the President’s office. He revived the separatist agenda. meshkov promised to promote the secession of Crimea from Ukraine by way of an All-Crimean Referendum. **On may 20, 1994, the Supreme Council of Crimea revived the Constitution adopted on may 6, 1992.** This brought on “the war of laws” between the parliaments of Crimea and Ukraine.

Despite the influential sympathizers in Russia, meshkov and his plans fell through in the end. For one thing, the support meshkov had in moscow proved to be not so unconditional after all. The beginning of his term in office fell on the rotation of power in Kyiv. Presidential election was coming and the *Kremlin placed their bets on Leonid Kuchma*, ostensibly a more pro-Russian politician than Leonid Kravchuk. Kuchma won and moscow was in no hurry to play the Crimean card.

Secondly, meshkov showed remarkably poor organizational skills and managed to alienate his own team in a very short time. The Crimean President tried to suspend the functioning of the Supreme Council of Crimea headed by Sergey Tsekov. Consequently, “the war of decrees” started within the Crimean authorities. Pro-Russian Crimean politicians *de facto* helped Kyiv to remove meshkov from power. *Curiously enough, Sergey Aksyonov, the head of the Russian occupation administration of Crimea appointed in 2014, used to be Tsekov’s colleague in the Russian Unity party.*

Thirdly, Kyiv took decisive actions against meshkov in early 1995 when *Russia was focused on the First Chechen War* and had no way of interfering with the Crimean mess. **On 17 March 1995, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine canceled the 1992 Crimean Constitution and abolished the position of the President of Crimea.** Having no support, meshkov fled to Russia. Earlier still, on September 21, 1994, the Ukrainian parliament voted on amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine, approving, *inter alia*, the new name of the autonomy—**the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (the ARC).**

The issue of Crimean Constitution was considered over the next years. Draft Constitution adopted by Simferopol in 1995 was approved by the Ukrainian parliament with substantial amendments. The issue remained pending until the

adoption of the new Constitution of Ukraine on June 28, 1996—the instrument which the Crimean Constitution was to be in line with. The final **Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea** was adopted by the Crimean parliament on **October 21, 1998** and approved by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on December 23, of the same year.

This Constitution was grumbled at for allegedly only promulgating the trappings of the autonomy while diluting its essence. Pro-Russian forces campaigned for the renewal of the 1992 Constitution and even tried to get the relevant ruling through the Ukrainian court system. On March 16, 2014, participants of the unlawful “referendum” had two options to choose from: “*reunification of Crimea with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation*” or “*the renewal of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea*” (without clarification which of the two editions was suggested—the one dated May 6 or the one of September 25). Predictably enough, the separatists and the Russian occupation administration reverted to the name “Republic of Crimea”.

CRIMEAN TATAR ISSUE

Thorny Road Home

Crimean Tatars were among the peoples deported entirely by the Stalin’s regime during the World War 2. The deportation of Crimean Tatars commenced on **May 18, 1944** and continued through May 20. Over 200,000 Crimean Tatars found themselves exiled and under arrest. For over 40 years the indigenous people of Crimea could not return to the land of their ancestors.

The deportation was effected by decision of the state legislative and executive authorities, it was purely extrajudicial, and in the spirit of the perverse practice of *collective responsibility* which was widely applied in the USSR. Like most of the deported peoples, Crimean Tatars were accused of *collaboration* during the Nazi occupation and of *mass desertion* from the Red Army during the defense of Crimea in 1941.

The topic of “treason” of Crimean Tatars as justification of the deportation are still widely popular with the Russian public and present in academic works and propaganda. Meanwhile, objective historical studies refute even the formal aspect of the charges brought against the Crimean Tatars. According to the estimates of Sergii Gromenko, the official number of deserters (20,000) is greatly overestimated. Despite the long period of Nazi occupation, the number of Crimean Tatars serving in the Red Army during the war by and large



The Deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944, a painting by contemporary artist Rustem Eminov

exceeded the number of their fellow countrymen serving in the armed units affiliated to the Third Reich.

Desertion and collaboration were common for just about every nationality all over the USSR and, Crimea was in no way exceptional. Wholesale accusations hid the real motives for arbitrary persecution of some peoples, but not the others, such as political maneuvering within the CPSU establishment going well back to the prewar times, geopolitical considerations, personal biases of Stalin and top officials of the Soviet Union.

Tens of thousands died in 1944 and 1945 from inhuman transportation conditions and hardship in exile. The organized Crimean Tatar movement now insists that the **deportation was an act of genocide**. This opinion is shared by a number of academics, social and political activists outside of the Crimean Tatar circles. On November 12, 2016, the Ukrainian parliament adopted the *Resolution on Recognition of Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People*. meanwhile, the Russian leaders avoid this kind of qualification. Every year on may 18, the

Crimean Tatars commemorate victims of deportation by holding rallies and organizing the commemorative events.

As a native Crimean Tatar who has lost my motherland (and these are not just high words), I think my folk, same as other nations surviving the genocide, is a guinea pig in some kind of a weird ideological experiment. We were exiled in 1944. Before that, there had been forced migrations. They send us off to some foreign land and make the entire generation become used to this land. And then we get a chance to go back to our homeland. And we have to start everything from scratch—again, same as our grandfathers and parents. This is traumatic for the psyche. Now is the year of 2014, and everything starts all over.

Fragment of interview with Lilia muslimova

In 1944, most of the Crimean Tatars found themselves in Uzbek SSR (78%). The rest were spread all over the hinterland of Russia and the Central Asian republics. The deported people were confined to special settlements which no one could leave without permit. After the death of Stalin and condemnation of certain aspects of his policy, the new Soviet leaders started revision of the decisions concerning the deported people. Special settlements were abolished but no one was allowed to return to former places of residence.

In 1957, most of the deported nations were allowed to return to their historical homelands. Simultaneously, their national Autonomous Oblasts and Republics were restored and established anew. However, Crimean Tatars happened to be among the peoples who were denied *the right to return and to restore their autonomy*. This fostered the creation of a powerful national movement of Crimean Tatars in exile. Its activists held public awareness campaigns, merging into informal organizations, drafted petitions to the authorities, which gathered tens of thousands of signatures of their fellow countrymen. In a police state of the post-Stalin USSR, Crimean Tatars dared to carry put up mass political resistance. To draw attention to the problems of their nation, some of the activists resorted to desperate measures. In June 1978, **musa mamut** set himself on fire in protest against the abuse of the rights of Crimean Tatars.

Years of struggle for civil rights formed the **traditions of self-organization and mass non-violent resistance**, which proved useful after the Crimean Tatars returned to Crimea. Cooperation with Ukrainian dissidents (especially General Petro Hryhorenko) was yet another valuable experience. The **Ukrainian national-democratic forces and the Crimean Tatar movement remained strong allies** after the declaration of independence by Ukraine in 1991. Crimean Tatars remained consistently pro-Ukrainian at the times when relations between Ukraine and Russia deteriorated over the issues of Crimea.

In the 1960s, the policy denying the Crimean Tatars right to return to Crimea began to slacken, and by the end of the 1980s all restrictions were lifted. mass repatriation began. According to the 1989 census, approx. 38,000 of Crimean Tatars lived in Crimea, and in 1991, their population exceeded 113,000. According to the latest All-Ukraine Census (2001), there were **235,000 Crimean Tatars—10.2% of the entire population of the peninsula**.

The return of the deported people was spontaneous, so upon arrival many had problems with settlement and conflicts with local residents were not infrequent. Abandoned in 1944, their houses have long been occupied by the new inhabitants. The Slavic, Russian-speaking majority was awash with phobias and stereotypes about Crimean Tatars being “uncivilized” and “aggressive muslims”. However, fears of a full-blown *ethnic and political conflict* in Crimea, the kind that happened in Fergana Valley, the Caucasus or Yugoslavia, never materialized. Crimean Tatars stuck to non-violent methods of promoting their rights.

The Qurultay–Mejlis System

Upon the return to their historical homeland, Crimean Tatars witnessed the pro-Russian autonomy emerging in Crimea, whose organizers made no secret of their wish to stay in a state governed from moscow. In order to protect their rights, the Crimean Tatar movement initiated the establishment of its representative structures—the Qurultay and the mejlis.

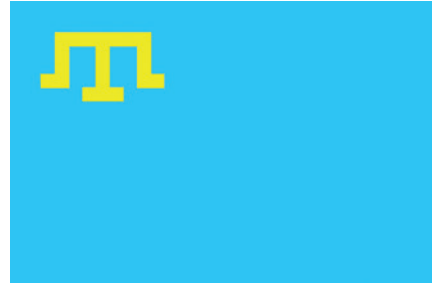
The tradition of Crimean Tatar national assembly goes back to the **I Qurultay** that convened in Bakhchysarai on December 9, 1917. All Crimean Tatars participated in the election of the delegates, so the Qurultay was competent to handle matters of the future of Crimean Tatars in the revolutionary Russia. The assembly, including the breaks, continued for 18 days and adopted a number of important (and rather democratic for that time) decrees. On the last day of the assembly, its delegates adopted *Fundamental Laws of the Crimean Tatars* (also known in historiography as the Constitution), appointed the national government (Directorate), and declared the Qurultay to be provisional parliament.

The historians keep disputing whether the *Crimean Democratic Republic (Crimean People's Republic)* mentioned in the laws was ever established back then. According to historian Andriy Ivanets, declaration of the republic was more of an act of initiation of the process rather than the actual establishment of the republic.

The II Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar People took place from June 26 to June 30, 1991. Its 255 delegates came from Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia and Georgia. The Qurultay adopted a number of fundamental documents, including the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Crimean Tatars, and several appeals (to residents of Crimea, the Crimean Tatar people, the United Nations, President of the USSR, etc.). The delegates elected the members of permanent representative body—Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People headed by **mustafa Dzhemilev**.

There were six Qurultays all in all—four of which were held in the independent Ukraine. These adopted decisions on the most important issues of political, social, economic and cultural life of the Crimean Tatars, identifying the key targets and forms of activity of the mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People. Under the new version of the Regulations adopted by the third session of the IV Qurultay on September 12, 2004, the mejlis shall convene the Qurultay at least once every two and a half years. The last, extraordinary session of the VI Qurultay took place on March 20, 2014 when the Russian occupation was complete. Ever since, Qurultay was unable to convene any sessions or elections in Crimea. The term of the latest Qurultay expired in 2018 and on November 12, 2018 the Qurultay delegates convened a conference in Kyiv to outline the framework of further functioning of the representative bodies.

Mejlis of Crimean Tatar People is a permanent executive body that functions between sessions of the Qurultay as the principal competent *representative body of the indigenous people*. mejlis comprises 33 members who elect the Presidium, whereas delegates of the Qurultay elect the Chairman of mejlis and the Audit Commission. Simferopol was the seat of mejlis. The system of national self-government bodies was forming all over Crimea step by step—*regional and local mejlises* which would implement decisions of the Qurultay and mejlis, as well as play an important role in day-to-day life of the Crimean Tatars. Before



Crimean Tatar national flag with tamga (family emblem) of the Crimean Khans

the occupation, there were 230 local and regional mejlises all over Crimea, comprising approx. 2,500 members.

In November 2013, **Refat Chubarov** was elected to the position of the Chairman of mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People. In July 2014, the occupation administration did not let Chubarov in Crimea and soon thereafter commenced a criminal case against him. **Since April 2016, mejlis is officially banned from any activities in Crimea and in the Russian Federation.** The effective period of the latest mejlis was to expire in 2017. However, due to the occupation and the ban of activities in Crimea, mejlis announced the emergency mode of operation for the self-government bodies. Kyiv was chosen as the new seat of mejlis. Local mejlises are particularly strong in the parts of Kherson Oblast bordering with Crimea.

On April 21, 2014, a group of about 40 “little green men” arrived at the mejlis building in Simferopol. At the time, there were only women inside. Before the annexation, there were two flags on the building—the Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar. I saw these people put up a ladder to take the flag down. I started talking to them, told them to keep their hands off the Ukrainian flag. In return, I heard only expletives. Then they got quite physical. They twisted our arms and took away our phones. A young passer-by saw them attack the women and decided to come to our defense. They knocked him off his feet, face down, and tried to twist his arms. They took down the Ukrainian flag and literally spat on it. Then they put up their own flag.

Fragment of interview with Lilia muslimova

Over the years of its activities in Crimea under the Ukrainian jurisdiction (1991–2014), mejlis had its ups and downs. Absence of the official registration was a serious problem in relationship between mejlis and the authorities, because the laws made no provisions for such form of self-organization and self-government. Legal uncertainty allowed for constant accusations of establishment of “unlawful parallel authorities” and calls to ban these organizations

of Crimean Tatars. Pro-Russian parties and movements showed remarkable zeal in this matter.

However, aware of its real political weight, central, republican and local authorities would consult and cooperate with mejlis. Starting from 1998, the leaders of mejlis have been members of the Ukrainian parliament, representing different political parties. During the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, there was an attempt to legalize mejlis by making its members join *the Council of Representatives of the Crimean Tatar People*—deliberative and advisory body under the auspices of the President of Ukraine.

On the whole, the relationships between mejlis and the official Kyiv were fairly uneasy. On the one hand, the Crimean Tatars supported the principle of territorial integrity of Ukraine, as opposed to pro-Russian political groups. On the other hand, mejlis insisted on recognition of the Crimean Tatars as the **indigenous people** and actively advocated for the **national autonomy of Crimean Tatars**. Neither the leaders of Ukraine, nor the considerable part of the Ukrainian political elite were ready for this. Consistently pro-Western stance of mejlis was of great importance as it coincided with the political course of some Presidents and was contrary to priorities of the others.

The attitude of the official Kyiv towards mejlis grew considerably warmer after the downfall of the Yanukovich regime and victory of the democratic forces. On March 20, 2014, the Ukrainian parliament in its Decree *recognized the Qurultay as the supreme representative body of the Crimean Tatar people, and mejlis as its executive body*. In response to the ban of mejlis by the Russian administration, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted on October 5, 2016 an address to the European Parliament, NATO, PACE, OSCE and national parliaments, calling on them to condemn and reject the unlawful decision.

Indigenous People and National Autonomy

The Crimean Tatar People's national movement in Ukraine remains committed to promoting a legal framework for the status of indigenous people and their self-determination in the form of a national and territorial autonomy in Crimea.

This consistent drive for an autonomy may stem from a long period of being a state nation in the past, strong nationhood instinct and amazing ability of Crimean Tatars to self-organize. However, there may be a more obvious explanation: an extremely *traumatic historical experience* of this nation in the 19th-20th centuries. Discrimination and depopulation under the Russian Empire, repressions and deportations under the Soviet Union—the

Crimean Tatars perceive these tragic events as a consequence of the absence of their own national statehood.

According to the 2011 census, Crimean Tatars make only **12% of the ARC population**. In terms of the entire peninsula, this figure gets even smaller due to the negligibly small Crimean Tatar community in Sevastopol. Since this nation has neither absolute nor relative majority in Crimea (same as in any administrative region of ARC), the principles of a *majority-based democracy* provide no tools for implementation of the idea of a national autonomy.

With this in mind, the national movement of Crimean Tatars chose the opportunities provided by the **international law in the sphere of protection of indigenous peoples**. According to Nataliya Belitser who researches the Crimean Tatars issue, the decisive factor is the difference between the terms “*indigenous people*” and “*national minority*”. The indigenous people have no ethnically related state beyond the country of residence. The national minority, on the contrary, represents part of the people who have already realized their right for national self-determination in another state. Quantitative superiority or length of residence within a territory are of no importance for the status of indigenous people. That is why neither the Russian majority in Crimea, nor the Greeks who came to the peninsula way back in the ancient times shall be entitled to the indigenous people status, because sovereign Russian and Greek states exist outside of Crimea. Indigenous people of Crimea are the Crimean Tatars together with a handful of Crimean Karaites and Krymchaks, because they have formed into ethnic groups in Crimea and have no other motherland outside of the peninsula.

International organizations (UN, ILO, OSCE) generally recognize the need for stronger protection of the indigenous people, because the latter are cut off the benefits enjoyed by the national minorities which receive aid from the countries of their origin or the *kin-states*. Among the exclusive rights of indigenous people, one shall also recognize the right for internal self-determination and self-government. Nataliya Belitser and other experts point out that the right for self-determination on the peninsula belongs to the indigenous people rather than the ethnic Russian majority or the so-called *multinational Crimean people* in whose name the Russian occupants invaded the peninsula in February and March 2014.

This approach allows the mejlis to substantiate the feasibility and the need of ARC transformation into the **Crimean Tatar National Autonomy**. Guaranteed participation of Crimean Tatars in the administration of affairs of the autonomy can be secured through establishment of the authorities on the



Crimean Tatars at a rally on Remembrance Day for the victims of the Crimean Tatar genocide. Simferopol, may 18, 2013

basis of a *consensus democracy*, introduction of national quotas and the right of the indigenous people to veto.

The prospect of creation of the Crimean Tatar Autonomy is one of the most controversial issues. According to the poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in conjunction with the Razumkov Center for Economic and Political Studies on August 16–22, 2018, about 50% of the Ukrainian citizens are in favor of the creation of the Crimean Tatar Autonomy. Approx. 28% of the respondents are opposed to the idea. While the pro-Russian respondents flat out reject any such possibility, the active part of the Ukrainian society appears to be split on this issue.

Some Ukrainians are opposed to granting of any clear ethnic and political substance to the Crimean Autonomy, fearing a new round of *separatism*, i. e. the intention to secede from Ukraine and create a sovereign Crimean Tatar state on the peninsula. These reservations play into the hands of proponents

of turning the ARC into a regular Ukrainian oblast devoid of any special status whatsoever, just like in 1954–1991. Constitutional system of the future national autonomy is yet another issue of concern for the inhabitants of Crimea other than Crimean Tatars. Some respondents disagree with legalization of preferences to Crimean Tatars and introduction of the *affirmative action principle* into the sphere of governance.

Indeed, some people in Crimea are still willing to take the risks, speaking openly about their opinions, disagreeing with the authorities and meeting Western journalists. This is their conscious choice. Most of such people are found among the Crimean Tatars. On the other hand, this movement is becoming increasingly Islamized. If Russia continues its hard-line policy toward the Crimean Tatars, there is a risk of radicalization of this movement.

Fragments of interview with a Western journalist who works from time to time in Crimea

Proponents of the national autonomy in Crimea deny the risk of the Crimean Tatar separatism in Ukraine. They appeal to international law which distinguishes the *internal* (implemented within framework of an existing independent state) from the external self-determination. International documents dealing with the rights of indigenous people emphatically point out that the right for self-determination does not sanction or encourage “*any action aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of any other State or country*”.

Pragmatically, Ukraine would actually benefit from enforcement of the national autonomy of indigenous people by enlisting additional support from the international community on the matter of de-occupation of Crimea. The Crimean Tatar issue stays within the focus of the major international organizations and influential states. The problem of discrimination and persecution of Crimean Tatars by the Russian occupation administration is closely monitored by the UN General Assembly, OSCE, Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe, European Union, etc. Russian activities in the occupied Crimea are in blatant violation of the principles of international laws, specifically the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)**. Pursuant to Article 30,

“Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples... States shall undertake effective consultations with the indigenous peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, prior to using their lands or territories for military activities”. Therefore, without the consent of mejlis, Russia had no right to conduct the armed seizure of Crimea and further militarization of the occupied peninsula.

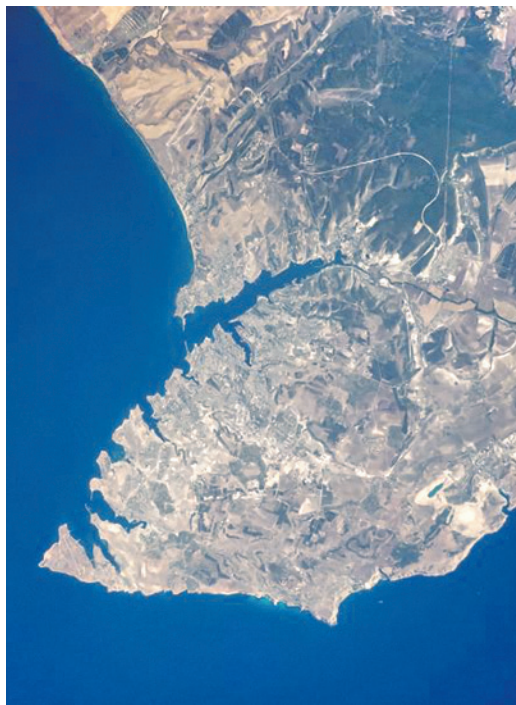
After 2014, the matter of granting the status of indigenous people to the Crimean Tatars and transformation of the ARC into a national autonomy has been seriously considered in the context of the Ukrainian lawmaking and projected constitutional amendments. A number of draft laws are already filed to the Ukrainian parliament for consideration.

SEVASTOPOL IS NO CRIMEA?

Stronghold of the Black Sea

Simferopol has, for the most part, been the administrative center of Crimea since late 18th century. However, coastal Sevastopol—the main base of the Black Sea Fleet—had special rights: its importance extended far beyond the strictly Crimean context.

Sevastopol is now *the biggest (in terms of the area and population) city on the Crimean peninsula*. It lies on the shores of the long Sevastopol Bay and its numerous branches. Sevastopol has been expanding both through urban development and the administrative absorbing the surrounding rural settlements. Urban development has been steadily spreading all over Heracleian Peninsula that is separated from the rest of Crimea by Sevastopol Bay and Balaklava Bay.



Heracleian Peninsula

Sevastopol went through its first considerable administrative expansion in 1939. Back then, the city spread over the areas north of Sevastopol Bay acquiring an extensive shoreline and Kacha settlement. The city grew much bigger after the merger with Balaklava Raion of Crimean Oblast (1957). Consolidation of Balaklava is usually attributed with the construction of a secret nuclear facility inside the mountain of Tavros—a factory, a nuclear arsenal and a submarine base. The Cold War museum was built in the abandoned tunnels of the facility in 2000s. After the annexation of Crimea, there have been reports about Russia considering restoration of the underground military base.

After all these expansions, the area within jurisdiction of Sevastopol authorities has grown to **1,079 sq. km**, which makes it bigger than Kyiv. Therefore, Sevastopol could be considered the biggest city of Ukraine. However, its area is mostly occupied by mountains, vineyards and bays. Sevastopol is divided into four administrative districts, including 30 villages and settlements and a town (Inkerman).

Back in the Soviet times, Sevastopol was part of Crimean ASSR and Crimean Oblast. Same as many other strategically important settlements in the USSR, it was a *restricted-access city* for a long time. Foreigners and Soviet citizens could come here from other towns and cities only with special permit papers. Restricted entry and stay in Sevastopol were finally abolished only in December 1995. After the occupation of Crimea in 2014, Russian public has been disputing about whether or not Sevastopol should have its status of a restricted-access city restored.

Lots of military men and people connected with military-industrial complex, the restricted-access city status and propaganda praising the heroic image of Sevastopol helped shape a special mentality in its inhabitants. Many residents of Sevastopol tend to be militaristic, stricken by nostalgia after the USSR and prone to Russian national chauvinism. Sevastopol is one of the top cities of Ukraine in terms of a multitude of military history memorials. Education, mass media, public spaces—everything reminded the visitors and inhabitants of Sevastopol—this is the *Hero City*. This Soviet status was once assigned to 12 cities and one fortress in the USSR for outstanding performance during World War 2.

Unlike the rest of Crimea, Sevastopol had a lot narrower space for intercultural dialog. For example, according to the 2001 census, Crimean Tatars made up 12% of total population in Crimea. In Sevastopol their presence was hardly around 0.5%. (*It should be noted, though, that Sevastopol largely consists of the territory of former Balaklava Raion, Kuibysheve Raion and Bakhchysarai Raion of the Crimean ASSR which, until the 1944 deportation, had the status of national Crimean Tatar Raions*). Residents of Sevastopol are known for localism and being remarkable xenophobia toward “outsiders”. It is a curious phenomenon, as many of them



Tavros mountain with the the entrance to the underground submarine base. Balaklava, modern photo

came to Sevastopol from other places. According to the 2011 census, only 41.4% of Sevastopol residents were born in this city; 24.5% were born in other parts of Ukraine, mostly Crimea; and 26.9% came from various regions of Russia.

Moscow authorities would send money via the city council head, to fund a variety of Russian-themed events (“A Word in Russian”, “Writing in Russian”), concerts of Russian pop stars... A branch of moscow State University opened in the city contributed heavily to promotion of all things Russian here. The Admiral Lazarev Library turned into a nest of separatists where retired Russian and Soviet army officers would gather together. Years later, these same retired officers would organize blockades of our Ukrainian military bases.

Fragments of interview with an anonymous social activist from Sevastopol

The Issue of Status

Disputes about the status and state affiliation of Sevastopol in 1990 caused even stronger tensions than the issue of Crimean autonomy. It was all due to the role of this city as the main base of the Black Sea Fleet of the former USSR.

In justification of the claim over Sevastopol, Russian policymakers launched a message that *Sevastopol was not transferred to Ukraine together with Crimean Oblast* in 1954 and, therefore, it remained part of the Russian Federation all that time. This allegation was based on the administrative decisions made in 1948, which, in the opinion of these policymakers, meant that Sevastopol had been separated from the rest of Crimean Oblast. For example, by Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian SFSR dated **October 28, 1948—On making Sevastopol an Independent Administrative and Economic Center**, Sevastopol was categorized as the “city of republican subordination”.

In reality, nothing in the 1948 Decree implied establishment of an independent administrative territory. The terms “*independent administrative and economic center*” and “*the city of republican subordination*” were never clearly defined in applicable laws of the USSR. Same as before, Sevastopol remained part of Crimean Oblast, and there is plentiful evidence to that effect. For one thing, Sevastopol authorities and the City Committee of the Communist Party remained subordinate to the relevant Crimean Oblast structures. Residents of Sevastopol elected deputies to Crimean Oblast Council. Only the funding principle changed: Sevastopol was funded directly from the republican budget. Therefore, Sevastopol was not specifically mentioned in the 1954 decisions, since it was transferred to Ukraine along with other towns of Crimea.

Affiliation of Sevastopol to Ukraine after 1954 is specifically defined by the **1978 Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR**. This Constitution clearly mentions *Kyiv* and *Sevastopol* as the cities of republican subordination. meanwhile, the 1978 Constitution of the Russian SFSR mentions *Moscow* and *Leningrad* as the cities of republican subordination.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, affiliation of Sevastopol to Ukraine was a matter-of-course. Residents of the city took part in All-Ukrainian Referendum of December 1, 1991 with 57% of Sevastopol residents voting in favor of independence of Ukraine. On the same day they also participated in the first presidential elections of Ukraine. The Constitution of the Republic of Crimea, versions dated May 6 and September 25, 1992, recognize Sevastopol as an *integral part of Crimea*.

Attempts to question the affiliation of Sevastopol to Ukraine with a reference to the 1948 decisions commenced after the initiative to declare independence

of Crimea fell through. In December 1992, the status of the city was considered by the 7th Congress of the People's Deputies of the Russian Federation. The Congress took into consideration the arguments in favor of Sevastopol belonging to Russia and instructed the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation to draft the appropriate decision. The decree **"On the Status of Sevastopol"** was adopted by the Russian parliament on **July 9, 1993**. Along with confirming the "Russian federal status" of Sevastopol, the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation instructed the Russian government to negotiate with the Ukrainian side.

By the date of decisions concerning Sevastopol, the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation were already in conflict with the President Boris Yeltsin. (The confrontation peaked in October 1993 when Yeltsin ordered special-purpose units and the army to attack the Russian parliament) Decisions of the Russian parliament concerning Sevastopol went contrary to the commitment of Yeltsin and the Russian government to negotiate with Ukraine the matter of the Black Sea Fleet, so the Decree was never implemented. Ukraine condemned the decision of the Russian parliament. Neither the Supreme Council of Crimea nor Sevastopol City Council supported the Russian members of parliament.

On July 20, 1993, Ukraine contested the Decree at the meeting of the *UN Security Council*. Yuli Vorontsov, the Russian Representative to UN, communicated the words of President Yeltsin during the Security Council meeting, saying he *was ashamed* of the decision made by the Russian parliament. The UN Security Council in its final statement confirmed its commitment to upholding the territorial integrity of Ukraine and declared the decision of the Russian parliament null and void. Notably enough, in 2014, the UN Security Council was unable to make a single resolution on the matter of occupation of Crimea due to the right of the Russian representative to veto.

Activities of the Russian MPs resonated with Crimea. On August 23, 1994, Sevastopol City Council adopted a decision about the Russian legal status of the city. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine canceled this decision as unconstitutional.

After Yeltsin prevailed over the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation and its followers, the Russian parliament was reorganized. The new Russian Constitution adopted on December 12, 1993 had no mention of Sevastopol. However, the Russian parliament kept on trying to raise the issue of the state affiliation of the city. By the end of 1996, both houses of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation made statements on this matter, but once again the MPs could not win support from the executive authority. On December 25 of the same year, the ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia notified the Russian

parliament that the status of Sevastopol was not an item on the agenda of negotiations with the Ukrainian side and the 1948 Decree never singled out a new administrative entity from Crimean Oblast.

From 1997 to 2013, the supreme authorities of Russia made no official territorial claims against Ukraine in the context of Sevastopol and Crimea.

Administrative segregation of Sevastopol from Crimea happened not in 1948, but in 1995. The Law of Ukraine dated March 17, 1995—“On the Autonomous Republic of Crimea” defines Sevastopol as *an administrative entity of the national subordination outside of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea*. The following year, this decision was fixed in the Constitution of Ukraine (adopted on June 28, 1996). Sevastopol and Kyiv were classified as cities with a *special status*.

For a while, the Crimean authorities were making attempts to keep Sevastopol a part of the ARC. Since the main base of the Black Sea Fleet could not be made part of the Russian Federation, pro-Russian forces would prefer to see Sevastopol as part of the Crimean autonomy. However, Verkhovna Rada removed references to this city from the Constitution of Crimea adopted in Simferopol on November 1, 1995. The final version of the ARC Constitution dated October 21, 1998 mentions only the fact that Sevastopol may have its representative office in the Verkhovna Rada of the ARC (new official name of the Crimean parliament).

As the 2014 events unfolded in Crimea, the issue of the status of Sevastopol once again made it to the agenda. In its anti-constitutional declaration of independence dated March 17, 2014, Verkhovna Rada of the ARC “attached” Sevastopol to “the Republic of Crimea” by revoking its special status. However, following the annexation of Crimea, Russia made no effort to make an administrative merger of the occupied ARC and Sevastopol. Instead, the occupation administration was formalized in two constituent entities of the Russian Federation: “the Republic of Crimea” and “the federal city of Sevastopol”. These administrative entities initially comprised “the Crimean Federal District of the Russian Federation” and in 2016 were made part of the Southern Federal District with the administrative center in Rostov-on-Don.

City Government

Special status of Sevastopol in Ukraine implied not only the administrative segregation from the ARC but special structure of local governance as well. In this aspect, Sevastopol is more like an *oblast* or a *raion*, but not a *city*. In other cities of Ukraine, the supreme authority is the Head of the City (the mayor) directly elected by the community. The Head of the City is in charge of the *executive*

committee of the City Council. However, in Sevastopol, same as in the oblasts and raions of Ukraine, the executive authority is exercised not by the executive committee of a council but by the local *state administration*. Heads of the local state administrations are appointed by the President of Ukraine.

And so the executive authority in Sevastopol is not a mayor elected by the people but the Head of **Sevastopol City State Administration** appointed by the President of Ukraine.

This practice first emerged in march 1992 when the institute of *envoys of the President of Ukraine* was established. These envoys would head the local state administrations in the oblasts, raions, Kyiv and Sevastopol (including the administrative districts of Kyiv and Sevastopol). Later on, the functions of presidential envoys were assumed by the heads of local administrations.

The first presidential envoy to Sevastopol in 1992 was Ivan Yermakov. The centralized appointment of officials was a reasonable decision, considering the specifics of the city—the base of the Black Sea Fleet—first “joint”, later to become Russian. However, as a matter of practice, heads of Sevastopol City State Administration were mostly appointed out of the local, often pro-Russian politicians.

Only once did Sevastopol get a Head of the City elected by popular vote. This became possible thanks to the Law of Ukraine dated February 3, 1994—“*On Formation of Local Authorities and Self-Government Bodies*”. This Law envisaged the transfer of authority from Sevastopol City State Administration to the Executive Committee of Sevastopol City Council—after the mayor of Sevastopol has been elected by popular vote. The election took place on June 24, 1994 and the incumbent Chairman of Sevastopol City Council, **Victor Semyonov**, won.

Sevastopol City State Administration was restored on the basis of the *Constitutional Treaty* between the parliament and the President of Ukraine on June 8, 1995. This document defined the key principles of organization and functioning of the state authorities and local self-government bodies until the adoption of the new Constitution of Ukraine. On July 19, 1995, the mayor’s position was canceled, and Semyonov was appointed to the position of the Chairman of Sevastopol City State Administration. Incidentally, he retained his position of the Chairman of Sevastopol City Council. The politician kept both positions until April 1998. Under his chairmanship, Sevastopol City Council adopted the anti-constitutional decision on the “Russian legal status” of Sevastopol in 1994.

Under the Constitution of Ukraine adopted on June 28, 1996, the status of Kyiv and Sevastopol was to be regulated by individual laws. The Law on Kyiv was adopted in 1999. It made provisions for the Head of the City to be elected

by popular vote and the option to simultaneously appoint the mayor to the position of the Chairman of Kyiv City State Administration. **No similar Law on Sevastopol has ever been adopted.**

Certain political circles in Sevastopol took the absence of the position of the city mayor as an offense. Pro-Russian forces lamented about *Kyiv not trusting the residents of Sevastopol to elect their own mayor*. This sentiment was played to the fullest in February 2014 when self-proclaimed “people’s mayor” **Aleksei Chaly**, arrived in Sevastopol. Volodymyr Yatsuba, the incumbent Chairman of Sevastopol City State Administration surrendered his powers to Chaly and his supporters without putting up much of a fight.

The currently effective Russian “Statute of Sevastopol” makes no provisions for **the mayor’s position, same as before**. The first version of “the Statute” (2014) made provisions for the members of the “Legislative Assembly of Sevastopol” (*de facto*—the City Council) to elect “*the Governor of the City of Sevastopol*”. After the amendments to “the Statute” dated November 29, 2016, the “Governor” of Sevastopol is to be elected directly by popular vote. However, formally legal independence of the “Governor” is neutralized by the right of the Russian President to terminate the office of the governor who “fails to perform his duties in a proper manner”. It should be noted that the President of Ukraine has no such powers against the city mayors. He can only dissolve the local self-government bodies, if there are grounds for appointment of a civil-military or a military administration.

FLEET—THE TROJAN HORSE IN CRIMEA

The Problem of Black Sea Fleet Division, 1992–1997

USSR Navy had bases in most of the Union Republics. Only Byelorussian SSR, moldavian SSR, Armenian SSR, Uzbek SSR, Kirghiz SSR and Tajik SSR were land-locked and, therefore, had no naval component of the armed forces on their territories.

The Pacific Fleet, the Northern Fleet and the Leningrad Naval Base were based exclusively on the territory of the Russian SFSR. After the collapse of the Soviet Union they automatically became part of the Russian Navy. meanwhile, the Baltic Fleet was based in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; the Black Sea Fleet was based in Ukraine and Georgia; and Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were eligible for their share in the Caspian Flotilla.

The new Russian government initially wanted to retain control over the Armed Forces of the former USSR, specifically over the Navy. In January 1992, Ruslan Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Russian parliament, made a statement, saying that all the fleets belonged to Russia in their entirety. But still Moscow failed to keep the things unchanged: the new states acquired every feature of sovereignty and set about building up their own armed forces. Consequently, the fate of the former USSR Navy outside of Russia needed to be decided. This matter was approached in a variety of ways, including:

- ◆ evacuation of the fleet to naval bases within the territory of the Russian Federation;
- ◆ division of the fleet between Russian Federation and another post-Soviet state; and
- ◆ legalization of the Russian Navy's presence within the territory of another post-Soviet state.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania chose to build their armed forces from scratch. The Baltic Fleet and the North-Western Group of Forces (former Baltic military District) were to be evacuated to Russia, and it all happened in the 1990s. Naval forces of the Baltic states were equipped with ships and vessels supplied by Denmark, Norway, the UK, Sweden, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Poland and the USA.

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan initially waived any plans to create their own Naval forces, delegating the power to protect their sea coasts to the Caspian Flotilla of Russia. Astana and Ashkhabad changed their attitude in the 2000s. They also had to build their naval forces from scratch. Azerbaijan, however, laid claims to a share in the Caspian Flotilla of the USSR. In July 1992, the flotilla was split between the states in the proportion of 75: 25, the bigger part going to Russia. Azerbaijan also retained the former main base of the Caspian Flotilla of the USSR—Baku. By the end of 1992, Russia moved its ships to Astrakhan.

Tbilisi also laid claims to a share in the Black Sea Fleet but failed to assert its place in the Russian-Ukrainian format of negotiations. In the end, Georgia had to make do with the ships and property abandoned by Russia at the time of relocation of its fleet to Novorossiysk and to other bases in the end of 1992. Georgia built up its own naval forces with the help of Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine.

The longest and the hardest negotiations went between Russia and Ukraine about the fate of the Black Sea Fleet. Ukraine set about building its own armed forces in January 1992 on the basis of Kyiv military District, Odesa military District and Carpathian military District—all located within Ukraine. Following



Alrosa diesel-electric submarine. Before the occupation it was the only operational vessel of this kind of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. On March 13, 1992 the submarine's crew took the Oath of Allegiance to the people of Ukraine, but the submarine remained in the Russian Black Sea Fleet

the similar principle, Kyiv intended to swear in the Black Sea Fleet personnel stationed in Ukraine, which meant the bulk of the fleet together with its main base in Sevastopol.

In December 1991, the navy sailors participated in the referendum in support of the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine and the first elections of the President of Ukraine.

The claims of Kyiv to the Black Sea Fleet were based not only on considerations of physical location of the naval bases within the territory of Ukraine. **Naval traditions go far back in the history of Ukraine.** Since the 18th century, Ukrainians took active part in the development of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Empire. After the toppling of the tsarism in 1917, the Black Sea Fleet sailors were involved in a powerful movement for *Ukrainization of the fleet*. National government in Kyiv also took efforts to assume control over the Black Sea Fleet. On April 29, 1918, most of the ships followed the order of the Fleet Commander Mikhail Sablin and raised the Ukrainian flag. The events

that followed and the loss of independence prevented the formation of the national naval forces in the early 20th century. Even Bolsheviks recognized formal affiliation of the fleet to Ukraine, if only for a short time, organizing the *Red Fleet of the Ukrainian SSR* in 1919.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia would not give up neither the Black Sea Fleet, nor the naval bases in Ukraine (Crimea, Odesa Oblast and mykolaiv Oblast). This way, the Russian Federation intended to preserve its military presence on the territory of the former Union Republic so as to be able to influence the foreign and the domestic policies of the latter. Originally, the idea was to make the fleet a supranational entity and part of the *Joint Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States* (JAF CIS).

In January 1992, pro-Russian commanders of the Black Sea Fleet refused to let the personnel take the Oath of Allegiance to Ukraine. The oath was taken in some military bases by individual servicemen of their free will and at the risk of persecution by the commanders (demotions, forced retirement, eviction of families from the military stations, etc.). meanwhile, conscripts—citizens of Ukraine—were made to take the “Oath of Allegiance to the CIS”.

In April of the same year, the confrontation within the navy evolved into tension between the states: Presidents of Russia and Ukraine tried to bring the Black Sea Fleet under their control by issuing respective executive orders. Long negotiations provided the way out of the ensuing stalemate. The process dragged out until may 1997. Within five years, the parties signed a number of treaties to set milestones on the path toward the agreement on the status of the Black Sea Fleet.

Key Treaties Concerning the Status of the Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine

| Date, place | Content of the treaty | Notes |
|--------------------------|---|-------|
| April 29–30, 1992. Odesa | Joint communique of the state delegations of Ukraine and Russia about moratorium on unilateral actions and the intent to assign work groups for drafting of the agreement on the Fleet. | |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| June 23, 1992. Dagomys | Agreement reached between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia on further development of the state-to-state relations. The parties stressed the importance of continued negotiations for the creation of the Naval Forces of the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Basing and logistics system shall be operated according to a treaty. | |
| August 3, 1992. Yalta | Agreement reached between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia on the principles of formation of the Naval Forces of Ukraine and Russia on the basis of the Black Sea Fleet. The fleet shall be removed from the JAF CIS. Over the transition period and up to 1995, the fleet shall be under joint authority of the presidents of Ukraine and Russia who shall appoint the joint command. After the transition period, the fleet shall be split between Ukraine and Russia. | Effectively, the fleet remained under the command of Russia. |
| June 17, 1993. moscow (Zavidovo) | Agreement reached between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia on the prompt measures in the context of formation of the Naval Forces of Ukraine and Russia on the basis of the Black Sea Fleet. Formation of the Naval Forces of Ukraine and Russia on the basis of the Black Sea Fleet shall commence in September 1993 and be over within the terms envisaged by the Yalta Treaty. The fleet stationed in Ukraine shall be split 50 / 50. The terms and conditions for the Russian fleet to be stationed in Ukraine shall be ruled by a status of forces agreement (SOFA). | The agreement was to be ratified by the parliaments of Ukraine and Russia but it never happened. |
| September 3, 1993. massandra | Protocol of Settlement of the Black Sea Fleet Problem signed by the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia. Within a month's term, the state delegations were to negotiate the issues related to drafting of the agreement under which Ukraine would sell its share of the fleet to Russia. | The agreement mentioned in the Protocol was never drafted. |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>April 15, 1994. moscow</p> | <p>Agreement reached between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia on a stage-by-stage settlement of the Black Sea Fleet problem. Upon completion of the fleet distribution, Ukraine was entitled to 15%-20% of the fleet. Naval Forces of Ukraine and the Russian Black Sea Fleet were to be stationed separately. Parameters of the division were to be drafted within 10 days.</p> | <p>Further negotiations on the division parameters yielded no results.</p> |
| <p>June 9, 1995. Sochi</p> | <p>Agreement reached between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia on the Black Sea Fleet. Separate stationing of the Naval Forces of Ukraine and the Russian Black Sea Fleet was confirmed. Sevastopol was designated as the main base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Russia and Ukraine were to divide the fleet in the proportion of 81.7 / 18.3% respectively.</p> | |
| <p>May 28, 1997. Kyiv</p> | <p>Prime ministers of Ukraine and Russia signed three treaties:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) on the parameters of division of the Black Sea Fleet; 2) SOFA on the stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine; and 3) on mutual settlements in connection with division of the Black Sea Fleet and the stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine. <p>The division of the fleet proceeded in accordance with the proportion defined in the Sochi Agreement. In exchange for 31.7% of the fleet (out of the Ukraine's share of 50%), Russia undertook to settle a part of the sovereign debt of Ukraine to the amount of USD 526,509,000. The SOFA on the stationing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine was to be effective for 20 years, automatically renewable for the next five years, subject to the consent of the parties. The amount of the sovereign debt of Ukraine to be written off against the stationing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine was agreed at USD 97,750,000 a year.</p> | <p>The treaties were ratified by the parliaments of Ukraine and Russia in 1999.</p> |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <p>April 21, 2010. Kharkiv</p> | <p>Agreement reached between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia on the matters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet stationed in Ukraine. Agreement of may 28, 1997 renewed for 25 years (up to 2042). On the effective date of the Agreement, Russia reduces the price on natural gas supplied to Ukraine by USD 100 per thousand cubic meters. Starting from may 28, 2017 Russia was to pay the rent for its Black Sea Fleet stationed in Ukraine in the amount of USD 100 million a year.</p> | <p>The treaty was ratified by the parliaments of Ukraine and Russia the same month.</p> |
|------------------------------------|--|---|

In April 1992, Ukraine began building its naval forces in Sevastopol. The key naval cadre was built of the officers who had been ousted or had retired from the Black Sea Fleet. most of them had been removed from their positions and discharged from the navy by the pro-Russian commanders of the Black Sea Fleet for taking the Oath of Allegiance to Ukraine. Naval Forces of Ukraine grew in size step by step, increasing their personnel, material and technical resources, and received ships—most of them newly built in mykolaiv, Kyiv, Kerch and Feodosia.

Under the 1992 *Yalta Treaty*, the Black Sea Fleet was to be divided by Russia and Ukraine. Over the transition period and up to 1995, the fleet was to be under bilateral authority of the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia who were supposed appoint the joint command. Therefore, **for a few consecutive years, Ukraine hosted its own Naval Forces and the formally “joint” Russian-Ukrainian Black Sea Fleet at the same time.** In a way, this was a paradox, because Ukraine bore the major burden of financing the Black Sea Fleet, sending its own citizens to serve as conscripts, while building its own compact Naval Forces.

As a matter of practice, no joint command of the Black Sea Fleet has ever been formed. The fleet was under command of the admirals appointed by moscow, who remained loyal to Russia and were openly or privately anti-Ukrainian. Black Sea Fleet commanders Igor Kasatonov, succeeded by Eduard Baltin, worked closely with members of the Russian parliament who challenged the affiliation of Sevastopol to Ukraine. The Black Sea Fleet provided moral and organizational support to pro-Russian political groups in Crimea.

The Black Sea Fleet commanders discouraged the personnel of the bases who expressed the desire to continue their services in the Naval Forces of Ukraine, and were generally opposed to the division of the fleet. Things would evolve into open provocations when the Black Sea Fleet units took naval bases of Ukraine by force. From 1992 to 1994, tensions over the fleet would spike from

time to time, almost to the point of sparking an armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

The division of the Black Sea Fleet dragged on to 1997 instead of the formerly agreed 1995. The Russian side, namely the administration of President Boris Yeltsin, agreed with the principle of the fleet division, but when it came to negotiations, it would push for the terms and conditions to the benefit of Moscow. The opposition to Boris Yeltsin, primarily in the Russian parliament, assumed the radical stance, demanding the annexation of Ukrainian territories and preservation of the Black Sea Fleet under the naval flag of Russia.

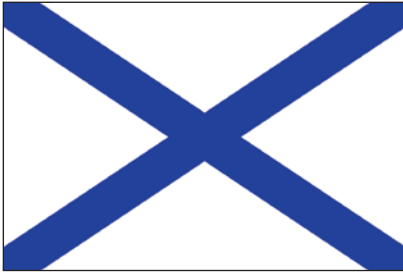
Even though the bigger part of the Black Sea Fleet was based in Ukraine rather than Russia, *the sides agreed to divide the fleet 50 / 50*. As negotiations went on, the Ukrainian share was repeatedly revised downwards until the parties finally settled for **18.3%**. Ukraine waived the 50% share in exchange for offsetting part of its sovereign debt for the energy resources supplied by Russia. (In 1993, the debt of Ukraine to Russia had been transformed into the



The Soviet Navy flag under which the "joint" Black Sea Fleet was supposed to remain until the division between the naval forces of Ukraine and Russia



On July 21, 1992 frigate SKR-112 made an unsanctioned move from Donuzlav to Odesa in protest against the anti-Ukrainian activity of the Black Sea Fleet's command. An attempt of the ships and aircraft of the Black Sea Fleet to intercept the SKR-112 almost led to an armed standoff between Ukraine and Russia



The traditional naval symbols of Russia and Ukraine were revived in 1992. St Andrew's flag of the Russian Navy (left) goes far back in time when it was the ensign of the Navy of the Russian Empire. The Ukrainian Naval Forces' ensign (right)—to the national revolution period of 1917–1921

sovereign loan to the amount of USD 2.5 bn) Ships, military bases and other facilities and property obtained from the division of the Black Sea Fleet were transferred to Naval forces of Ukraine.

Stationing became a sensitive issue at the negotiations. **The Russian side insisted on granting the status of the main base of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation to Sevastopol.** In doing so, Russians demanded that the Naval Forces of Ukraine should be removed from Sevastopol and even outside of Crimea. This would have turned Sevastopol into a de-facto Russian city even without a formal legal act, such as, for example, adopted by the Russian parliament in July 1993.

In the end, the sides agreed that the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation and the Naval Forces of Ukraine should be stationed side-by-side in Sevastopol. According to the final agreements of 1997, the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation was to be stationed in several locations (Sevastopol, Hvardiiske, Feodosia, etc.). The Black Sea Fleet bases in mainland Ukraine (Odesa, Izmail, mykolaiv, Ochakiv) were transferred to the Naval Forces of Ukraine in 1994 and 1995.

Under the 1997 agreements, the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation was to stay in Crimea on a lease basis for 20 years, the lease automatically renewable for the next five years, subject to the consent of the parties. meanwhile, there were no monetary payments for the rent of the Ukrainian territory, as Russia would simply write-off part of the sovereign debt of Ukraine every year. No market value of the rented land and immovable property was established until 2014 but the experts repeatedly pointed out that the agreed lease rate of USD 97.75 m a year was greatly undervalued.

Russian Fleet in Crimea from 1997 to 2013

From 1997 to 2013, the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea was a considerable military, political, social and humanitarian factor. Under the 1997 agreements, total personnel of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation in Ukraine was to remain below **25,000** servicemen. Until 2013, the fleet would methodically downsize its military personnel by way of retirement of the servicemen, canceling of duty positions and by filling certain positions with the civilian staff. By 2014, the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea comprised approx. 12,500 servicemen.

The major land component of the fleet was **810th marine Brigade (810th MB)** (from 1998 to 2008 it was a marine regiment) stationed in the area of Cozacha (Cossack) Bay of Sevastopol (up to 2,000 servicemen). In February 1992, servicemen of the marine brigade started taking the Oath of Allegiance to Ukraine, but the command of the fleet quickly blocked this process.

The battalion under command of Vitaly Rozhmanov where 44% of personnel took the Ukrainian oath was immediately disbanded. Subsequently, the marines became the strong arm of the command of the Russian Black Sea Fleet

in Crimea. *The 810th marine Brigade was engaged in provocations against the Naval Forces of Ukraine over the period of division of the fleet (seizure of the Sevastopol Commandant's Office in July 1992) and took active part in the occupation of Crimea in 2014. mariners from Sevastopol were engaged in the wars of Russia in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria and Donbas.*

The types and strength of the armaments of the Russian Black Sea Fleet allowed in Ukraine were stipulated in the 1997 agreements. No rotation was envisaged by the same agreements, thereby preventing the re-armament and upgrade of the Russian fleet in Crimea. In this manner,



Personnel of the 810th marine Brigade of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol



Missile cruiser moskva is the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet

Ukraine hoped to steadily push the foreign military out of its territory. The Russians, however, were determined to stay in Crimea and demanded the removal of restrictions on the development of their Black Sea Fleet.

The Ukrainian authorities never solved the problem of monitoring of activities of the Russian military units in Crimea. The Ukrainian officials were denied access to important facilities of the fleet and, therefore, they were unable to establish whether or not the Russians abided by the agreements. Ships and vessels of the Black Sea Fleet permanently stationed in Sevastopol were subject to notification- rather than permit-based regime of crossing of the Ukrainian state border. Ukrainian border guards and customs service were not allowed to inspect the Russian ships. This provided broad opportunities for smuggling. For example, Kyiv was unable to verify whether on not moscow honored the agreement on removal of tactical nuclear weapons from the Black Sea Fleet stationed in Crimea. Some ships, aircraft and helicopters of the Black Sea Fleet could carry such weapons, whereas there were no restrictions on storage of nuclear weapons on the Russian part of the Black Sea coast.

In the absence of practical tools of control and sanctions, the **Russian fleet would openly violate the laws of Ukraine**. In contravention of the agreements, the Russians practiced sub-leasing of facilities in Crimea. The Black Sea Fleet unlawfully held a number of land plots, buildings and structures. These include, inter alia, over 70 facilities comprising the navigational and hydrographic support system, which the Russians never returned to Ukraine despite several

rulings by Ukrainian courts. The Ukrainian army took over one of such facilities—a radio navigation system mars-75 (Henichesk, Kherson Oblast)—only on march 26, 2014, after Russia had invaded Crimea.

The agreements had another weak point—they did not regulate any specific procedure for deployment of the Black Sea Fleet in crisis situations. At the same time, Ukraine was no ally of the Russian Federation. **The presence of the Russian armed forces on the Ukrainian territory made Kyiv hostage to excessively active military policies of moscow.** Back in the times of the “joint fleet”, the ships from Sevastopol moved towards the active combat zones off the coast of Abkhazia and Samegrelo (1992–1993). Not every mission was coordinated with the ministry of Defense of Ukraine. Without consulting with Kyiv, Russia deployed a reconnaissance company of the 810th marine Regiment in combat activities during the Second Chechen War (1999–2000). Despite protests of the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko, the Black Sea Fleet ships, normally based in Sevastopol, took active part in the war of Russia against Georgia in 2008.

According to framework agreements, the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation was to stay in Ukraine until 2017, with an option to renew for another period. With Leonid Kuchma and especially Viktor Yushchenko in office, the official Kyiv made no secret of its hopes to see the Russian fleet sail away to Russia within the terms envisaged by the agreement. However, regrouping of such massive force required extensive preparations. Novorossiysk and other naval bases on the Black Sea coast of the Russian Federation had no sufficient facilities to host the Crimean group. **moscow made no preparations for withdrawal of the fleet and demonstrated confidence that its Black Sea Fleet was to stay in Crimea.** The 20-years period was nearing its end and Ukraine still had no leverage over the Russian leaders.

The situation changed with the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich winning the Office. Under the Kharkiv Agreement (2010), the Russian Black Sea Fleet was to remain stationed in Crimea until **2042** in exchange for a reduction of the natural gas price. The new agreement did not solve a single problem mentioned above in connection with the stationing of the fleet in Ukraine, apart from stipulating that the rent should be payable in cash rather by way of offsets against the sovereign debt, effective from 2017. After the annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014, the **ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation declared the agreements of 1997 and 2010 null and void.** Ukraine, however, did not denounce the said agreements, deeming it feasible to keep upholding them until filing cases against Russia in international courts.

Russian Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine 1997–2013

LOCATION OF MAIN FACILITIES

- Sevastopol (headquarters, ships, marine brigade, military airfield (Kacha), other objects, services, offices, facilities)
- Feodosia (testing facility)
- Hvardiiske (military airfield)
- Yalta (communication and relay station, military sanatorium)
- Cape Opuk (military training area)

SURFACE AREA OF RENTED LAND

182.3 sq km

33.1 sq km - rented area in Sevastopol

For comparison:

surface area of Simferopol - 107.4 sq km

surface area of Yalta - 28.3 sq km

IN SEVASTOPOL:

140 objects

3,571 buildings

127 docks

Length of docking area:

12 km (half of all available in Sevastopol)

Fleet mooring areas:

- Sevastopol Bay
- Pivdenna Bay
- Karantynna Bay
- Striletska Bay
- Cozacha Bay



Way before the events of 2014, the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation had considerable impact on the social life in Crimea and, above all, in Sevastopol. The Russian servicemen were paid salaries several times higher than the average in the city. Most of the officers of the Russian Black Sea Fleet took up permanent residence in Sevastopol upon retirement. By various estimates, about 30,000 of the retired Russian servicemen and their families lived in the city as of 2014. As a common practice, they would apply for Ukrainian citizenship so as to enjoy the entire range of civil rights, including the right for Ukrainian pension.



The monument called Let there be the Black Sea Fleet was erected to commemorate 300 years of the Russian Navy in Sevastopol

The Black Sea Fleet was actively doing business, creating jobs, doing local procurement, etc. About 10% of working population of Sevastopol were employed by the enterprises, institutions and organizations belonging to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Local budgets collected substantial taxes from the fleet activity. Under the Russian-Ukrainian agreements, the Black Sea Fleet participated in funding of social and economic sphere in the areas of its stations. (The bulk of this money was used for funding of the development of infrastructure that was used by the Russian servicemen). Until 2013, the development companies belonging to the Black Sea Fleet commissioned over 40 residential houses in Crimea.

Back then, Russian propaganda claimed that the Russian Black Sea Fleet provided the economic backbone of Sevastopol, absolutely vital for the very existence of the city. **In reality, the economic role of the fleet steadily declined**, as the city actively developed the service sector and considerable investments poured into Sevastopol from a variety of sources.

Every year Sevastopol would receive transfers from the State Budget of Ukraine to make up for the loss of income from the facilities rented by the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The fleet owed big amounts in tax arrears and other payments (including utility bills), there were also chronic salary arrears to



A rehearsal for celebrations of the Russian Navy Day Sevastopol residents watching Russian armored personnel carriers landing from ships of the Black Sea Fleet on July 22, 2010

the hired staff. The Black Sea Fleet construction administration would not perform its obligations to the investors in a proper manner.

Coastal units of the Black Sea Fleet were stationed in military compounds dispersed throughout the city fabric. A lot of buildings in downtown Sevastopol sported national flags of the Russian Federation well before 2014. The Soviet and Russian historical themes prevailed in the names of local places. In 1996, on the 300th anniversary of the Russian Navy, they opened a monument in downtown Sevastopol with the slogan “*Let there be Black Sea Fleet*”. Over 30 memorials have been installed in Sevastopol since 1993 at the initiative of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation.

Black Sea Fleet operated cultural and educational institutions in Sevastopol, such as assembly halls, museums, a library, a drama theater, preschool facilities and a secondary school. In 1999, the Black Sea Fleet assigned barracks within one of its bases to house the branch of Lomonosov Moscow State University. A number of Orthodox churches in Crimea positioned themselves as “Fleet garrison churches” and were adorned with the symbols of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

Ties of the Ukrainian city with the Russian fleet were fostered through joint celebrations and ceremonial events. For example, the Russian Navy Day is very popular in Sevastopol (celebrated every year on the last Sunday of July). The festivity scenario has a mandatory element—military ships parade, firepower demonstration and showing off the professional skills of the Black Sea Fleet special-purpose units.

The Black Sea Fleet took part in the political life of Crimea and Sevastopol. The Black Sea Fleet command provided organizational and moral support to pro-Russian political groups whose most active members were often retired servicemen of the Black Sea Fleet. The printing house that published the fleet paper *Flag of the motherland* took orders to print blatantly anti-Ukrainian and separatist material. There is sufficient evidence that the naval officers provided classified (sometimes intelligence) information to the active members of pro-Russian groups. In turn, pro-Russian organizations rallied for lifting the restrictions on the time of stationing and the upgrading of the firepower of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine.

HOW THE SEA WAS NEVER DIVIDED

The Crimean peninsula is bordered by the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. These are the marginal seas far away from the World Ocean. The Sea of Azov is the most continental sea on Earth connected to an ocean. A voyage by sea from Mariupol to Lisbon would go through the Straits of Kerch, Bosphorus, the Dardanelles and Gibraltar (not to mention the straits between the islands in the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea).

Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Georgia and Romania have direct access to the Black Sea. The Sea of Azov borders only two countries—Ukraine and Russia. Central European countries and the states of the Caspian region have access to the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov by way of big navigable rivers—the Danube and the Don.

The Sea of Azov is shallow, its maximum depth is 13.5 meters. Ice formations are a considerable detriment to the navigation in winter. Both the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea hold proven and prospective oil and gas reserves.

The Azov-Black Sea basin is currently **the area of occupied territories and a combat zone**. Part of the coastal Georgia has been under control of Russia and the administration of the so-called “*Republic of Abkhazia*” since 1990s. A small sector of the Azov coast is controlled by the administration of the so-called “*Donetsk People’s Republic*” (DPR) and the Russian troops. The war in Donbas caused the Ukrainian Sea Guard (coast guard) sustain losses in the Sea of Azov: two cutters were sunk (BG-119 took fire from the shore and BG-22 was lost by a naval mine). In 2014–2015, experts anticipated a Russian large-scale offensive aimed at connecting the DPR-controlled area with the occupied Crimea by land.

With two major seaports (Mariupol and Berdiansk), commercial cargo traffic in the Sea of Azov is vital for Ukraine. However, Russia has been controlling the



Kerch Strait and disrupting free maritime traffic since 2014. The Kerch Strait connects the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea while separating the Crimean peninsula (Ukraine) and the Taman peninsula (Russia). Formerly, Crimea was connected to Russia by way of the **Kerch ferry**. The problem of low carrying capacity of the Kerch ferry was the repeatedly raised by the proponents of the Russia-Crimea rapprochement. The bridge project had been discussed even before 2014, but the practical implementation of the idea commenced only after the occupation of Crimea. Despite the objective obstacles (bottom unsuitable for the bridge pillars), the construction commenced in 2016.

The Crimean Bridge (the automobile stage commissioned in may 2018) physically hindered the maritime traffic. Bridge arches are not high enough to let vessels taller than 33 m pass underneath. This has considerably constrained the traffic to Azov ports of Ukraine in terms of the types and numbers of trade vessels. mariupol lost about 30% of large vessels traffic. In addition, under the pretense of the enhanced protection against saboteurs, Russians tightened controls for commercial vessels passing through the Kerch Strait and bound for the Ukrainian seaports.

In the center of the strait, south of the ferry line, there lies an uninhabited **Kosa Tuzla Island** (5 km to 7 km long). The island appeared in 1925 when a strong storm tore the spit away from the Taman coast. The the scour between the Taman peninsula and Kosa Tuzla Island is too shallow for the deep-draft ships to pass. The main passage from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov goes through the Kerch-Yenikale Canal that runs between the island and the Crimean coast.

For a long time, the Kosa Tuzla Island administratively belonged to the mainland regions on the eastern shore of the Kerch Strait. In January 1941, the island was transferred from Krasnodar Krai to the Crimean ASSR. In 1954, Kosa Tuzla Island was transferred to Ukraine along with Crimea. The administrative border between the Ukrainian SSR and the Russian SFSR in the Kerch Strait passed through the outlet, thereby leaving the island and the navigable canal on the Ukrainian side.

No state borders existed in the Sea of Azov until 1991. Under the **1958 and 1982 UN Conventions**, the Sea of Azov fulfilled the requirements of *historic internal waters* of the USSR. The Kerch Strait was a natural passage to the inland waters and had no status of the strait used for international maritime traffic. The situation changed when the shores became parts of independent Ukraine and Russian Federation. The new states needed to determine their boundaries on land as well as delimit the adjacent water bodies.

Negotiations between Ukraine and Russia started in 1996 and went on until the end of 2013. Under the international maritime laws, the problem of existence and configuration of the borders in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait could be solved in a variety of ways. As coastal countries, Ukraine and Russia could claim territorial waters of up to 12 miles wide from their shorelines. In this case, beyond the 12-mile zone there would have been *international waters*—the area of free navigation, including for military ships of the third countries. Recognizing the Sea of Azov as the *internal waters* of Ukraine and Russia would have been another option. In this case, the third countries would have been bound to coordinate their presence in the Sea of Azov with Kyiv and moscow.

The Russian side was seeking to limit the presence of the third-country ships near its shores and insisted on the status of internal waters for the Sea of Azov. Kyiv, on the other hand, was in the first place concerned with proper demarcation of the state border and was prepared to split the Sea of Azov with Russia in accordance with internationally recognized *median line* principle. This way, **Ukraine would have gained control of over 60% of the water body** including its deeper part rich in fish. As regards the Kerch Strait, Kyiv considered the administrative border in the scour, the one existing since the Soviet times, to be the state boundary.

In the course of negotiations, Russia convinced Ukraine to proceed on the basis of the internal waters principle. However, **Russians were opposed to any borders, suggesting rather the joint use of the sea by the two countries without any delimitation.** Moscow also would not recognize the state boundary in the Kerch Strait, contesting the affiliation of Kerch-Yenikale Canal to Ukraine. Negotiations were stalled after several rounds.

Things got rolling again in 2002. Since the status of internal waters was going nowhere in terms of the maritime border problem, Kyiv returned to the concept of international waters. In November 2002, the Ukrainian government applied the international sea laws and set the 12-miles zone in the Sea of Azov. The implementation of the governmental decision by way of registration with the UN Secretariat never happened, but compelled the Russian side to act.

A partial agreement on the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait was reached in two stages. First, Russia convinced the official Kyiv to return to the concept of “internal waters of the two states”. In exchange, on January 28, 2003 Moscow agreed to sign the **Agreement on the Ukrainian-Russian Border** so sought for by Kyiv. The document officially formalized the state boundary on land, whereas delimitation of the sea was to be settled in a separate bilateral agreement.

To compel Kyiv to accept its terms, Moscow resorted to a provocation that went down in history as the **2003 Tuzla Conflict**. On September 20, without any warning, the Russians started building a dam from the Taman peninsula to Kosa Tuzla Island. By the order of the Krasnodar Krai administration, workers set about restoring the spit as it had been up to 1925. Successful implementation of the plan would have allowed the Russians assume control over the island and get a foothold in on the eastern shore of the Kerch-Yenikale Canal. As the dam approached the island, the Russian-Ukrainian relations flared and threatened to evolve into an open conflict. The Ukrainians promptly set up a border guards outpost on Kosa Tuzla. Diplomatic missions of the two countries exchanged scalding notes.



The construction was discontinued on October 23 after the direct negotiations between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia. At the time, the dam stopped within 100 meters from the island. Further bilateral negotiations completed on December 23, 2003 by signing of the **Agreement on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait**. The new document confirmed the internal waters mode, however pointing out that the Sea of Azov is delimited by a state boundary. The parties never finally settled on the status of the

island. On July 13, 2005 Russia only recognized the Ukrainian jurisdiction over Kosa Tuzla Island, *for the time being*.

Delimitation of the Sea of Azov envisaged by the Agreement **never happened until the occupation of Crimea by Russia**. During the negotiations, Russia insisted on revision of the median line delimitation principle. Moscow was insisting on an approach to delineation that would combine “*the methods of median line, proportionality and fairness*” (*de facto* pushing for the proportion of 60 / 40 in favor of Russia). On May 15, 2008 the parties settled for a compromise on a polygonal median line and defined the coordinates of the points where its sections would turn. Further negotiations, however, did not end up with recognition of this line as a state boundary.

In its current state, the legal framework allows the ships of both countries to stay and conduct business in any point of the Sea of Azov, which perfectly suits the Russian side. The absence of delimitation was the cause of many troubles way before the Russian occupation of Crimea. For example, joint efforts on overcoming the environmental disaster in the Sea of Azov proved to be inefficient in November 2007 when a strong storm damaged dozens of vessels, including a Russian tanker. There was a huge spill of fuel oil, diesel and sulfur. Yet another big incident happened on July 17, 2013 when the cutter of the Coast Guard of the Border Service of FSB of Russia collided with a Ukrainian fishing boat near the village of Vorontsovka (Russian Federation). The Ukrainian boat sunk, four citizens of Ukraine died and one sustained injuries. The Russian side accused the Ukrainian fishermen of poaching and held the survivor under arrest.

In March 2014, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that, since “Crimea returned to Russia”, the *Kerch Strait was no longer subject to negotiations with Ukraine*. Meanwhile, Russia continues to treat the Sea of Azov as the shared waters in accordance with the 2003 Agreement. The FSB Coast Guard has been active all throughout the water body, coming very close to the coast of mainland Ukraine.

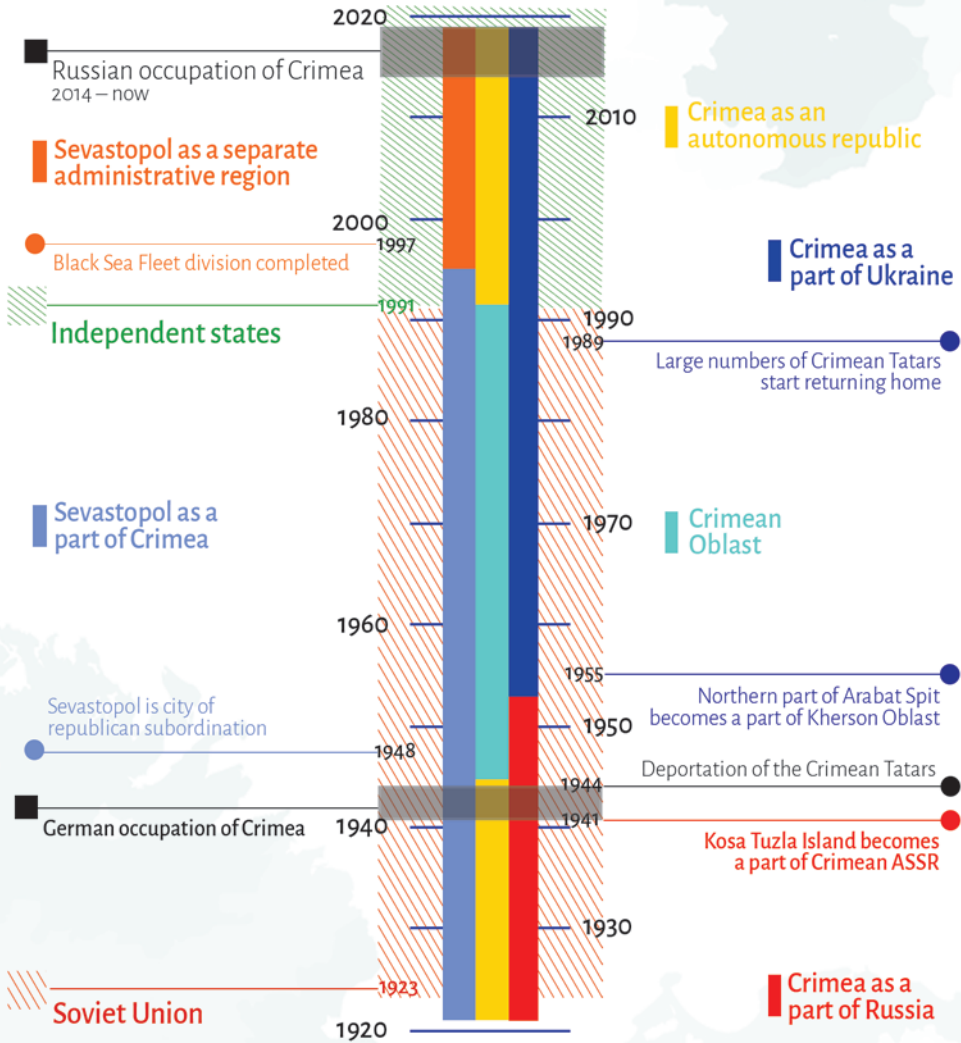
Political and diplomatic circles of Ukraine are ambiguous whether or not the Agreement on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait should be denounced. The arguments against denouncing are mostly based on the assumption that the current legal framework will be an important tool at the time of consideration of cases against Russia in international courts.

The Ukrainian-Russian relations flared up again in the Sea of Azov in the spring of 2018 when Ukraine seized *The Nord*—a Russian fishing boat with Crimean registration. In a kind of retaliatory response, the FSB Coast Guard ships patrolling the Sea of Azov began *systematically stopping for inspection*

commercial vessels destined for mariupol and Berdiansk. Russians are also creating problems for the vessels passing through the Kerch Strait. The losses sustained by Ukraine because of this situation are considerable. Schedules are disrupted, cargo traffic declines and shipping companies are taking their business elsewhere from the Azov seaports.

In an effort to establish total control over the Sea of Azov, Russia is prepared to start an open confrontation with Ukraine. **On November 25, 2018 ships of the Black Sea Fleet and the Coast Guard attacked and fired on the Ukrainian naval artillery boats *Berdiansk* and *Nikopol* and tugboat *Yany Kapu* on their scheduled cruise from Odesa to mariupol. The Ukrainian ships were seized and 24 servicemen were captured by Russia.**

CRIMEA OVER THE LAST 100 YEARS



Chapter 2. THE CRIMEAN ANSCHLUSS

PRECONDITIONS FOR OCCUPATION

In the decade following the peaceful settlement of the Tuzla conflict, the Russian-Ukrainian disputes over the territories seemed to have gone away. Crimea and Sevastopol disappeared from decrees of the Russian parliament or the agenda of the UN Security Council meetings. Occasional statements of the Russian politicians disputing the territorial integrity of Ukraine were of no official consequence. Pro-Russian separatists continued to operate on the peninsula but their reputation and influence did not give grounds for any serious concern to the Ukrainian authorities. At the same time Vladimir Putin who held the position of the prime-minister of the Russian Federation tried to allay the concerns of the official Kyiv at the time of *the Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008*. In his interview to a German TV channel, he said that **Crimea was no disputed territory and Russia had long recognized the borders of the present day Ukraine.**

The Crimean issue was sidelined as the result of changing priorities of moscow. Instead of playing the separatism card, Russian government focused on the *re-integration projects of the former Soviet Union countries*. Accession of Ukraine to *the Eurasian structures* (primarily the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space) was expected to consolidate the Russian hold on the entire territory of Ukraine.

However, moscow continued its threats, if only informally, to revise its attitude toward territorial integrity of Ukraine whenever the official Kyiv demonstrated its aspirations to choose the Western vector towards integration with NATO and EU. The emotional speech of Putin in that same 2008 at the closed meeting of the Russia—NATO Council during the Bucharest Summit of the alliance was remarkably telling. According to a diplomat who was present at the meeting, Putin said to George W. Bush that **Ukraine was not a real state, and some Ukrainian territories were a gift from Russia.**

Apparently, the Kremlin was developing contingency plans of a military intervention, support of separatists, occupation and annexation of Ukrainian territories well before 2014. Since 2010, Russian foreign policy efforts with regard to Ukraine had been focused on provision of support to President Viktor Yanukovich who was expected, and with good reason, to implement the agenda of Moscow. Yanukovich extended the stay of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, legislatively canceled the Ukrainian movement toward NATO and appointed blatantly pro-Russian officials to the key security positions.

Moscow was fully aware of the shaky position of Yanukovich in Ukraine—not only due to his pro-Russian stance but also due to the thoroughly corrupt and vastly unpopular criminal and cliquish nature of his regime. Many political analysts believed that Yanukovich was heading towards a defeat in 2015 presidential elections and a situation similar to the *Orange Revolution of 2004–2005*. Russia was preparing to openly invade so as to keep Yanukovich in power or at least to prevent pro-Western politicians coming to power in Kyiv.

However, the pro-Russian regime in Ukraine fell earlier. Protests caused by the refusal of Yanukovich to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in November 2013 quickly gained weight and momentum evolving into a broad popular revolt—the *Revolution of Dignity*. Same as in 2004, the crucial events took place on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the main square of Kyiv and became collectively known as “Maidan protests”. Moscow exerted pressure on the Ukrainian authorities, demanding a decisive violent crackdown on the protests. Events in some other post-Soviet republics provided sufficient evidence that this kind of scenario would result in an isolation of the regime from the West and would push the official Kyiv into deeper dependence on the Russian Federation.

At the same time prospects of Yanukovich totally defeating the Maidan were dim. The Kremlin started invoking Plan B as early as the turn of 2013/2014 with the primary goal to split Ukraine and set up alternative centers of power. This was supposed to **prevent the new, pro-Western politicians from asserting their power in Kyiv and all over Ukraine**. At the same time, considerable weakening of Ukraine and an imminent slide into a civil war, in the opinion of Putin, could open up a unique window of opportunity to annex Crimea.

All this time, Crimea retained a vast symbolic importance in the political consciousness of the citizens of Russia and Putin himself. President Putin also reasonably counted that the annexation of Crimea would boost his approval rating. **The Putin regime needed a striking victory** to overshadow its recent failures: protests in Russia (*the Bolotnaya Square Revolution of 2011–2013*) and the disastrous foreign policy on Ukraine (revolt against Yanukovich) etc. Establishing

direct control over Crimea was fully in line with geopolitical considerations of Putin, as the new power in Kyiv was reasonably expected to review the *Kharkiv Accords* about the fleet.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

On February 20, 2014—after two days of the hot phase on the maidan, 48 protesters were shot dead. Such massive casualties scared many representatives of the ruling regime and sowed dissent within their ranks. The Ukrainian parliament, thus far loyal to the President, recalled the enforcers and instructed the General Prosecutor's Office to investigate the circumstances of the slaughter. The Internal Troops and special-purpose riot police units drawn to Kyiv by the ministry of Internal Affairs were exhausted by months of street battles and demoralized by the decision of the parliament to investigate the crimes against the maidan.

The events of the late February 2014 buried the chances of a compromise between the opposition and Yanukovych, and the President lost any support from his fellows-in-arms and the law enforcement agencies. Understanding that the capital city is a lost cause, Yanukovych flew out to Kharkiv on the night of February 22. The attempt to organize an *alternative center of power* in the east of Ukraine also failed. Fearful of the vengeful maidan, Yanukovych and his inner circle went into hiding, seeking for ways of sneaking out to Russia or Crimea.

Kyiv sunk into the *succession of power crisis*. The Ukrainian laws make no provision for early termination of the presidency on the grounds of voluntary dereliction of duties and disappearance of the president by way of escaping. There was no way of implementing the *impeachment* procedure in an expedited manner. That is why the parliament adopted the *decree*, not entirely flawless legally but vital under the current conditions, *on the self-removal of the President*. On February 23, the members of parliament adopted a dedicated decree confirming that the Chairman of Verkhovna Rada **Oleksandr Turchynov** shall be the acting President of Ukraine (under the Constitution of Ukraine, the Speaker shall become Acting President in the event of the early termination of the incumbent President). On that same day, Yanukovych was already in the Russian Federation, smuggled by the Russian Air Force helicopters on the orders from Putin.

Now two men claimed the presidency of Ukraine. The Army, the Security Service squads and law enforcement agencies were disorganized and passive. Running away, Yanukovych robbed the State Treasury. A lot of high-ranking

officials fled to Crimea or elsewhere abroad. The organized activists of the Revolution of Dignity took power in most of the regions. The *Anti-Maidan* groups—loyalists gathered by the former regime as a counter to the maidan protests—consolidated in the cities in the east and south of Ukraine. After the escape of Yanukovich, they were ready to support any power that would oppose the new authorities. And this is when Russia launched the annexation operation of Crimea.

UKRAINIAN FORCES IN CRIMEA

Just before the occupation, Ukraine had a considerable contingent of troops in Crimea, including the Army, Border Guards, Internal Troops, special-purpose units of the ministry of Internal Affairs and Security Service of Ukraine. The Ukrainian land component in Crimea was far more numerous than, for example, in Donetsk Oblast and Luhansk Oblast. **Potentially, its combat power was stronger than the land component of the Russian Black Sea Fleet** based in Crimea, represented mostly by the 810th marine Brigade.

The Ukrainian combined force on the peninsula included the **Naval Forces** and **Air Force** units. The Naval Forces of Ukraine had under their command the coastal defense units, represented primarily by the *36th Coastal Defense Brigade* in Perevalne, *1st marine Battalion* in Feodosia and the *501st marine Battalion* in



Frigate Hetman Sahaydachniy during anti-piracy operations in Gulf of Aden, February 2014. Photo by Pavlo Parfenyuk

Kerch. The coastal defense units had tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery systems, air defense and coastal missile systems, etc.

The marine component of the Ukrainian Naval Forces comprised of 17 combat ships, approx. 30 logistics vessels and a handful of cutters of various designation. **However, this force was very inferior in combat power to the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation.** At the beginning of the Russian aggression, the Ukrainian naval flagship frigate Hetman Sahaydachniy was returning from the Atalanta anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden.

The Ukrainian fleet was based in Sevastopol and on the Donuzlav Lake. Novofedorivka was home to the base of the *10th Saky Naval Air Force Brigade*.

The Ukrainian Air Force was represented by the *Crimea Tactical Group* consisting of the *204th Sevastopol Tactical Air Force Brigade* under command of Colonel Yuliy mamchur (who gained fame of his courageous stand against Russian special operations squad at Belbek airfield), as well as anti-aircraft missile troops and SIGINT units in Yevpatoria, Feodosia, Sevastopol, etc.

The *Azov-Black Sea Regional Command* of the State Border Guard Service was headquartered in Simferopol. In addition to the land forces, its command extended over the ships and cutters of the *Sea Guard detachments* in Sevastopol (Balaklava), Kerch and Yalta.

Troops of the ministry of Internal Affairs were represented by the Simferopol brigade, two operations regiments in Sevastopol and Krasnokamenka, and battalions in Yevpatoria and Haspra. The 47th Special Purpose Regiment Tiger was specifically training to put down civil unrest, counter sabotage groups and terrorism. In addition, Crimea was home to well-trained **special-purpose riot police units of the ministry of Internal Affairs** (*Berkut*, etc.) and the *Alfa* unit of the **Security Service of Ukraine**.

All in all, there were **over 20,000** Ukrainian servicemen in Crimea in February 2014. With proper combat readiness and competent command, these forces could have successfully countered the Russian aggression. However, this never happened for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the service personnel was morally not ready for a war with Russia. For many years, the Ukrainian servicemen and enforcement agencies in Crimea maintained close personal and working relationship with their colleagues from the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The generation of officers selflessly building Ukrainian Naval Forces in the 1990s was relegated to the background. They were replaced with the people who had put on uniforms out of selfish considerations. They were perfectly content with Ukraine declaring the absence of potential enemies and officially promoting a doctrine where there is

nobody to war with. During the Yanukovych era, the *territorial recruiting concept* became particularly popular. It only enhanced the already existing diffusion tendencies between the Ukrainian Naval Forces and Russian Black Sea Fleet with servicemen transferring in both directions (through a voluntary discharge procedure) and strengthened family ties between the Ukrainian and Russian servicemen.

Secondly, the staff of Crimean enforcement agencies mostly disapproved of the Revolution of Dignity and questioned the legitimacy of the new authorities after the victory of the revolution. The Yanukovych regime deployed Crimean units of the Internal Troops, special-purpose units of the ministry of Internal Affairs and the Security Service of Ukraine in the confrontation at the maidan. They sustained casualties, both fatal and non-fatal.

Yanukovych made an attempt at deploying the Army, including the Crimean units, against the protesters. On February 19, 2014 **Yuri Ilyin**, the Naval Forces Commander, was appointed as the Head of General Staff of the Ukrainian Army. Following his order, commanders of several military units, including the Crimean ones, sent their personnel, combat vehicles and weapons to Kyiv. However it was too late, and the Army did not participate in the fight against the maidan. At the time when Russian servicemen started to blockade of Ukrainian military bases in Crimea, Russian negotiators went on persuading the Ukrainian commanders that the new authorities would not forgive their readiness to suppress protests in Kyiv.

Thirdly, neither the new authorities, nor the servicemen and enforcement agencies in Crimea proved to be ready for hybrid methods of the Russian aggression. Facing the insurmountable internal and external challenges, the new country leadership did not dare to order the armed resistance to invaders. The Crimean servicemen witnessed the uncertainty of the official Kyiv and chose to bide their time. Russian blockades and forced takeovers of the Ukrainian military facilities were done with heavy involvement of the local civilians (or Russian servicemen posing as civilians), and the Ukrainian military would not dare to shoot at them. And lastly, Russian intelligence agencies had ample time to turn many officers and officials, while demoralizing the others by a mixture of intimidation, promises and propaganda.

Civil pro-Ukrainian forces of Crimea were mobilized by the Revolution of Dignity, but proved unprepared for confrontation with the Russian troops. **The Crimean maidan** gathered numerous activists in Simferopol. Rallies were held in other towns of the peninsula as well. The organized Crimean Tatars movement supported the Revolution of Dignity and this kind of support was very important.

The unwavering and capable leaders of the Crimean maidan challenged the reputation of the ARC as a “pro-Russian region”. However, non-violent resistance to the hybrid aggression ultimately lead to beatings, abduction and torturing of the activists (**Andriy Shchekun**), and even murders (**Reshat Ametov**, etc.).

WHEN DID THE OPERATION START?

Officially, Ukraine claims the Russian aggression started on **February 20, 2014**. This date is properly *fixed in the Ukrainian laws*. However, the official acts pointing at this date refer to the events that happened in fact a bit later: violation of the state border crossing procedures by the Russian Army in the area of the Kerch Strait and the Russian military units stationed in Crimea blockading the Ukrainian military facilities.



Medal For the Return of Crimea

The strongest evidence that the operation started on February 20, 2014 is offered by the fact that this date is engraved on the departmental medal **For the Return of Crimea** (approved by the Order of the Defense minister of the Russian Federation on march 21, 2014). The Russian side has never offered any official explanation why the “return” countdown started on February 20. A number of unofficial comments refer to various events that took place on that day, directly unrelated to the occupation.

“Recognized” this way by the Russians, this date means that the aggression started on February 20, i. e. when Yanukovich was still incumbent President, physically present in Kyiv. And this destroys the basic point of the Kremlin about the “return” of Crimea commencing, ostensibly, in conditions of the “coup d’etat and anarchy in Ukraine”. The coincidence of the start of aggression in Crimea and the massacre at the maidan, *the potential connection between these two events*, is still a question to be answered. With solid proof that the Russian operation commenced on February 20, 2014 Ukraine may considerably strengthen its positions in international courts and in boost its diplomatic effort against the aggressor. On the other hand, the date on the Russian medal might well be a case of negligence or *deliberate disinformation*.

Military activities of Russia in Crimea on the eve of seizure of the ARC governmental buildings are detailed in the reports of the *intelligence department* of the Ukrainian Naval Forces headquarters. For example, on the night of

February 21, two columns of BTR-80 (total of 14 armored personnel carriers) left their permanent station at Cozacha Bay to reinforce the guarding of military airfield of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Kacha and Hvardiiske. Unofficially, Russian military explained they were acting to prevent seizure of the Black Sea Fleet bases by the maidan activists. However, there are grounds to believe that special care for the airfields were connected to the planned airlifting of the *additional troops* from Russia. The reinforced airfield security was but a small part of the events happening in winter 2013–2014. According to Anatoly Burgomystrenko, Deputy Chief of the Intelligence Directorate, in violation of the state border crossing procedure, Russia started clandestine delivery of the additional forces to Sevastopol by the Russian landing ships as early as February 2.

In the context of further processes, there was an important political event on February 20 when **Vladimir Konstantinov**, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of the ARC, made a statement at the closing press-conference during his official visit to moscow. The Speaker of the Crimean parliament pointed out that, *if the central authority in Kyiv is toppled, Crimea will have no other choice but denounce the 1954 decision on the transfer of Crimean Oblast to Ukraine*. De facto, being the top official of the ARC, Konstantinov publicly entertained a possibility of secession of Crimea from Ukraine. Konstantinov was a member of the ruling *Party of Regions* but he started talking about of the Crimean separatism before everyone realized that the game was *over for Yanukovych*. Apparently, Konstantinov's rhetoric grew bolder after secret talks in the Russian capital city.

The Crimean Verkhovna Rada was to convene for an **extraordinary session in Simferopol the day after, ostensibly to adopt the address to Russia**. However, due to negative response and accusations of separatism, the parliament *moved the session over to February 26*. Instead, members of parliament representing the Party of Regions, as well as Communists and Russian nationalists from the **Russian Unity** party (Sergey Tsekov and Sergey Aksyonov), held an extended session in the Crimean parliament on February 21. Konstantinov reported about the results of his trip to moscow,

The behavior of Konstantinov and the Crimean mPs generally fits the hypothetical scenario of the special operation scheduled to start on February 20. To legitimize the occupation, it was vital for moscow to establish control over the representative body—Crimean parliament, thereby sanctioning its further actions by fictitious decisions of the elected representatives of the people. It would be safe to assume that the Verkhovna Rada of the ARC made two attempts to pass the necessary decisions: on February 21 and February 26. Both attempts failed due to the hesitant stance of the members of parliament and

the pressure exerted by the pro-Ukrainian forces. The Crimean parliament started working in a manner that pleased Moscow only after it was seized by the Russian special operations forces.

Open-source information about the deployment of the invasion forces does not allow to establish the precise time of commencement of the military operation. **The solid evidence is dated from February 22 to February 24.** According to Oleg Teryushin, Sergeant of the *31st Air Assault Brigade* (military unit 73612, *Ulyanovsk*), his men were put on combat alert on February 22 and, as part of the battalion task forces, were airlifted to Anapa, from where they were taken to Novorossiysk by trucks, and on to Sevastopol by the landing ship, on February 24. Later on, Teryushin, dressed in a uniform without insignia, participated in the blockade of the 36th Coastal Defense Brigade of the Ukrainian Naval Forces in Perevalne.

The decision to launch the operation may have been adopted at one of the closed meetings under the guidance of Putin and convened in response to yet another change in political situation in Ukraine. For example, **on the night of February 21, the Russian President convened a briefing session with permanent members of the Security Council of the Russian Federation in Moscow** dedicated to Ukraine. The session was attended by Prime minister Dmitry Medvedev, Speakers of the Chambers of Parliament—Valentina Matvienko and Sergey Naryshkin, Head of the Presidential Administration Sergey Ivanov, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Patrushev and his Deputy—Rashid Nurgaliev, Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sergey Lavrov), Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Vladimir Kolokol'tsev), Head of



Russian large landing ship Nikolay Filchenkov begins unloading in Sevastopol's Cozacha Bay, beginning of 2014. Photo by Oleksiy Chorny

the ministry of Defense (Sergey Shoygu), Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (Mikhail Fradkov) and the permanent member of the Security Council of the Russian Federation—Boris Gryzlov.

The session in Moscow took place about the same time *when Yanukovych held negotiations in Kyiv with the leaders of Ukrainian opposition* through the mediation of Western diplomats—Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Germany), Radosław Sikorski (Poland), Eric Fournier (France) and Vladimir Lukin (Russia). After the massacre at the Maidan, Kyiv was looking for a way to de-escalate the situation. The negotiations concluded with a compromise agreement between the authorities and the opposition, which, however, was never implemented. There is no open-source information on the outcome of the briefing session in Moscow. However, according to the open sources, *before that night, the Russian President had summoned members of the Security Council for briefing sessions to discuss the events at the Maidan only twice: on January 24 and January 31, 2014.*

In his interview in 2015, Putin openly admitted that **he made the decision to annex Crimea at a meeting with only four incognito colleagues on the night of February 23, 2014.** The same opinion is shared by the Russian political refugee, former member of the State Duma—Ilya Ponomarev. According to his information, the helicopter with Putin aboard nearly crashed on February 22 in Sochi—the city hosting the *Winter Olympics*. This incident is thought to have driven the Russian President toward radical actions and he decided on the invasion at the meeting that took place on the night of February 22—February 23.

Notably enough, **by the order of Putin, on the night of February 23, Russian military helicopters sneaked the fugitive President Yanukovych** from the Azov coast of Donetsk Oblast and to the airfield in Yeysk (Krasnodar Krai). On the same day, Yanukovych was brought to Anapa (240 km away from Sochi) and afterwards—to Hvardiiske airfield of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation (Crimea).

On February 23, an *open political revolt* against the Ukrainian authorities broke out. Announced three days ahead, the meeting in Sevastopol gathered record numbers of participants. Representatives of local pro-Russian groups and member of the Ukrainian parliament **Vadym Kolesnichenko** (closely tied to the Russian structures exerting humanitarian influence in Ukraine) referred to the events in the capital city as *coup d'état* and called for rejection of the new authorities and decisions of the Ukrainian parliament. By the motion of the organizers, the participants of the meeting “voted” to appoint **Aleksei Chaly**—a Sevastopol businessman and a citizen of the Russian Federation—as a “*people’s mayor*” of Sevastopol, a position that had never existed before. The

insurgents announced their intention to take control over the law enforcement agencies in the city, called on Russia for help and started signing up volunteers to “*self-defense formations*”.

At night, Yanukovych left Sevastopol on a warship of the Black Sea Fleet, and on February 24, Sevastopol City Council created a position for Chaly—“*Chairman of the Coordination Council for the Establishment of Administration to Promote Vital Activities of Sevastopol*”. Russian flag was raised over the Sevastopol City State Administration and the “self-defense groups” set up seven checkpoints at the entry points to the city. On that same day, people eye-witnessed active movements of the armored vehicles of the marines of the Black Sea Fleet across the city.

In the context of events at the end of winter 2014, the **Sochi Olympics** (February 7—February 23) were vital. In 2008, Moscow chose to invade Georgia on the opening day of the *Olympic Games in Beijing*, hoping the international community would be focusing on China instead of the Caucasus. In 2014, however, the Kremlin postponed the open aggression against Ukraine until after the closing of the Sochi Olympics. As a host country, Russia feared to spark walk-outs among the nations participating in sports events. (Comments that Russia would actively pursue its aggressive policy against Ukraine after the Sochi Olympics were not infrequent during the Revolution of Dignity).

The Olympic Games gave Russia an excuse for a considerable military buildup in the region. Infantry and air assault brigades were deployed to provide security during the Olympic Games, while a Russian Navy group patrolled the adjacent offshore areas. Islamist underground movement in the North Caucasus and loyalists of Mikheil Saakashvili, former President of Georgia, were named as potential threats. After the Olympic Games, the Russian command used the return of the ships of its Black Sea Fleet to their permanent base in Sevastopol to smuggle a part of the invasion force from the Caucasus.

HYBRID AGGRESSION

Russian policy against Ukraine during the annexation of Crimea, destabilization of the southern and eastern regions and combat activities in Donbas became a practical implementation of the so-called *Gerasimov Doctrine*—non-linear **Russian war**. The Ukrainian *think tank* **Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI** characterizes this war as *hybression* (hybrid aggression)—a package of diverse actions, adjustable in terms of intensity and hybrid in nature, against the adversary, applied in a variable algorithm, where military instruments are not dominant, and their application is thoroughly disguised and vigorously

denied, while the very act of aggression generates uncertainties that hinder its identification.

In February and March 2014, Russia acted on Crimea, combining various methods of diplomatic pressure, information and psychological operations, military intervention and deployment of armed forces in breach of agreements regulating their presence in Ukraine, sending in the irregular gangs, blockading, providing military and political support to opposition groups, etc. Russian activities had one distinct feature—**plausible deniability**. The annexation of Crimea was presented as a local initiative. On March 4, 2014 Putin publicly denied any role of Russian troops in the Crimean events.

The cover-up story referred to self-organization and self-determination of the *inhabitants of Crimea* amid a coup d'état and anarchy in Ukraine, as well as the threat of the armed Ukrainian extremists invading the peninsula. Military and political actions were carried out on behalf of the authorities of the ARC and Sevastopol (there were references to some “*Security Council of Crimea*” but no one seemed to have any idea about its personal composition and powers). Regular and irregular units from the Russian Federation were, ostensibly, local self-defense groups and Russian volunteers.

The occupation troops and paramilitary groups took civilian facilities under control in Crimea fairly quickly: the government buildings, sea ports and airfields, telecom systems, strategic enterprises, etc. Only bases of the Army, Border Guard Service and Security Service of Ukraine were still beyond their control—armed and capable of fighting back. Russians took into account the overall political situation and **expected to neutralize the Ukrainian military in Crimea without resorting to armed confrontation**.

In the early stages of blockading, commanders of the Russian units claimed to protect the Ukrainian military bases against *the extremists*. The Russians tried to negotiate the surrender of firearms or tried to have the Ukrainian servicemen return their firearms to the guarded armories. (The Maidan activists and the Crimean Tatars were most likely to qualify as the mysterious “*extremists*”.) The occupants pressed on the Ukrainian commanders that under no circumstances should they *respond to provocations* and thereby cause casualties among the civilians.

Later on, there were attempts to turn the Ukrainian servicemen, have them defect to the Crimean separatists and Russia. To secure any such defection, the separatist authorities started **imitating the military construction**. On March 1, the illegitimate prime minister of the ARC Sergey Aksyonov issued an executive order, effectively taking all enforcement agencies of Crimea under his personal



Masked Russian servicemen in uniforms without insignia are blocking the Ukrainian military unit in Bakhchysarai. march 3, 2014. Photo by Oleksiy mazepa

command. The Crimean government made up the position of “the minister of defense” and assigned it to **Valeriy Kuznetsov**, major-General, retired (former military advisor to President meshkov and ex-Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Crimea; permanent resident of moscow since 1995). **Denis Berezovsky**, the traitor, was appointed by the separatist government to the position of the “*Naval Forces Commander of the ARC*”. Then they suggested that the Ukrainian servicemen should join the newly established force and take the oath of allegiance to the Crimean government. Formally, the “Naval Forces of the ARC” existed for two weeks—until Russia annexed Crimea.

Ukrainian bases were often visited by chieftains of paramilitary groups—turncoats from the Ukrainian enforcement agencies, separatist leaders and Russian officials—to spread their propaganda. High officials and famous persons, such as **Nikolay Pankov**, Deputy minister of Defense of the Russian Federation; **Igor Turchenyuk**, Deputy Commander of the Southern military District of the Russian Federation; **Alexandr Vitko**, Black Sea Fleet Commander; **Vladimir Karpushenko**, Hero of Russia (commander of reconnaissance company

of the 810th Marine Regiment during the Second Chechen War), *solicited the Ukrainian commanders and the staff to commit betrayal.*

Ukrainians servicemen were promised equivalent positions and increased salaries on a par with the amounts paid to the servicemen of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation. One of the favorite talking points was also an impending demise of Ukraine as an independent state. Unit commanders were daunted. *Ultimatums were presented* from time to time to give up the units by some specific time the day after under the threat of the armed assault if the commanders chose to ignore the demand. (Most of such threats have never been delivered on.)

2014. Shrove Sunday (March 2). my friend worked in an office close to the Ukrainian Naval Forces Staff Headquarters. She told me it was blocked, with electric power and water supply cut off. Our soldiers made do with combat rations but the smokes were terribly short. I bought two cartons, tied them together with scotch tape and wrapped in a plastic bag. Also bought a couple of sausages and top-up cards of various cell operators. As I drove up, I saw our soldiers sitting on the roof of the headquarters. I walk up to the fence, leap up and toss the bag over. A group of youths comes rushing at me, snatching me by the sleeves and yelling "Banderite!", "Fascist!" Servicemen wearing no insignia but carrying sniper rifles lay on the roofs of the nearby houses. It was awful. We saw wives and small kids kept away from their husbands and dads.

Fragments of interview with an anonymous social activist from Sevastopol

Most of the Russian troops arriving in Crimea wore *no insignia and national colors* (apart from the Russian flag, which, in the context of Crimea, might as well be a sign of pro-Russian political attitude rather than nationality). However, public denials or disavowals were mostly a ritual for the uninitiated. The origin of the soldiers wearing the latest *Ratnik* combat gear, carrying the latest Russian firearms and operating the latest Russian military machinery, could



Large anti-submarine ship *Ochakov* sunk at the mouth of Donuzlav bay, march 6, 2014. Photo by Oleksiy mazepa

hardly be mistaken. (Servicemen of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation normally stationed in Crimea had a distinctly different look.)

The euphemism “*polite men*” describing the servicemen coming from Russia became an element of this “game”, an allusion to the official position and as well as the actual situation. This was an apt propaganda definition for the restrained attitude of the armed soldiers. meanwhile, the Ukrainians called them “*little green men*”, sarcastically pointing out the absurdity of their anonymity.

Russian servicemen in full gear, carrying small arms and often hiding their faces behind balaclavas, accompanied by armored vehicles and army trucks, participated in blocking of the Ukrainian military facilities, manned the checkpoints, patrolled the areas and executed special assignments. Some Russian servicemen, primarily those of the special operations squads, **acted under the guise of paramilitary detachments and Ukrainian enforcement agencies**. They worked the crowds, incited the local people and neutralized pro-Ukrainian activists during the street protests.

During the blocking of Ukrainian military facilities, Russians would lock the perimeter, dig in and harden their positions around the facility and disrupt the radio communications with jamming equipment. Naval crew bases were blocked from the land and from the sea. Naval blockade involved ships and auxiliary vessels of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation: missile cruiser *moskva* (the flagship), missile boat *Ivanovets*, minesweepers *Turbinist* and *Vice-Admiral Zhukov*, various tugboats, etc. On the early stage, some Russian

ships would block the bay gates, *imitating mechanical failure and loss of way*. To keep the ships of the Southern Naval Base locked in the Donuzlav Lake, Russians *sunk their ships at the mouth of the bay*: Large anti-submarine ship **Ochakov** and diving support vessels **VM-416**, **VM-413** and **VM-232**. military facilities and ships were stormed with the use of armored vehicles (BTR-80), aircraft (Mi-35M helicopters) and vessels (tug boats, motor boats, etc.).

It has been established that the annexation of Crimea was carried out by the servicemen of the Southern, Western and Central military districts of Russia, mostly from the special forces units of the main Intelligence Directorate (Spetsnaz GRU), infantry and air assault units and the marines. *InformNapalm* volunteer intelligence community has been investigating the circumstances of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and gathering evidence of involvement of various units of the Russian Army in occupation of Crimea and combat activities in Donbas since 2014. *InformNapalm* has collated the most extensive open-source database of the identified Russian military units to date. According to the findings of investigations carried out by *InformNapalm*, **21** military units of the Russian Armed Forces took part in the occupation of Crimea.

Military Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine has also collated the list of military units of the Russian Federation involved in occupation of Crimea. Their list is shorter but it mentions some units left out by the *InformNapalm* volunteers:

- ◆ 45th Airborne Special Operations Regiment (military unit 28337, Kubinka);
- ◆ 98th Airborne Division (military unit 65451 Ivanovo);
- ◆ 22nd Special Forces Brigade (GRU) (military unit 11659, Stepnoy);
- ◆ 331st Airborne Regiment (military unit 71211, Kostroma);
- ◆ 25th Special Forces Regiment (GRU) (military unit 05525, Stavropol);
- ◆ 3rd Special Forces Brigade (GRU) (military unit 21208, Tolyatti);
- ◆ 727th marine Battalion of Caspian Flotilla (military unit 20264, Astrakhan).

The *InformNapalm* database also provides information on **136** servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces awarded with the medal For the Return of Crimea.

Paramilitary “self-defense” and cossack groups actively assisted in the occupation of Crimea. Some of these groups were established in Crimea during or before the occupation, others simply came from Russia.

First calls for gathering of the “**Crimean self-defense**” were made in response to the Revolution of Dignity. In December 2013, the relevant initiative was filed by **Vadym Kolesnichenko** (member of the Ukrainian parliament elected to represent Sevastopol) and **Sergey Smolyaninov** (Deputy



Russian Army military units involved in seizure of Crimea*



15th Motorized Rifle Brigade
Roshchinsky, Samara Oblast
military unit 90600
Central Military District
📍 1,900 km



7th Armored Brigade
Chebarkul, Chelyabinsk Oblast
military unit 89547
Central Military District
📍 2,660 km



2nd Special Forces Brigade
Pskov
military unit 64044
Western Military District
📍 1,900 km



18th Motorized Rifle Brigade
Khankala, Chechnya
military unit 27777
Southern Military District
📍 1,200 km



66th Signals Brigade
Stavropol
military unit 41600
Southern Military District
📍 800 km



10th Special Forces Brigade
Goryachy Klyuch
military unit 51532
Southern Military District
📍 500 km



19th Motorized Rifle Brigade
Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia
military unit 20634
Southern Military District
📍 1,100 km



7th Air Assault Division
Novorossiysk
military unit 61756
Southern Military District
📍 400 km



16th Special Forces Brigade
Tambov
military unit 54607
Western Military District
📍 1,200 km



21st Motorized Rifle Brigade
Totskoye, Orenburg Oblast
military unit 12128
Central Military District
📍 2,100 km



76th Air Assault Division
Pskov
military unit 07264
Western Military District
📍 1,900 km



99th Logistics Brigade
Maykop, Adygea
military unit 72153
Southern Military District
📍 700 km



32nd Motorized Rifle Brigade
Shilovo, Novosibirsk Oblast
military unit 22316
Central Military District
📍 4,300 km



31st Air Assault Brigade
Ulyanovsk
military unit 73612
Central Military District
📍 1,900 km



136th Motorized Rifle Brigade
Buynaksk, Dagestan
military unit 63354
Southern Military District
📍 1,300 km



34th Motorized Rifle Brigade
Storozhevaya-2, Karachay-Cherkessia
military unit 01485
Southern Military District
📍 800 km



15th Coastal Defense Missile Artillery Brigade
Sevastopol
military unit 80365
Southern Military District
📍 0 km



34th Signals and Control Brigade
Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia
military unit 29202
Southern Military District
📍 1,100 km



74th Motorized Rifle Brigade
Yurga, Kemerovo Oblast
military unit 21005
Central Military District
📍 4,500 km



810th Marine Brigade
Sevastopol
military unit 13140
Southern Military District
📍 0 km



7057th Naval Aviation Base
Kacha, Sevastopol
military unit 49311
Southern Military District
📍 0 km

📍 Distance to Crimea

* Based on OSINT investigations of InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community

of Sevastopol City Council). However, things went no further than volunteers signing up. Loyal to the Yanukovych regime, the Crimean authorities set about the organization of “self-defense” in the late January 2014. Specifically, in Sevastopol, the initiator was **Grigory Yatsuba**, Head of the City State Administration, who was vastly supported by pro-Russian public organizations, cossacks and pro-Putin *Night Wolves* biker group. The “self-defense” members kept vigil by the administrative buildings and patrolled the streets, looking for the local and mythical visiting maidan activists. On the other hand, local authorities and Party of Regions organized special trains to take Anti-Maidan supporters to Kyiv.

A month later, the “self-defense” opened a new page of its illustrious history. Now the people were picked not by the Yanukovych officials but by pro-Russian groups seeking the assistance of Moscow in their confrontation with the new Ukrainian authorities. Representatives of the *Russian Unity* party (headed by Sergey Tsekov and Sergey Aksyonov), supported by the Russian cossack organizations, were signing volunteers up to “rapid response groups” in Simferopol. **mikhail Sheremet**—one of the leaders of the Crimean “self-defense” during the Russian invasion in March 2014—happened to become a prominent figure in this environment.

In Sevastopol, the “self-defense units” were formed by the *Russian Block* party (headed by **Gennady Basov**) with the assistance of a number of organizations: The *Coordination Council of the Russian Organization of Tavria and Sevastopol* (headed by **Vladimir Tyunin**); *Patriots of Sevastopol* cossack community (headed by **Igor Rudenko-Minikh**); the *Black Sea Cossack Hundred* (headed by **Anatoly Mareta**), etc. Activists of these groups had risen to prominence long before the events described here: some of them had prior criminal records or were under investigation on counts of anti-state rhetoric and participation in attacks against the Ukrainian servicemen in 2008.

The “self-defense” chieftains were mostly retired enforcement officers with **solid experience in organization and command of the military personnel**. For example, **Vladimir Mertsalov**—one of the leaders of the Crimean “self-defense”—was an ex-policeman and chairman of the trade union of the ministry of Internal Affairs personnel in the ARC.

The founder of Sevastopol “self-defense” unit—**Victor Litvinov**—used to serve in the Ukrainian Naval Forces and the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation. His appointee “Chief of Staff”—**Oleg Roslyakov**—used to be the commander of the 810th marine Regiment of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation from 1998 to 2003. Among other participants of the Crimean events in February and March 2014, eyewitnesses recall **Igor Girkin** (a. k. a. Igor



Servicemen of the 99th Logistics Brigade awarded with medals For the Return of Crimea. Photo provided by InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community

Strelkov)—who would later become the leader of Donbas insurgents, Russian intelligence officer, veteran of war in Transnistria, Bosnia and North Caucasus. According to the *Novaya Gazeta*, the group of militants brought in from Russia were supervised by Colonel (Ret.) **Frants Klintsevich**, Chairman of the Russian Union of Veterans of the Afghan War and a Russian mP. According to Aleksei Chaly, the creation of “self-defense” groups was facilitated by Vice-Admiral (Ret.) **Sergey menyaylo**, ex-Deputy Commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and future “Governor of Sevastopol”.

Paramilitary “self-defense” groups were further reinforced by the servicemen of **Berkut** riot police force of the ministry of Internal Affairs based in Crimea. During the Revolution of Dignity, they were particularly brutal in confrontation with the maidan activists in Kyiv. On February 22, they returned to Crimea. Authorized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to be in charge of the ministry of Internal Affairs, Arsen Avakov issued an order to disband the Berkut force. However, separatist authorities of the ARC and Sevastopol set up their own units under the same name.



“Self-defense” and pro-Russian activists next to the blocked Ukrainian Naval Coastal Defense Headquarters. Simferopol. march 5, 2014. Photo by Oleksiy mazepa

Local “self-defense” groups were soon reinforced with paramilitary groups arriving from abroad, mostly from Russia. According to the *Novaya Gazeta*, on February 28, an Il-76 plane took off the Chkalovsky military airfield (Moscow Oblast, Russian Federation), to bring to Crimea a group of Russian nationals—the *Afghan war veterans, sportsmen, employees of security agencies, members of military-patriotic clubs and bikers* a total of 170 men. People from the Chechen Republic were used in order to influence the Crimean Tatars community. **Serbian chetniks** turned up at the checkpoints near Sevastopol. There is further evidence of other foreign nationals in Crimea at that time. Of all paramilitary units, **cossacks** (mostly nationals of Russia) proved to be the most significant factor. They came to the peninsula by the Kerch ferry from Krasnodar Krai.

Under the Russian laws, persons who identify themselves as cossacks and who are members of the registered cossack organizations, are legally authorized to organize territorial paramilitary units, headed by the chieftains (the atamans), and get or provide special and military training. Russian cossacks are routinely involved in law enforcement, civil and territorial defense, or as guards of the state frontier, or in military-patriotic education of youth or a number of other functions.

In February 2014, Sevastopol saw the Kuban cossacks. These wore funny garb and carried horsewhips. They camped at No. 14a, Astan Kesayev Street (right next to the a district police headquarters of Sevastopol). This same house served as the base for the group of Russian Block party militants under the name of Sports Club SOBOL. Since march, the cossacks had free access to the police stations and could stay there all day long. In urban transport, one could see athletic youths who had a hard time paying their fare in hryvnias. The cossacks organized checkpoints where they would check the IDs of motorists and other people.

Fragments of interview with an anonymous social activist from Sevastopol

Cossacks enlisted to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation do military service in the units that have cossack names. The register of the Kuban Cossack Host—the nearest to Crimea—lists approx. 30,000 cossacks. A lot of them are combat veterans (Transnistria, Abkhazia, Chechnya, Yugoslavia) and retired military and law enforcement men.

The number of Russian cossacks arriving in Crimea at the end of February 2014 varied *from several hundreds to thousands*. There is evidence that involvement of the Russian cossacks in the Crimean events was arranged by **Konstantin Zatulin**, member of the State Duma, member of the Presidential Council for Cossack Affairs. On the peninsula, Russian cossacks got assistance from the pro-Russian cossack groups of the ARC and Sevastopol, smaller in numbers and poorer in training, such as the *Union of Crimean Cossacks* (headed by **Sergey Yurchenko**). Cossacks took active part in blockading and seizure of the Ukrainian military facilities, stand-by duty at the checkpoints (specifically, on the administrative border between Crimea and Kherson Oblast), and working with the local residents.

According to the Ukrainian servicemen, the seizure of military units proceeded as follows. A loud mass of civilians, including pensioners, women and children (indoctrinated local residents) would lead the charge toward the gates and passages. Dozens of paramilitary men (cossacks, “self-defense” militants) would follow and push the crown further on. In the rear guard, there were

Russian soldiers in full gear, who appeared to be ready to engage in a firefight, if the Ukrainians put up a resistance (properly organized positions taken by snipers and machine-gunners). If the civilians and cossacks were unable to pass an obstacle, Russian military trucks or armored vehicles would make a break in the fence or the gate. The use of civilians and paramilitary groups in seizure of the military units kept the Ukrainian servicemen from armed resistance. However, occupation of Crimea did not go entirely without casualties. The Ukrainian warrant officer **Serhiy Kokurin** was shot dead by a sniper during the storming of the 13th Photogrammetry Center by the militants in Simferopol on march 18. Another serviceman was wounded.

Deployment of the regular army and paramilitary groups in Crimea started before the seizure of the Ukrainian administrative buildings and went on for the entire month of the active phase. military personnel, machinery and arms were delivered to Sevastopol by the large landing ships of the Black Sea Fleet (**Nikolay Filchenkov**, **Azov**, **Yamal and Saratov**), Baltic Fleet (**Kaliningrad and minsk**) and Northern Fleet (**Georgy Pobedonosets** and **Olenegorsky Gorniak**) of the Russian Naval Forces. The personnel was also delivered by the Black Sea Fleet minesweepers **Turbinist** and **Vice-Admiral Zhukov**. The ships unloaded mostly in *Cozacha Bay* where the Russian marines were stationed; other points of destination were *Sukharna Bay* and *Pivdenna (Southern) Bay*.

Airlift missions were performed by the Russian airplanes and helicopters (Il-76, An-124, mi-8, mi-24) landing on the Black Sea Fleet airfields in **Hvardiiske** and **Kacha**. military Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine has disclosed the side numbers of some Il-76MD airplanes engaged in the operation: 76722, 76731, 76776, 76777. *InformNapalm* volunteer intelligence community has also obtained evidence of involvement of Il-76MD with side number RA-78805.

Over the Kerch Strait, the Russian forces were delivered by ferries **Nikolai Aksenenko** and **Yeysk** (trucks) and **Annenkov** (trains). There is evidence of engagement of other civil vessels for sea transportation, such as *Sevastopol* that was used for transportation of civilian members of the "self-defense" groups from Sevastopol to Yalta.

The hybrid troops arrived in Crimea in two stages: clandestinely and openly. During the clandestine stage, movements of the landing ships between Novorossiysk and Sevastopol were explained as *routine daily activities* of the Black Sea Fleet. Border Guards of Ukraine were notified of the arrivals at the airfields, however *understating the number of the landing planes*. military buildup and enhanced security at the facilities were, ostensibly, the result of *public and political turmoil* in Ukraine. Cossacks arriving by the Kerch ferry were posing as *pilgrims*

to the Orthodox holy places in Crimea or making up stories about visiting their relatives. Servicemen arriving from Russia would receive *civilian clothes purchased in advance for that very occasion* so as to be able to leave their accommodations. On the second stage, after the communication facilities had been seized, air defense neutralized and military units blocked, the occupants proceeded more openly. On the eve of and during the annexation operation of Crimea, a total of 30,000 servicemen and undetermined numbers of civilians arrived from Russia. moreover, 12,500 servicemen of the Black Sea Fleet had been stationed in Ukraine on a permanent basis.

The arriving Russian servicemen were mostly accommodated at the facilities of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. They are known to have stayed in the barracks of the **7th Training Detachment (Lazarev Barracks)**, **810th Marine Brigade** (Cozacha Bay) and the **Divers School** (Karantynna Bay). The smaller numbers were accommodated at the air base **Hvardiiske** next to Simferopol. In March, when the troops were built up to sufficient strength and needed to stay by the blocked Ukrainian units, the intervention forces set up several *field camps*, specifically next to the training ground at Cape Opuk, the Khersones reserve airfield (near Sevastopol) and the training grounds of the 810th Brigade. The *Novaya Gazeta* investigation mentioned the civilian militants from Russia accommodated in the **Black Sea Fleet health resort Yalta** (city of Yalta). Russian Cossacks from Krasnodar Krai used the **St. Andrew's Cathedral** in Kerch and the



Kirill Fedorov from the 810th marine Brigade of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in front of a LPD Kaliningrad of the Baltic Fleet, March 4, 2014. Photo provided by InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community



Magomed Khamatayev, scout and machine gunner of the special operations battalion of 18th motorized Rifle Brigade, aboard the ferry Nikolai Aksenenko at the port Krym. Photo provided by InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community

nearby Komsomolsky Park as their logistics base. The “self-defense”, cossacks and other paramilitary groups camped in various places, such as the offices of pro-Russian parties and organizations, as well as in the seized premises.

Military Prosecutor’s Office of Ukraine has collated evidence of at least 10 main battle tanks, 207 armored personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles and armored vehicles (GAZ-2330 “Tigr”), 8 launchers of the coastal missile systems K300P “Bastion-P”, 24 multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) BM-21 “Grad”, 12 9K57 “Uragan” mLRS and 10 transport loading vehicles to them, over 80 artillery pieces and at least 25 self-propelled howitzers (including 17 “Gvozdika” howitzers), 80 air defense systems (including 16 surface-to-air missile systems S-300, 8 self-propelled anti-aircraft missile and gun systems “Pantsir-1”, 4 surface-to-air missile systems “Osa”), 16 Su-24 fighter bombers, 2 Su-27 fighters, 6 Su-24MP reconnaissance planes, 26 helicopters (including 3 Mi-8, 12 Mi-24 and 11 Ka-52), and about 640 Ural and KamAZ military trucks delivered to Crimea between February 20 and March 16, 2014.

In the interview in the *Crimea. The Way Home* (2015) documentary, Putin confirmed that he personally commanded the annexation operation of Crimea.

THE COURSE OF OCCUPATION

Verkhovna Rada of the ARC was the first building seized by the Russian servicemen in Crimea. The day before, on February 26, civil unrest was seething behind the walls of the Crimean parliament. On a session scheduled for that day, the MPs were expected to vote for separatist decisions and send a plea to Russia. Pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian activists gathered side by side near the Verkhovna Rada of the ARC. Sources and eyewitnesses vary in their estimates of the numerical strength of participants, but proponents of territorial integrity of Ukraine by and large exceeded the crowd gathered by the Russian Unity party. About 30 people were wounded in a clash that took place between the Pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian activists. Two persons died. In the face of the threat of further escalation (and, probably, due to the absence of the *quorum*), the Crimean parliament refrained from making loud statements. The confrontation in the streets was stopped. The organizers of both meetings—Refat Chubarov and Sergey Aksyonov—convinced their activists to disperse.

Around 4 a. m. the day after, the building of Verkhovna Rada of the ARC was taken by a well-armed joint detachment of over 100 Russian soldiers who met no resistance whatsoever. Some time later, Russian servicemen took the building of the *Crimean government* (Council of ministers). The invaders

put up the Russian flag on top of the Crimean parliament but never made any statements or claims. It took a while to understand what had happened exactly. mass media circulated rumors of the revolt of the Crimean Berkut, or something about terrorists, etc. In the morning, pro-Russian activists, cossacks and “self-defense” groups gathered around the occupied parliament and formed a human shield. It soon became clear that the anonymous servicemen were waiting for the Crimean MPs to arrive to the Verkhovna Rada, or for the “self-defense” activists to bring them there.



Aleksey Ivanov, Russian paratrooper of the 31st Air Assault Brigade, disguised in the Ukrainian Berkut uniform inside the Crimean parliament building. Photo provided by InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community

Behind closed doors (without independent confirmation of the quorum), Verkhovna Rada of the ARC adopted a decree to hold a referendum on **may 25, 2014** on the issue stated as follows: “*The Autonomous Republic of Crimea shall have a nationhood and be part of Ukraine on the basis of agreements and treaties: For / Against*”. The deputies also dismissed **Anatolii mohyliov** from the position of the Chairman of the Council of ministers of the ARC and appointed a new prime minister—Sergey Aksyonov whose party held just about 3% of seats in the Crimean parliament. Both decisions were in violation of applicable laws of Ukraine.

The enforcement agencies in Crimea whose duty was to respond to the threat of terrorism and military invasion were paralyzed from day one. Special-purpose units of the Security Service and the ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine refused to storm the occupied governmental buildings. The Ukrainian army had no commander at the time. **Oleksandr Turchynov** had been acting President of Ukraine for less than a week. The Defense minister **Pavel Lebedev** was hiding in Sevastopol, soon to be joined by the Chief of the General Staff **Yuri Ilyin**. Being the officials involved in the approval of the orders to send the army against the maidan, they were hiding from liability. Acting Naval Forces Commander **Sergei Yeliseyev** and Chief of Staff **Dmytro Shakuro** also abandoned their official duties, breaking their oath of office eventually.

Restoring of the top-down governance proceeded rapidly *but not fast enough to match pace of the Russian aggression*. On February 27, **Ihor Tenyukh** (Naval Forces Commander in 2006–2010) was appointed to the position of Acting

Defense minister. Acting Chief of the General Staff (**Mykhailo Kutsyn**) was appointed the day after. The new Naval Forces Commander was appointed on march 1. However, **Denis Berezovsky**, the appointee, broke his oath of office just one day later, and the position of the acting Naval Forces Commander went to **Serhiy Hayduk** on march 3.

In addition to administrative problems, the new Ukrainian authorities had to deal with the Kremlin that resorted to open intimidation. On February 26, Russia launched *extensive snap exercises* in the Western and Central military districts involving 150,000 servicemen of various military branches, up to 90 airplanes, over 120 helicopters, up to 880 tanks, 1,200 pieces of military equipment, and up to 80 ships and vessels. On march 11, moscow announced “*the largest airborne troops exercises over the last 20 years*”. The exercises took place in Rostov Oblast—in the immediate proximity to the border with Ukraine. Russian leaders, particularly Sergey Naryshkin, Speaker of the State Duma, were know to have made direct threats against the new Ukrainian authorities. **The threat of a full-scale invasion of the Russian troops in mainland Ukraine remained for the entire spring of 2014.** With that in mind, western partners emphatically recommended that Ukraine should avoid putting up an armed resistance in Crimea.



Russian military men blocking the Ukrainian 5th Sea Guard Detachment in Balaklava, march 2014. Photo by Oleksiy Chorny

Kept in Rostov-on-Don, fugitive President **Viktor Yanukovich** was yet another ace in the hole of the Kremlin. On February 28, he held a press conference where he announced himself to be *the sole legitimate President of Ukraine*. On March 1, Yanukovich wrote a letter to Vladimir Putin with a request to invade Ukraine. During the session of the UN Security Council, **Vitaly Churkin**, Russia's Permanent Representative, made references to that same letter. This way, as the situation in Ukraine was under consideration in the UN, Moscow tried to *shift the focus from its military aggression to the crisis of legitimacy of authorities*. For a while, Vladimir Konstantinov played along, referring to Yanukovich as the incumbent president. In response to Putin's request, Russian parliament allowed military intervention in Ukraine "*out of considerations of safety of the citizens of the Russian Federation, our compatriots and personnel of the Russian Armed Forces stationed ... in Ukraine*". At the time, Russian servicemen, wearing no insignia, were already blocking and seizing civil and military facilities in Crimea.

On February 27-February 28, Russian troops, supported by paramilitary "self-defense" groups and Cossacks established control over airfields in Simferopol and Belbek, set up their positions at the administrative border between the ARC and Kherson Oblast, seized the government communication center and the state-owned TV and radio company of Crimea. Other priority targets included military airfields, air defense units and bases of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGSU).

By the initiative of **Mykola Zhibarev**, Head of the Sea Guard of the State Border Guard Service (participant of the SKR-112 incident in 1992), **ships and boats of the Crimean Sea Guard (coast guard) detachments were swiftly moved to mainland Ukraine on March 1 and March 2**. The 5th (Balaklava) and, partially, the 2nd (Yalta) Detachments moved to Odesa. Ships and boats of the 5th Detachment even managed to make it to the sea despite the Black Sea Fleet missile boat *Ivanovets* blocking the Balaklava Bay. Ships and boats of the 23rd (Kerch) Detachment moved to Berdiansk in complex ice conditions on the Sea of Azov. This way, 23 ships and boats were saved from capture by the Russians. Back then, there was still an opportunity to evacuate *the Ukrainian Naval Forces* from Crimea, but, on the eve of his removal from the office, Commander Denis Berezovsky canceled preparations for sorties. Consequently, Russians blocked and, by the end of March, seized all ships and vessels of the Ukrainian Naval Forces based in Crimea, except for **frigate Hetman Sahaydachniy**. The Ukrainian Naval Forces flagship was returning from the Indian Ocean and, despite the efforts of the Black Sea Fleet, dodged captivity.



Ukrainian servicemen guarding the gates of the Southern Naval Base in Novoozerne, march 5, 2014.
Photo by Oleksiy mazepa

The occupants apparently counted on the traitor Admiral Denis Berezovsky to take control of the Ukrainian Naval Forces units as soon as the beginning of march. **The milestone events happened on march 3.** After a failed attack of the cossacks and “self-defense” groups on the military compound of the Ukrainian Naval Forces Staff Headquarters in Sevastopol, the “Crimean Naval Forces Commander”, guarded by the Russian intelligence officers, came to see the Ukrainian officers. The officers assembled in the courtyard of the headquarters where Berezovsky and the new commander Serhiy Hayduk made their speeches. The attending servicemen rejected the offer to “take the side of the people of Crimea” and concluded the assembly by singing the Ukrainian anthem. Despite the presence of numerous journalists, the video of Berezovsky fiasco has never made it to the regional and Russian TV.

After the attempt to establish centralized control of the Naval Forces failed, the invaders launched a *long process of blocking and seizing of the military units—one at a time.* Despite the Russian propaganda tooting about numerous Ukrainian officers deserting to “the Crimean authorities”, the continuing passive resistance in Crimea was increasingly aggravating the Kremlin position on the diplomatic front. Against this background, the hopes of the new Ukrainian

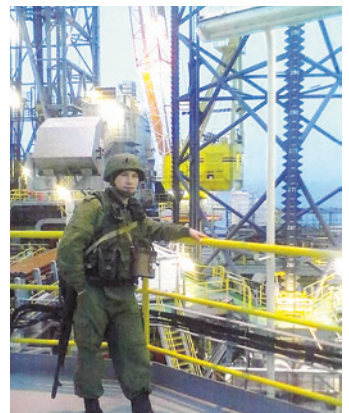
authorities that *the time will play into their hands* and one only needs to wait it out until the international community responds to the fact of aggression were ill-founded. No wonder **the commanders of military units received incoherent signals from Kyiv, in essence calling them “not to respond to provocations”**.

Moscow had to make adjustments to its plans to use the Crimean separatists. On march 3, the Verkhovna Rada of the ARC moved the referendum first to **march 30, 2014** but on march 6 the date of the plebiscite was moved back to **march 16, 2014**. The wording of the bulletin was edited as well. The Crimean people were to choose between “*reunification with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation*” and “*restoration of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea*”. The question of secession of Crimea from Ukraine was in a direct conflict with the Ukrainian Constitution which specifically stipulates that matters of territorial integrity shall be within the competence of the all-Ukrainian referendum exclusively.

The imitation of state-building processes in Crimea rushed on. On **march 11**, Verkhovna Rada of the ARC and Sevastopol City Council adopted a joint decree on Declaration of Independence which they intended to announce.

The “independent state” status was purely a technical matter allowing to appeal to the Russian government on behalf of “sovereign authorities” rather than as a Ukrainian autonomy. According to the announced results of the unlawful referendum of **march 16**, the “reunification with Russia” was allegedly supported by **96.57%** of voters. Further “landmark decisions” were made almost every other day. On march 17, Verkhovna Rada of the ARC adopted the resolution on independence and submitted a request for making “the independent state” a part of the Russian Federation as a new federal subject. On **march 18**, the Crimean separatists—Aksyonov, Konstantinov and Chaly—signed the agreement with Putin “on making the Republic of Crimea part of Russia”. Putin ratified the agreement on **march 21**.

By the date of the “referendum” and even after the official annexation of Crimea, there were still military units on the peninsula flying the Ukrainian flag. After the “referendum” that took the focus of the occupation forces, *attacks on these military units intensified*. On march 19, Russians seized the **Ukrainian Naval**



Russian paratrooper Ivan Kozlov, 104th Airborne Assault Regiment of the 76th Air Assault Division on the seized Chornomornaftogaz offshore platform. Photo provided by InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community

Forces Headquarters in Sevastopol. The day after, **36th Coastal Defense Brigade** in Perevalne, **501st marine Battalion** in Kerch and the **Southern Naval Base Headquarters** in Novoozerne surrendered. Russians took control over corvette **Ternopil**, minesweeper **Chernihiv**, medium landing ship **Kirovohrad** and a number of logistics boats and vessels. **1st marine Battalion** in Feodosia, **72nd Center for Information and Psychological Operations (PSYOP)** in Sevastopol, the parts of **204th Tactical Air Force Brigade** in Belbek and **10th Naval Air Force Brigade** in Novofedorivka were still standing well after march 21. The command ship **Slavutych**, large landing ship **Kostiantyn Olshansky**, corvette **Vinnitsia** and harbor minesweeper **Henichesk** would not surrender as well. The occupants had to take these units and ships by storm, engaging their Air Force. Ocean minesweeper **Cherkasy** was the last to fall in Crimea. It happened on **march 25, 2014**.

The aggressors went beyond the administrative borders of the ARC and Sevastopol. Russians invaded Henichesk District of Kherson Oblast, reaching as far as Chonhar (March 8) and Strilkove (March 15). The occupants held their positions until December 2014 and then retreated to the territory of the ARC.

Along with **Chornomornaftogaz**, the Crimea-based oil and gas company, the occupants seized its infrastructure within the exclusive maritime economic zone of Ukraine. Russian paratroopers landed on the *offshore platforms* in the western part of the Black Sea (close to Zmiinyi Island).

It took one month for the Russian hybrid troops to win over or to seize and disarm almost all Ukrainian military units in Crimea. Only the Sea Guard detachments, as well as seven airplanes and helicopters of the 10th Naval Air Force Brigade managed to evacuate to mainland Ukraine in time. They sneaked right from under the nose of the occupants and flew over to mykolaiv on march 3 and march 7. Being aware they have no chance of disarming the Dnipropetrovsk paratroopers without sustaining heavy casualties, Russians let **the reconnaissance company of the 25th Airborne Brigade** out of Crimea (they had been camped in Perevalne since early February 2014 on joint exercises with the 36th Brigade) on march 21. However, the majority of servicemen, those who remained true to their oath and chose to keep serving in mainland Ukraine, had to go through humiliation of disarmament and captivity. Out of over 20,000 Ukrainian servicemen in Crimea, just about 6,000 returned to mainland Ukraine.

SEIZURE OF CRIMEA

34 days

• Putin signs decree on ratification of the March 18 treaty

• Signing of the Agreement on the admission of the "Republic of Crimea" to the Russian Federation

• Proclamation of the independent "Republic of Crimea"

• Fake "referendum"



• Unsuccessful attempt by D.Berezovsky to take command of Ukrainian Naval Forces Staff Headquarters [video: bit.ly/u navy-crimea]

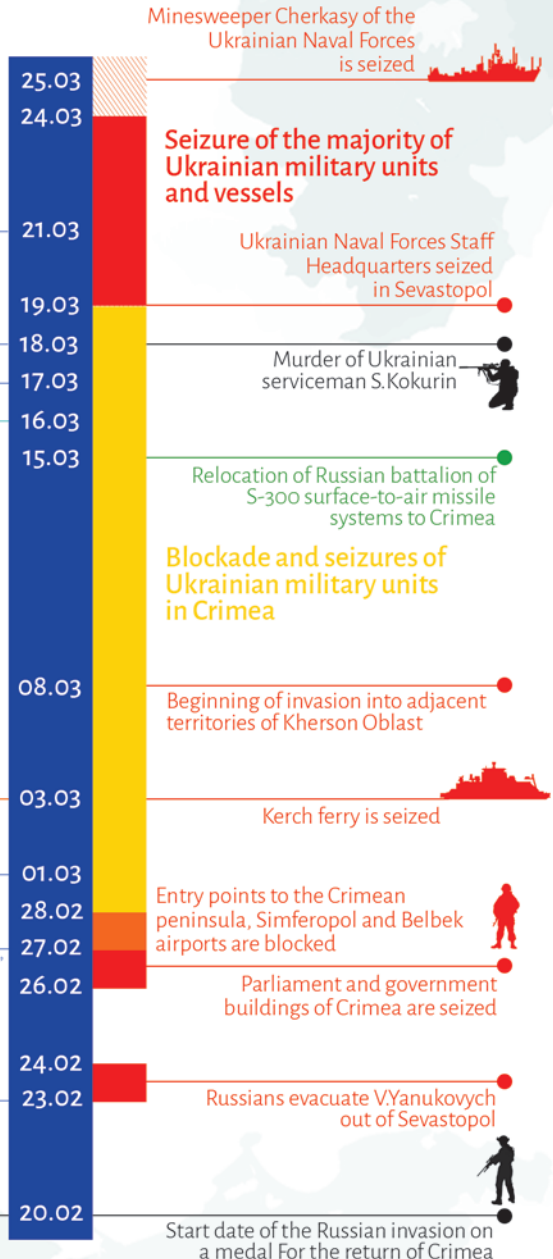
• Russian parliament votes for deployment of Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine

• S.Aksyonov becomes the "Prime Minister" of Autonomous Republic of Crimea; vote for "referendum"

• A.Chaly becomes self-proclaimed "people's" mayor of Sevastopol



Protesters are shot in Kyiv in Maidan



INFORMATION CURTAIN

Information support is an important component in asserting the Russian dominion over Crimea. The Kremlin is working hard to disguise its true intentions and normalize the situation in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Target Segments of the Information Occupation of Crimea

In 2014, Moscow singled out three target groups and devised a plan of strategic communications with each of them.

1. **Crimea.** The primary goal here was to convince residents of Crimea that Russia was their friend standing for their interests. To demoralize and keep in check those who felt opposed to the occupation, they would foster an image of massive support of the Kremlin activities in Crimea.
2. **Russia.** Russian media went into a frenzy, describing the “oppression” of the Russian language in Crimea, and the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar radicals “threatening” the Crimean people. In addition, the Kremlin was made to look as if it was reluctantly responding to disguised efforts of the West to meddle in the sphere of Russian interests.
3. **Worldwide.** The mission was to convince the target group that Ukraine was a *failed state* and thereby gain international acceptance of the occupation of Crimea, or at least dampen the international interest in what was going on in Ukraine. In addition, Russia demonstrated its readiness to escalate to a full-scale war in the event of active resistance of Ukraine and the West.

Fight for Crimean People: Fruits of Fear

The information warfare operation targeting the Crimean people consisted of three stages, each having its specific purpose and promoting specific messages.

Stage 1: Preparation for Annexation

Purpose: confuse and frighten the local population until the enemy is seen as a friend and a friend is perceived as an enemy.

From 1991 to 2014, Russia kept a powerful media presence in Crimea. Important political, military, economic, social and humanitarian interests of Russia in Crimea provided a strong motivation for active work with the Crimean audience. The pressure never slacked even after Russia officially revoked its claims for Crimea and Sevastopol in 1997. Skillfully applying its political influence on Crimean politicians along with direct bribery, on the background the half-hearted

stance of the official Kyiv unwilling to engage in an open confrontation with the Russians and local elites, the Kremlin succeeded, and spectacularly so, in preparing the basis for propaganda subversion. The media activity proceeded along the following lines:

1. Politicization of history and propaganda of the Russian vision of the past events. Key messages:

- ◆ Crimea has been Russian of old and has nothing to do with Ukraine;
- ◆ Crimea was unlawfully transferred to Ukraine in 1954;
- ◆ Crimea remained in Ukraine after the collapse of the USSR in 1991 by pure luck.

2. Discreditation of modern Ukraine. Key messages:

- ◆ Ukraine is doing nothing to foster prosperity of Crimea, and Russia is the major investor in the local economy;
- ◆ the Ukrainian Naval Forces are unable to protect Crimea from external threats but Kyiv keeps hindering the development of the real security guarantor—the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation;
- ◆ Ukraine is a failed state that is unable to exist without external support and has no future.

3. Playing the Russians in Crimea against Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. Key messages:

- ◆ there is coercive Ukrainization going on in Crimea;
- ◆ Crimean Tatars support radical Islamist groups and are spoiling to start butchering the Russian majority in Crimea;
- ◆ Ukrainian nationalists and Crimean Tatars are seeking to push the Russian Orthodox Church out of Crimea.

4. Opposition to Pro-Western Course of Ukraine. Key messages:

- ◆ NATO is seeking to take hold of Crimea to the detriment of geopolitical interests of Russia;
- ◆ EU is trying to turn Ukraine into a raw material colony, draining the country's resources and driving the people below the poverty line;
- ◆ the USA are trying to break the brotherhood of the Ukrainians and the Russians;
- ◆ the West is inciting and funding the 'color revolutions' in Ukraine, Georgia and other countries so as to remove the undesirable and defiant governments.

The former government allowed the cultural annexation of Crimea to succeed, thereby setting grounds for “physical” annexation of the peninsula. The authorities did nothing to counter the propaganda while almost every piece of news has been delivered through the perspective of the Russian propaganda.

Fragment from the interview with an anonymous engineer from Crimea

Stage 2: media blitz

Purpose: frighten with threats of persecution and chaos, pointing the only way to salvation.

This stage falls on first quarter of 2014, especially the military operation in February and march. The Kremlin mobilized all information channels under its control in Crimea and in Russia itself: television, radio, newspapers, blogs and troll factories in social media. Agents of influence were also actively engaged, spreading rumors and printed propaganda materials in various towns all over the peninsula. The intensity of propaganda reached all-time highs, as aggressive messages were flooding Crimea. Fear became the major tool of influence on human consciousness—all to trigger the basic self-preservation response in the Crimean people. The general public was frightened with promises of anarchy, persecution, pogroms and total chaos, if the Crimean people submit to the new authorities in Kyiv.

Over this period, the Russian propaganda was forming the following thought patterns:

- 1. Drawing the apocalyptic future of Crimea as part of Ukraine. Key messages:**
 - ◆ the maidan protests were paid for and orchestrated by the West that seized the control over Ukraine;
 - ◆ the new authorities in Kyiv are illegitimate and do not control the situation, and Ukraine has *de facto* ceased to exist as a sovereign state;
 - ◆ Ukrainian nationalists, armed to the teeth, are preparing to come to Crimea by train and massacre their political opponents;
 - ◆ Crimean Tatars have hidden arms caches and Islamist fighters are training in the camps somewhere in the Crimean mountains;
 - ◆ the new Ukrainian authorities are going to cancel the autonomy, kick the Russian Black Sea Fleet out of Sevastopol and totally ban the Russian language in Crimea.

2. **Suggesting the only alternative—reunite with Russia. Key messages:**
 - ◆ Russians are not invaders but brothers who, out of altruistic considerations, are willing to help in the hour of need;
 - ◆ Russia will protect from the Ukrainian nationalists who are spoiling to launch persecution and genocide, and will save Crimea from civil war;
 - ◆ Russia stands for prosperity and stability, high salaries and pensions, peace and harmony;
 - ◆ The Crimean people will lose nothing but rather benefit from uniting with Russia.
3. **Offering an action plan, specifically suggesting to:**
 - ◆ Demonstrate moral support to and solidarity with the anonymous soldiers dressed in Russian uniforms (“the polite men”);
 - ◆ Make a stand against the local pro-Ukrainian activists and be ready to fight back the invasion from mainland Ukraine;
 - ◆ Participate in the blockade of the Ukrainian military units and seizing of important facilities in Crimea;
 - ◆ take part in the “referendum” and vote for reunification of Crimea and Russia.

At this stage, the content was spreading at unprecedented rates and the fear factor worked effectively even though a lot of aggressive messages were only freshly generated and promoted. Checking out the search query statistics by certain key words which the Russian propaganda was using at the time of annexation of Crimea reveals a telling picture. Until the end of January 2014, there had been little search activity for key words “**Banderites**” and “**Fascists**” (epithets slapped in the Russian media on to the pro-Ukrainian activists). However, over just one week between January 26 and February 1, the number of queries spiked, and between march 2 and march 8, the number of queries reached the all-time maximum, growing 26 times against the average period until the end of January 2014. This peak falls on the dates of full-scale media blitz during the annexation of Crimea and gives a spectacular example of the extent of power and efficiency of the Russian propaganda.

The following factors contributed to the striking success of the Russian propaganda in Crimea:

1. instability, uncertainty and weakness of the state authorities of Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity and the fleeing top officials;
2. suddenness;
3. poor critical thinking of the majority of Crimean people after the years of being trapped within the information bubble inflated by Russia;



4. high-speed and extensive information warfare synchronized with the armed seizure of facilities;
5. poor organization of pro-Ukrainian people in Crimea and unpreparedness for active resistance at the time of annexation;
6. massive treason of the civilian authorities and full-blown administrative leverage to enhance the impact of propaganda calls.

Of particular note, there is the fact that the Russian forces worked remarkably hard to promote informational isolation and to prevent any leaks of information about the true state of affairs in Crimea. Journalists and bystanders who dared to record videos would often lose their cameras and telephones at the point of a gun. Physical abuse and breaking of equipment were not infrequent. meanwhile, local TV channels and radio stations broadcast the Russian vision of the events in Crimea. This kind of biased reporting produced the required effect on the people who would mostly react in two ways: support the occupation or observe passively.

Poor awareness of Crimean people about the real state of affairs outside of Crimea—in mainland Ukraine and in Russia—also played into the hands of the occupants. Over 50% of Crimean people had never been to mainland Ukraine and over 70% never traveled abroad. It is only natural that people with such limited personal experience could be manipulated into believing any myth, no matter how wild and far-fetched.

Stage 3: legitimization of annexation

Purpose: make people accept the fact of occupation without any resistance.

At Stage 3, Russian propaganda employed attractive rhetoric to hide the ugly reality inside a pretty wrapper. Moscow had been trying to disguise its crime long before the “referendum” of March 15, 2014. To that effect, the obedient media would switch to vocabulary, replacing negative connotations with positive, thereby re-focusing one’s consciousness to

perception of the aggression as the good. This proved to be a most widely used technology. Here are some of the substitute expressions:

- ◆ “the return of Crimea” for the military intervention / illegal annexation;
- ◆ “the polite men” for the occupation army;
- ◆ “protection of Crimean people / saving the Russian-speaking population” for military aggression;
- ◆ “securing the peace and orderliness” for taking by force administrative and military facilities;
- ◆ “popular vote” for the fake “referendum” carried out under supervision of the occupation army;
- ◆ “restoring the historical justice” for forcible acquisition of a territory of a sovereign state in breach of the international laws.

The substitute expressions disoriented the Crimean people, tricking them into believing that the enemy is actually a friend, and blocking the protest sentiment. This is exactly why, despite the actual turnout of 32%, the people would not protest when the organizers of the “referendum” reported the turnout in excess of 81%, of which 96.57% allegedly supported the annexation of Crimea by Russia. The occupation of Crimea was officially complete. Afterwards, Russia’s only task was to keep hold of the captured territory.



Illustration: “Russia or Fascism”—a propagandist billboard in Crimea before the illegal “referendum”, March, 2014.

Source: ostro.org

Russia made some kind of a Putinist symbol out of Crimea—the symbol of rebirth of “the Great Russia”. General mantra: “Not a step back!”

Fragments of an interview with a Western journalist who works from time to time in Crimea

The Kremlin against the World: Enforcement of Indifference

While the media blitz aimed at the Crimean people was to trigger the subconscious threat-defense reaction, the information operation against the international audience pursued different goals:

1. distract the attention from the unfolding events, i. e. military aggression of the Russian Federation against an independent state;
2. neutralize accusations against moscow;
3. generate a lot of *white noise*, thereby fostering the uncertainty and indecision worldwide;
4. prove that moscow has the right to act in Crimea as it sees fit;
5. demoralize the opponents of occupation by displaying force and decisiveness;
6. convince the public of the imminence and invariability of the annexation.

To make this operation a success, the Kremlin mobilized the government-owned international TV channels—*RT* and *Sputnik*, and engaged all of its information assets abroad: a whole network of printed media (the so-called *Zero Hedge* network, including the namesake paper and the affiliated websites actively reposting the pro-Russian articles), websites of pro-Russian organizations around the world, individual journalists and bloggers, Russia sympathizers among Western politicians and public figures. The content was widely spread by the Russian *troll factories* overflowing every major social network: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and actively commenting on the articles on the independent media sites and thematic forums.

The arguments of all pro-Russian sources boiled down to the following talking points:

- ◆ Crimea was taken over by the “self-defense units” organized by the local people, not by the Russian occupation army;
- ◆ Crimea was annexed in response to the coup d’etat in Ukraine and the danger to local Russian-speaking people;

- ◆ Russia was driven to annexation of Crimea in response to the threat of NATO expansion and the risk of having Western military bases in Crimea;
- ◆ whereas Russia is a nuclear superpower with a remarkably strong army, the West should better stay away from involvement in conflict over Crimea;
- ◆ Ukraine is a failed state, mentally divided into the East and the West, with a very brief history of independence, so there is no point in fighting with Russia over it.

Some old-school politicians followed the suit of the Russia-sponsored media. For example, Czech President **Miloš Zeman** said in April 2014 that the EU should accept the fact that Crimea is now part of Russia. Former German Chancellors **Helmut Schmidt** and **Gerhard Schröder** went about justifying the occupation of Crimea, while former US Secretary of State **Henry Kissinger** and ex-US Ambassador to the USSR **Jack Matlock** chose to start promoting the



On March 16, 2014—against the backdrop of the Crimean “referendum”—Dmitry Kiselyov, the anchor on the major Russian TV channel Russia 1, commented that Russia was the only country in the world truly capable of “turning the USA into radioactive dust”

“Finland scenario” for Ukraine instead of condemning Russia.

As the fighting started in Donbas, Russian agents of influence and allies started offering other peace-making scenarios. The most popular option was for Russia to pull back its forces from the east of Ukraine in exchange for recognition of annexation of Crimea, federalization and non-aligned status for Ukraine.

In a way, things in Crimea are even worse than in the Donetsk or Luhansk “People’s Republics”, because no international organizations are allowed to the peninsula. There is no one to turn to for help. And there shall be absolutely no criticism against the authorities. An isolated territory.

Fragments of an interview with a Western journalist who works from time to time in Crimea

World against the Kremlin: Non-Recognition of Annexation

Despite all the efforts of Moscow, most politicians, experts and public figures around the world strongly condemned the annexation of Crimea.

US President **Barack Obama** pointed out that the Crimean “referendum”, held in violation of the Ukrainian Constitution and under pressure of the Russian military intervention, will never be recognized by the USA and the international community.

In their joint statement on March 16, 2014, President of the European Council **Herman van Rompuy** and President of the European Commission **José Manuel Barroso** pointed out: *“We reiterate the strong condemnation of the unprovoked violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and call on Russia to withdraw its armed forces to their pre-crisis numbers and the areas of their permanent stationing, in accordance with relevant agreements”.*

In her address to the Bundestag on March 13, 2014, German Chancellor **Angela Merkel** said: *“This is about the territorial integrity of a European neighbor, about respect for the principles of the United Nations, about principles and methods of accommodating conflicting interests in the 21st century. <...> Ukraine’s territorial integrity is not negotiable”.*

Canadian Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** at the very beginning of the annexation of Crimea compared Russia’s moves to the Third Reich aggression: *“What has occurred, as we know, has been the decision of a major power to effectively invade and occupy a neighboring country, based upon some kind of extraterritorial claim of jurisdiction over ethnic minorities. <...> We have not seen this kind of behavior since the Second World War. This is clearly unacceptable”.*

National leaders were not alone in their support of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. International organizations also condemned the annexation.

On March 27, 2014, the **UN General Assembly** adopted the resolution calling upon all States, international organizations and specialized agencies not to recognize any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on the basis of the above-mentioned referendum and to refrain from any action or dealing that might be interpreted as recognizing any such altered status. The Resolution was supported by 100 UN member states, with 58 abstaining and only 11 nations voting against. It was followed by a number of other UNGA resolutions:

- ◆ *Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)* (Res. No. 71/205, December 19, 2016);
- ◆ *Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)* (Res. No. 72/190, Tuesday, December 19, 2017);
- ◆ *Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov* (Res. No. 73/194, December 17, 2018);
- ◆ “*Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)*” (Res. No. 73/263, Saturday, December 22, 2018).

Territorial integrity of Ukraine was also supported by: **the G7, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Committee of ministers of the Council of Europe, Venice Commission, Visegrad Group, NATO** and other organizations and assemblies.

International sanctions were imposed on Russia for the aggression against Ukraine. First sanctions were imposed on March 6, 2014 and the restrictive measures have only been increasing and expanding. For example, on November 8, 2018, the USA imposed new sanctions against two Ukrainians, one Russian national and nine companies in Ukraine and Russia involved in the annexation of Crimea and the related violation of human rights. To date, dozens of countries support sanctions against Russia.

Why did Russia’s Plan Fall Through?

Annexing Crimea, Russia was hoping for a weak reaction of the international community and rapid legalization of the annexation. That proved to be a major miscalculation. Moreover, Moscow laid the basis for its own defeat. The Kremlin’s plans of military invasion failed to factor in the globalization and the extent of development of the world in 21st century.

1. Modern technologies made it impossible to keep total informational blockade up and going. The Internet, cellular communication technologies, social networks and various gadgets vastly undermine the ability to cut the information flow at will. Despite the enormous efforts of the occupation forces, disturbing messages, reports, photographs and video records kept coming from the scenes, demonstrating the true state of affairs during the annexation of Crimea.
2. International division of labor, cooperation and mutual dependence of the nations are growing deeper with each passing year. It keeps cutting the opportunities of one country going against another without disturbing the overall balance and affecting the interests of the third parties, especially in

highly developed Europe. The 20th-century approach based on brutal force is no longer effective in these conditions. We are living in the age when the rule of law dominates the rule of force.

3. The 2014 version of Russia is not that scary after all. Its outdated governance system, technological inferiority, demographic problems and the economy strongly dependent on the loans hardly add up to the image of a superpower with global leadership ambitions. Even its armed forces are thoroughly inferior to the armies of the leading NATO member states. Nuclear weapons were, in fact, the only factor that saved Moscow from swift and extensive international pressure. And even that did not last long.

4. The strength of Ukraine as a nation by far exceeded Russia's expectations. Sustainable and consistent, if not always most efficient, policy of Ukraine toward protection of its territorial integrity has considerably weakened Russia's position and helped gain broad support worldwide. Economic blockade of Crimea, sanctions against individuals involved in the occupation of the peninsula, diplomatic efforts and lawsuits in international courts played their role in disrupting the Kremlin's plans.

Chapter 3. HOSTAGES OF PUTIN

THE CONDEMNED: FROM THE RESORT AND RECREATION ZONE INTO AN OCCUPATION ZONE

Uncertainty is ingrained in the fabric of life in Crimea. Here, people are used to human flows, seasonal earnings, short-lived institutions, overwritten history and alliances of convenience. The occupation only made this sense of fragility of human condition stronger.

Some experts predict that, in just few years, a typical inhabitant of the peninsula will have little in common with the Crimea of 2013.

Complex realities of post-Soviet Ukraine defined the unstable living conditions in almost every region of this country. However, step by step, social and economic processes were turning around. According to the 2001 census, the ratio of women to men of fertile age improved (about 1,054 women to 1,000 men of the child-bearing age). Just before the occupation, there were **1,967,200 inhabitants** in Crimea (excluding Sevastopol).

Over the years of independence of Ukraine, Crimea experienced first-ever positive natural growth in rural population (+450 persons in 2012 and +412 in 2013). meanwhile, urban population kept going down but over the last few years before the occupation the rate of decline slowed down as well. On the whole, the urbanization of the region continued. After the 1989 census, the number of towns in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea grew by 2 units. By the time of the 2001 All-Ukrainian Census, there were a total of 16 towns on the peninsula. **Five of them had over 50,000 inhabitants.** On the whole, Crimea was a moderately urbanized area of Ukraine (on a par with Kyiv Oblast, Cherkasy Oblast, Kirovohrad Oblast, Chernihiv Oblast, Poltava Oblast, Zhytomyr Oblast, Khmelnytskyi Oblast, Volyn Oblast, Lviv Oblast and Kherson Oblast).

In 2013, both the ARC and Sevastopol were among the leading regions of Ukraine (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, Kharkiv Oblast and the city of Kyiv) terms of the level of employment (over **70% employed residents**). Sevastopol and ARC



Opening of the monument to "Polite men" in Bakhchysarai miniature Park on March 16, 2016. Sculpture of a soldier gripping a cat in unnatural position instantly became an object of ridicule, so they cut the cat off first and then totally remade the monument. The new version was unveiled in August 2016

have also reached high levels of socialization of the labor market. On the map of Ukraine, the region really stood out thanks to considerable net migration inflow—right after Kyiv Oblast, Kharkiv Oblast, Odesa Oblast and the city of Kyiv.

Despite the uneven distribution of investments over the regions of Ukraine, with its resort and recreational potential, Crimea has never suffered from shortage of capital investments: they were commensurate with the heavily industrialized regions. On a par with Kyiv (and way ahead of the other regions), the peninsula attracted foreign tourists (30% of all foreign visitors) and was vastly popular with the citizens of Ukraine as a recreational place. Back in the Soviet times, German tourists, mostly with average and below-average income, were not infrequent in Crimea. The flow of foreign tourists grew considerably stronger after Ukraine had abolished entry visas for the citizens of the EU, USA, Canada and other countries. Traditionally for Ukraine, Crimea was the epicenter of summer tourism. There were also projects of building modern ski resorts in the Crimean mountains.

It's not that the life of Crimean people in Ukraine was all roses and care-free. Nevertheless, social and economic development went on in a positive direction defined by and set forth in applicable laws: developing a product

with an international appeal, promoting comprehensive development of the territories, social and economic interests of the peninsula's residents, meeting the demand for the domestic tourism, preserving environmental balance and unique historical and cultural heritage.

By turning the tourist peninsula into a closed militarized zone, the occupation administration not only diverts the goals and changes the mindset and lifestyle of the local population, but also physically replaces the latter with the loyal colonists.

By various estimates (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, public organizations, etc.), **20,000 to 78,000 people** fled Crimea in the first months of the occupation.

I left Crimea in April 2015. I thought it was for a few months. It turned out for good. At least until Crimea is back in Ukraine again. moved in with my husband who had been living in Kyiv for six months already. He had to leave Crimea in a hurry, because no bank would service Visa and MasterCard and his employer no longer could do business in Crimea. The alternative was to stay, broke and hung out to dry.

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous physician—IDP from Crimea

Considering the specifics of October 2014 when the Russian administration conducted its own census on the peninsula, one may see the announced results as a preprogrammed restructuring of population over the next few years. According to this “plan”, the population went down by 135,000 inhabitants (6.7%) from 2001 to 2014. The population of Sevastopol, on the contrary, increased by 18,000 (4.8%). On the whole, Russian statisticians counted grand total of 1,889,400 inhabitants of Crimea in 2014 and **1,913,989** in 2018. While these figures are thoroughly dubious, numerous eyewitnesses, independent investigative reports, monitoring missions of international, Russian and Ukrainian organizations, government agencies of Ukraine and reputable public associations provide evidence that the people opposed to occupation regime are being squeezed out of Crimea, to be actively replaced by the pro-Russian populace from the mainland Russia.

Over the years of occupation, Crimea is being

| abandoned by: | populated by: |
|---|--|
| investors | Russian servicemen, officials and their families |
| Ukrainian servicemen | politicians and officials associated with the former President Viktor Yanukovich |
| scientists, intellectuals | pro-Russian population of the occupied Donbas and the CIS |
| public activists, journalists | criminals, individuals on the international wanted list |
| highly qualified personnel of international companies | Russian workers arriving for the construction of local infrastructure objects |
| representatives of regional minorities (ethnic, linguistic, sexual, religious) | representatives of ethnic minorities from Russia, not typical for the region |
| local businessmen | marginal elements, random fortune seekers |
| foreign and Ukrainian tourists | package / subsidized tourists—representatives of the public sector of the Russian Federation |
| students | pensioners from depressed regions of Russia |
| former Ukrainian servicemen who switched sides, joined the Russian Armed Forces and were sent off to serve in other regions of the Russian Federation | former security officers from other regions of Ukraine who switched sides |

According to the Russian statistical data, over 80,000 fled the peninsula over the first few months of occupation, to be replaced by 2018 by over **177,000 immigrants from the Russian Federation** and the CIS countries. On the whole, residents of the peninsula agree that the increase in population is quite impressive. These dynamics are particularly visible in big cities. For example, the density of population in Simferopol is 3,182 persons per sq. km. By comparison,

in Krasnodar (Russia) it is 2,600 persons per sq. km. In Kazan—1,900 persons per sq. km.

The Crimean population replacement policy has a number of objectives:

- ◆ reduce overall number of residents of the militarized region;
- ◆ form a passive social environment loyal to the occupying authorities;
- ◆ ensure predictable results during the elections;
- ◆ complicate the methods of and opportunities for de-occupation of the peninsula;
- ◆ foster the environment for success of a potential “repeat referendum”.

This policy is promoted by trumped up criminal cases against the activists, persecution of journalists and intellectuals, searches in the houses of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, restrictions for business activities, monopolization of tourism, “military mortgage” (subsidized mortgage programs for Russian military men), trade union programs for the Russian public sector tourists, the Far Eastern Hectare program (provision of land for free in the Far East of Russia), preferential treatment of the Crimean youths willing to enter the higher education institutions in mainland Russia, military training and indoctrination of schoolchildren and preschoolers, etc.

Crimea is home for over 10,000 public officers. Key positions in public agencies are mostly held by the immigrants from Russia. In addition, Russian servicemen come to Crimea while the Crimean conscripts are often sent to various regions of the Russian Federation.

Immediately after the annexation, residents of the peninsula were declared to be Russian citizens by default. Crimean residents were given just 19 days to renounce their Russian citizenship. meanwhile, the Russian laws make the life of non-citizens increasingly harder. Ultimately, the Russian occupation agencies reported 19,000 cases of renunciation of the Ukrainian citizenship and only 3,247 cases when permanent residents of Crimea filed a waiver of the automatic assignment of the citizenship of the Russian Federation.

Broken Communications

Due to broken communication with mainland Ukraine and the imposition of sanctions, the *mobility* of people is limited. In late April 2014, Russian Federation set an illegal “border” at the northern entry point to Crimea. Some Ukrainians are known to have been deported from Crimea by the occupants. In late December 2018, an expensive fence was built in the north of Crimea, to further separate the residents of the region from Ukraine. According to the FSB reports, the fence is complete with cutting edge video surveillance equipment

and thermal imaging devices. Such drastic measures are ostensibly needed to prevent breaching, saboteurs, smuggling of weapons, ammunition, commodities, tobacco and alcoholic products, drugs and other such things.

Eventually, the occupation has considerably limited the ability of residents of Crimea to travel. All Western countries closed their consulates on the peninsula as far back as 2014. According to *Henley & Partners*, a Ukrainian passport is now rated No. 41 in the world and its value keeps growing with each passing year. In 2018, the holder of the Ukrainian passport could visit a total of 128 countries around the world under the simplified procedure. Meanwhile, the number of visa-free countries for Russian citizens keeps going down (Russian passport is now rated No. 48). In addition, Russian passports with Crimean registration are treated with prejudice in the civilized world.

Development of cellular communication in Crimea slowed down as well. Since early 2018, the number of base stations on the peninsula has grown by paltry 3% (none of which was configured to the new GSM standard). In the meantime, the LTE coverage in the region is pretty patchy. Cellular communication is particularly poor and overloaded during the resort season, and is unavailable even in some parts of the big cities (Kerch, Simferopol, Sevastopol). The 4G Internet is only available in big cities.

In 2014, I saw this old woman in Simferopol: her face was all wrinkles but she kept trying to apply some red lipstick. I asked her, "Excuse me, madame, what's the big deal with the lipstick and all? Taking a picture for some document?" And she goes, "Oh, my sweetie! We are going back to the Soviet Union! I am taking a picture for the Russian passport. This is truly a gift from Heaven".

Fragment of interview with Lilia muslimova

Red Light for Entrepreneurs

The occupation affects the labor market on the Crimean peninsula as well. The so-called People's Employment Center of the Republic of Crimea regularly reports that local employers are mostly looking for physicians, mechanics of every variety, hospital nurses, cleaning personnel, drivers, unskilled workers and various engineers.

Under the independent Ukraine, Sevastopol has turned into a quite modern, hi-tech center. The majority of IT professionals fled the city immediately after the annexation.

Fragment of interview with an anonymous Western journalist who works in Crimea from time to time

On the whole, business registration and conduct procedures in the Russian Federation are more complex than known to Crimean citizens under the Ukrainian laws. The region is losing high- and medium-income tourists, which naturally affects the important sectors for private business initiative—restaurants, cafes, hotels, cottages, shops, beauty parlors, health centers, etc. Successful businesses are quickly grabbed by the yesterday’s “liberators” of the peninsula. Unsurprisingly, the **experimental** “resort tax” does not encourage tourism in Crimea. In fact, this is an additional amount the tourists are expected to pay to the budget “for the use of the resort infrastructure” in 2018–2022 at the rate of RUB 50 (~ USD 0.75) a day, depending on the season and the resort. There are other charges, such as the road tax, the environment tax and sales tax, which have a negative impact on the Crimean economy. Traditional agribusiness and wine industry in the region are suffering badly, not least because of the broken economic ties with mainland Ukraine. Compared to the regions of the Russian Federation, Crimea has the worst business survival index: of all small- and medium-sized businesses registered in 2018, only 77.3% stayed afloat by the end of the same year (rating by *the Inc. Russia*).

CLOSE-MOUTHED: DE-UKRAINIZATION OF THE PENINSULA

The Kremlin justified the occupation of Crimea with the “protection of the Russian-speaking residents of the peninsula”. The share of people claiming Russian to be their native language is consistently high in Crimea. Over the period of Ukrainian independence, their share was shrinking (**from 82.64% down to 76.55%**), which was hardly noticeable for an average citizen or a visitor of the region, though.

After the collapse of the USSR, residents of Crimea felt no pressing need to learn the Ukrainian language, which, however, started to develop here faster and more freely, along with the languages of ethnic minorities. The



The Kalanchak checkpoint at the administrative border between Kherson Oblast and the ARC, not far from Armiansk. march 2017. Photo by Valentina Okhlopkova

Ukrainian language was commonly used in the official documents of the public agencies, markings of consumer products, cinemas and, partially, in education and culture. The Russian language dominated in the service sector, national segment of the Internet, on the radio and TV, in press, book publishing, education and upbringing of children long before the occupation. Crimea was at the very bottom of the list of regions of Ukraine in terms of popularity of the Ukrainian language. Under the Russian occupation, the Ukrainian language was driven out of the public sphere entirely.

The data mentioned above are known from the census of 1989 and 2001. However, the Russian authorities reported in 2014 that **84.1%** of Crimean residents claimed that Russian was their native tongue. According to the hastily put together census, the number of people who would recognize Russian as their native tongue was going down steadily over the first decade of independent Ukraine, but, all of a sudden, their numbers soared above the Soviet level on the 23rd year of independence. Even if, supposedly, the poll results published in October 2014 were true, one needs to factor in the fear of the Crimean people

felt toward the armed aggressor. Fear often pushed people to offer safe rather than honest answers.

After all, even the Russian *pseudo census* proved the absurdity of alleged “forced Ukrainization” of the Russian-speaking people in Crimea. According to its results, only 44.57% of Ukrainians, 19.49% of Russians, 18.40% of Belarusians, 15.34% of Armenians, 13.63% of Crimean Tatars and 9.17% Tatars could speak Ukrainian on the peninsula. It appears that “years of Ukrainization” failed to make the majority of Crimean residents even learn the Ukrainian language, for only 22.36% of them claimed they could speak it (only 18.80% of Sevastopol residents and 21.75% on the average in entire Crimea). Let’s assume that back in 2014 not every Crimean resident was willing to admit one’s command of the Ukrainian language.

Pseudo census is a handy tool. On the one hand, it proves that Crimean people *en masse* rejected the Ukrainian culture. On the other hand, it *de facto* compels all the rest to join this kind of rejection. According to the pseudo census, in terms of popularity, the Ukrainian languages was pushed far back to position No. 4 (3.3%) after Russian (84.1%), Crimean Tatar (7.8%) and Tatar (3.7%). These data are particularly in stark contrast with the 2001 census: 10.1% of the ARC population claimed Ukrainian to be their native tongue (Russian for 77.0% and Crimean Tatar for 11.4%).

Russia has been preparing for the annexation for quite a while. It all started on the cultural level: most of the schools in Sevastopol had curricula in Russian, as well as the University. The Ukrainian language was taught in a thoroughly perfunctory manner (we had a single 1-hour class a week in the second semester of 11th year, and there was no final grade at that). History of Ukraine was taught by the textbooks with the Russian perspective. Russian propaganda went berserk after the 2004 Orange Revolution. In my alma mater, the instructors threatened that the open proponents of the maidan would get no pass.

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous engineer from Crimea

According to the estimates of a number of experts, witnesses and activists, the pressure of various factors of Russification is pretty high and dangerous for societal development in Crimea. The appropriate practices are consolidated through the new school curricula and textbooks, festivities and media. Years of independence bear evidence: the Crimean children easily mastered the Ukrainian language. However, they mostly lived in the Russian-speaking environment, fostered since the Soviet era. They communicated in Russian, browsed the web in Russian and watched Russian TV. School was the only place where they could freely communicate in Ukrainian. And under the Russian occupation, schools have been russified almost entirely.



March 20, 2014—Russian occupants took the Ukrainian flag down from the P. S. Nakhimov Naval Academy. In protest, cadets started singing the Ukrainian national anthem. Soon thereafter, they left Crimea and successfully completed their training in the Naval Academy of Odesa. Bohdan Nebylytsia, 25 y.o. Commander of the artillery boat Nikopol captured by the Russians on November 25, 2018—was one of them

Three languages are officially declared equal in Crimea: Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar. There are no formal bans, restricting teaching in Ukrainian at schools or book publishing, but the reality created by the occupation authorities is quite the opposite. There are no Ukrainian periodicals in the stores, Ukrainian theater studios are getting closed, even radio stations are avoiding the quality Ukrainian music. Before the occupation, there were seven schools in Crimea where the subjects were taught in Ukrainian. And there were 165 schools combining the Ukrainian and the Russian languages. Now the Russian officials report that there is only one school left on the peninsula where they teach in Ukrainian (School No. 20 in Feodosia), with a total of 146 children studying in nine classes. Seven more schools have 13 Ukrainian classes. In 2017–2018 academic year, 318 children were taught in Ukrainian (0.2% of total number of students)—35 times less than before the occupation. Then again, even these Russian statistics are relative, for there is still the matter of quality of teaching in Ukrainian. Parents are pressed to reject the school training in Ukrainian, and those who resist are persecuted on charges of disloyalty to the existing authorities.

The Ukrainian culture centers, museums, libraries and educational organizations have been *de facto* liquidated in Crimea. There is evidence of searches

with confiscation of Ukrainian flags, portraits of the Ukrainian historical figures and books of modern Ukrainian authors (for example, confiscations from the Ivan Franko Library in Simferopol). The museum of Ukrainian Vyshyvanka (embroidery) was shut down early in 2015.

The Ukrainian Culture Center is the only non-political organization that openly works to preserve the Ukrainian language and culture on the peninsula, promoting history, traditions and creative works of the Ukrainian people, and printing the *Krymskyi Teren* newspaper. The organization comprises now just a handful of activists who routinely receive subpoenas for questioning, warnings about prohibition of extremism, and threats. This organization is not allowed to hold public events, houses of its members are routinely searched by law enforcers, with equipment being confiscated, etc. The Ukrainian heritage is being persecuted in the religious sphere as well. For example, on January 28, 2019, the so-called Arbitration Court of the Republic of Crimea decreed to



Volodymyr Balukh—the Crimean farmer and pro-Ukrainian activist who rejected the Russian citizenship after the annexation. Political prisoner of the Russian Federation, sentenced to five years in a prison colony and penal fines. Back in November 2016, he put up the Ukrainian flag in the front yard of his house and hung a plaque saying “Street of the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred” (killed participants in the Revolution of Dignity). International human rights activists believe this fact to be the direct cause for the two trumped up criminal charges against the activist

confiscate the Cathedral of St. Vladimir and Olga from the Crimean diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church—Kyiv Patriarchate in Simferopol.

It's that simple, if you have no Russian passport or speak Ukrainian at home—you are an activist.

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous Western journalist who works in Crimea from time to time

To some extent, the Ukrainian state institutions were not ready for the occupation of parts of its territory and the need to protect its victims. The internally displaced persons (IDP) and victims of the occupation mostly expected a far swifter response of the state to the personal welfare and strategic problems arising from the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Quite a few territorial structures of the ARC are still not working in mainland Ukraine. Some of them eventually managed to get going, mostly in Kyiv, Kherson and Odesa, through integration in the relevant establishments of these Oblasts. Some authorities were specifically organized in response to the situation at hand.

Let's trace the restoration / reorganization / formation of the Ukrainian authorities directly responsible for the state policy on the matters of temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, specifically ARC and Sevastopol:

- ◆ June 12 2014—the **Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea** evacuated to Kyiv. In September 2016, its staff was expanded and some structural subdivisions were relocated to Kherson.
- ◆ May 16, 2014—the **Representative Office of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea** (founded on December 17, 1992) was moved to Kherson. January 20, 2016—human rights and international functions of the Representative Office are considerably enhanced; certain structural subdivisions founded in Kyiv.
- ◆ July 17, 2014—special central executive authority of Ukraine is founded: **State Service of Ukraine on the matters of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the City of Sevastopol and the Temporarily Displaced Persons**. October 22, 2014—the same body is renamed into the **State Service of Ukraine on the matters of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol** (no longer active, as the Service has been reorganized into a ministry).

- ◆ May 15, 2015—from now on, consular services to the citizens of Ukraine are provided by the **Representative Office of the ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in Odesa**, temporarily assigned to perform functions of the Representative Office of the ministry of Foreign Affairs in Simferopol.
- ◆ September 16, 2015—foundation of the **main Directorate of the National Police in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol**, stationed in Odesa since December 16, 2016 (including the department stationed in Kherson).
- ◆ December 16, 2015—Governmental Decree approves the Integrated State Program on Assistance of Social Adaptation and Reintegration of the Citizens of Ukraine Displaced from the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine and the Regions of the Counter-Terrorism Operation to other Regions of Ukraine for the period up to 2017. **Almost every ministry, central, as well as local executive authorities of Ukraine** are engaged in implementation of various aspects of this Program.
- ◆ December 18, 2015—approval of Provisions on the **Regional Department of the State Property Fund in Kherson Oblast, Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol** (functions in Kherson).
- ◆ April 20, 2016—State Service of Ukraine on the matters of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol was merged with the State Agency on the matters of Restoration of Donbas; foundation of the **ministry on the matters of Temporarily Occupied Territories and the Internally Displaced Persons** (stationed in Kyiv, with territorial bodies, *inter alia*, in Kherson). The structure includes individual directorates on the matters of the ARC and Sevastopol, on the matters of the internally displaced persons and humanitarian cooperation, etc.
- ◆ June 1, 2016—**Main Directorate of the Security Service of Ukraine in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol** resumes operation (stationed in Kherson).
- ◆ November 15, 2017—the Cabinet of ministers approves the Strategy of Integration of the Internally Displaced Persons and Introduction of the Long-Term Solutions Concerning the Internal Displacement for the period up to 2020. November 21, 2018—approval of the Work Plan to promote the implementation of this Strategy, which is the responsibility of almost all **ministries and other central and local executive authorities of Ukraine**.
- ◆ May 2, 2018—foundation of the **main Directorate of the State Fiscal Service in Kherson Oblast, Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol**.

- ◆ May 14, 2018—standalone Department of the Patrol Police in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol in Kherson Oblast commenced its operation (manning the checkpoints in the border areas: Henichesk, Kalanchak and Chaplynka; control of the main highways connecting Ukraine and Crimea).
- ◆ June 4, 2018—the ombudsman office appoints a specific officer—**Representative of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol**.

On June 20, 2018—Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea approves the Plan of Urgent measures to Counter the Russian Aggression from the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine in Crimea, and Protection of the Interests of the State, Citizens of Ukraine and the Ukrainian legal Entities in Crimea for the period of 2018–2019. Performance of the measures envisaged by the Plan involves **members of parliament of Ukraine, representative officers of the central executive authorities, Administration of the President of Ukraine, General Prosecutor’s Officer, National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Security Service of Ukraine, Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, heads of the mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, heads of the higher education institutions, National Academy of Sciences and the industry-specific academies of sciences, Oblast and Raion State Administrations, local self-government bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations, representatives of international organizations, lawyers, human rights activists and scientists.**

On the whole, one may observe quite a long process of institutional restoration of the Ukrainian Crimea, hindered by the problems of coordination and interaction between the governmental agencies and other structures in this context, passivity of the officials and absence of a comprehensive strategic vision of de-occupation of Crimea.

Meanwhile, the IDPs are pretty actively organizing themselves in mainland Ukraine. Analytical centers, human rights-, cultural and other organizations dealing with the Crimea problem (e. g., *CrimeaSOS*, the *Crimean Human Rights Group*, etc.) are springing up around Ukraine. Crimean residents and *Crimean paramilitary militias* fight back the Russian aggression in Donbas.

Social and public sectors in Ukraine often vary in their vision of the solution of the Crimean problem. These discrepancies manifested themselves most vividly in August 2014 when the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the **Law on the Establishment of Free Economic Zone Crimea and on Specific Ways of Doing Business within Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine**. This Law

establishes a free customs area of the commercial, service and industrial variety in Crimea where one will be exempt from the national taxes and charges. Most of the human rights organizations and the organized Crimean Tatars movement objected immediately. A number of members of parliament, the steering committee of the parliament, ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons are also motioning for the abolishing of this law. In their opinion, this kind of regime challenges the very fact of damage caused to Ukraine and the Crimean people by Russia, simultaneously encouraging contraband, corruption and massive, duty-free exports of goods and electricity to Crimea and Russia. In return, the activists commenced the *indefinite civilian action to blockade Crimea* in September 2016 (blockade of cargo transportation and supply of electricity to the occupied zone). On the whole, checkpoints set up at the administrative border with the peninsula had a considerable negative impact on the living conditions of Crimean residents and lead them to doubt the ability of the Russian administration to handle local problems. In Ukraine, the blockade urged the government to issue a tough decree (On Limitation of Supplies of Certain Commodities (Operations, Services) from Temporarily Occupied Territory to other Areas of Ukraine and/or from Ukraine to the Temporarily Occupied Territory”) on December 16, 2015. In 2016, the organizers of blockade announced the shift into the monitoring mode.

The organized resistance groups in Crimea (such as the **Crimean Solidarity**) require continuous support. Most of the unwilling hostages of the Kremlin switch back to the Soviet practice of keeping silence.

HURT: FORGOTTEN HISTORICAL VALUES AND ACQUIRED RESENTMENTS

Crimean people live surrounded by the abundant *historical and cultural heritage sites, preserves and parks*, which commenced their fall into decline and even occasional plunder under the occupation. At the same time, the region already renowned for the abundance of monumental structures is now being actively studied by new monuments.

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, there used to be over **10,000 cultural heritage sites** in the ARC and Sevastopol: archaeological—5,106; historical—2,582; monumental art—almost 300, etc. State Register of Immobile Landmarks of Ukraine lists 86 monuments of the national and 1,112 monuments



Archaeological site of Kachi-Kalyon cave monastery in Crimea, an ancient settlement with about 250 artificial caves, tentatively dated from 6–8 century CE. Photo by Iryna Brunova-Kalisetska

of local significance on the Crimean peninsula. Besides, there used to be a common practice of keeping the historical and cultural heritage sites on the balance of specific organizations (e. g. Crimean Tatars Charitable Organization Crimea Foundation). Before the occupation, there were 239 archive institutions in the region.

Now Russia is uncontrollably usurping the cultural heritage sites of Crimea. These sites are subject to simplified procedure of listing in the Uniform State Register of the Cultural Heritage Sites of the Russian Federation. On October 17, 2015 **over 220 historical and cultural heritage sites of Crimea** were classified as federal cultural heritage sites by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation.

A whole new generation of children is growing up in Crimea without any memory of Ukraine.

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous Western researcher who works in Crimea from time to time

There are 401 historical settlements listed in Ukraine, **26** of which are located in Crimea. There are seven preserves, 21 park sites and cultural sites of the garden art functioning in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Ancient Town of Chersonesos Taurica and its Chora (5th century BCE—14th century CE) is on the

UNESCO World Heritage List; a number of other historical and cultural heritage sites of Crimea are nominated for inclusion (Bakhchysarai Palace of the Crimean Khans, Genoese Fortress in Sudak, Crimean Astrophysical Observatory, outposts and fortifications along the Genoese trade routes from the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea, Mangup-Kale, Eski-Kermen, Chufut-Kale). According to the official Ukrainian statistics, the Crimean museums stored 1,247,360 units of the core collection and 403,240 units of the auxiliary scientific collection. At the moment, UNESCO and other international organizations have officially terminated cooperation with the museums on the occupied territory.

Russia has illegally seized the Crimean part of the Ukrainian museum collections. The discovered artifacts and collections from the Crimean museums and preserves are being shipped out to the Russian Federation. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation has issued unlawful permits to 18 institutions to search and study the archaeological heritage sites in Crimea. The unique local landmarks are being destroyed, archaeological sites are being damaged, criminal negligence abounds in the matters of preservation of cultural heritage. The competent authorities of Ukraine regularly register violations of the national and international laws regulating the cultural heritage protection. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee expresses its concerns about the state of the sites on Crimea.

Even before the occupation, the region boasted a sufficiently large number of *monuments* (compared to other regions of Ukraine). However, the Register of the Ministry of Culture lists only 12 monuments of local significance, restored (for the most part) or installed in Crimea from 1991 to 2013. According to the estimates by Andriy Ivanets, at least 127 monuments (busts, memorial signs, memorial crosses, sculptures, statues, monuments and memorial complexes) have been installed in Crimea after 2014. The artistic value of some of the new objects is low but they keep popping up at a relatively high rate.

After the collapse of the USSR, the *Soviet and Russian symbols* kept dominating the public space in Crimea, but other historical objects were being restored as well, and the culture of mutual understanding was encouraged. The styles and the ideological messages of the new monuments became more and more diverse. Memorial sites in honor of the tragic events during the deportation of Crimean Tatars, monuments to Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian figures, memorial sites of the history of independent Ukraine, etc. were built or restored. Among the monuments erected after 1991, there were such figures as *Petro Sahaydachny* (Hetman of the Ukrainian kozak host in early 17th century), *Ismail Gasprinski* (Crimean Tatar intellectual and educator in 19th century), monuments (busts)



In February 2019, Russians shipped parts of the ancient Prytaneion from the digging site at Panticapaeum on Mithridates Mountain (Kerch)

to Ukrainian writers *Taras Shevchenko*, *Lesya Ukrainka*, *Ivan Franko*; bust of the dissident and human rights activist *Petro Grigorenko*, monuments to the 10th anniversary of the Ukrainian Naval Forces, *Archbishop Luka*, *St. Andrew the Apostle*; bust of *Mithridates VI the Eupator* (King of Pontus and Bosphorus), etc.

The monuments installed under the Russian occupation administration are consistently ideologically charged, with particular anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian bias, politicizing even such neutral themes and figures as fairytale characters, etc. The subject matter of the newly erected monuments is narrowing considerably to honoring of the so-called *Crimean spring* (occupation of Crimea in 2014), and to commemorate the figures and events of the Soviet Russia, USSR and the Russian Empire, religious symbols, etc. And finally, there numerous new memorial signs in Crimea in honor of “reunification of Crimea and Russia”, suggesting that “Russia is our home”. There is a monument to the “*polite men*”, a memorial sign to senior warrant officer of the *Berkut* riot police unit killed in Kyiv in 2014; a monument to *Dmitry Senyavin*—Admiral of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Empire; pro-Stalinist sculpture of the Big Three (leaders of the states participating in the 1945 Yalta Conference); bust of the last Russian emperor *Nicholas II*; a monument to *Catherine II*; a monument to the Soviet Soldier; Russian Orthodox Church memorial crosses, etc.

Even before the occupation, there used to be conflicts in Crimea and especially in Sevastopol between the organized pro-Russian activists and the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian groups around the memorial objects. The peninsula also launched a campaign (although on a smaller scale than in the rest of Ukraine) to take down monuments to communist leaders (the so-called “Leninfall”), but

■ Occupation monuments*



38

Popularization of Russian culture



33

Glorification of Soviet history



23

Actualization of history of the Russian Empire



16

Propaganda of Russian Orthodox Church



9

Justification of Russian aggression in 2014



4

Honoring of Soviet and Russian border guards

* Monuments erected in Crimea during 2014-2018
According to Andriy Ivanets' monitoring (fall 2018)

the majority of the Soviet and the imperial monuments survived and were even renovated.

The occupation creates in its own reality. The *militarist theme* prevails in the memorial signs. Servicemen, public sector workers, youth and children are actively engaged in the installation and honoring of these signs. manufacture, transfer and installation of monuments to the Crimean cities and villages proceed with increasing involvement of the political and business circles from various regions of the Russian Federation. Some monuments installed by independent Ukraine have been removed and replaced by the Russian ones. muslim graveyards, monuments to Ukrainian figures, etc. are being routinely vandalized.

One may reasonably call Crimea a *region lost to full-scale analytics*. Classical research tools, sociological surveys, focus groups or expert polls do not work

there. Without access to the occupied territories, it is difficult to understand the structure of population, not to mention the prevailing sentiments. State authorities of Ukraine and the international organizations have been complaining about the extreme restrictions they encounter on their entry to Crimea for proper monitoring of the current situation. meanwhile, self-identification of the residents of peninsula is still a major problem: there is no way of telling, whether the people approve of the annexation of Crimea by Russia like the majority in the Russian Federation, or doubt their “historical choice”, or flat out reject the referendum as fiction fabricated by the Russian propaganda?

The analytics of the period preceding the occupation characterized the population of Crimea as follows: highly varied ethnic pattern, strong regional allegiance, fossilized Sovietdom; the Crimean youth getting closer to all-Ukrainian and global values. Experts suggested that joint efforts should focus on restoration of the rights of the deported Crimean Tatars and the national minorities of Crimea, as well as on development of national cultures, promotion of international exchange programs, democracy studies and dialogs between the generations.

The Ukrainian state, civic and international organizations conducted social studies in Crimea and drafted practical recommendations on prevention of internal conflicts, harmonization of relationship between the major ethnic and political groups on the peninsula (Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars). Among other initiatives, one should note the accomplishments of the *Crimean Political Dialog* project (2009–2014) where the organizers successfully established communication between representatives of the pro-Ukrainian, pro-Russian and Crimean Tatar political community.

Crimea is home to a lot of pro-Soviet people, and that's what makes it the way it is. I mean, all these retired officers and warrant officers. These people governed the city of Sevastopol. Ukrainian cultural programs and events were nonexistent there.

Fragments of an interview with an anonymous social activist from Sevastopol

However, as the Soviet propagandist names were preserved in Crimean toponymics (e. g., Kirovske Raion, Krasnohvardiiske Raion, Lenine Raion, Pervomaiske Raion, Sovietskyi Raion), so did the Soviet values in the mindset

of the majority of local residents. Bonding with the Soviet past manifests itself quite clearly in visual symbols, speech patterns and organized communities. A lot of people throughout the post-Soviet area failed to adapt to realities of the competitive society. They feel nostalgic for the USSR and often confuse it with contemporary Russia. Crimean society is the best illustration of this kind of nostalgia—non-critical belief in collectivism and centralized ways. It has always been cultivated by the stakeholder political actors, and today it is fueled by the orchestrated demographic restructuring on the peninsula.



*Participant of the may Day march. Sevastopol, 2012.
Photo by Valentina Okhlopkova*

Since 1990, the region has grown considerably “older”, but made a slow recovery from demographic crisis of 2006–2009 (when birth rates were dropping at an alarming rate). median age of the population in 2013 was 40.5 years (in 2017–41 years). After the annexation, life expectancy among the Crimean residents dropped for the first time since 2002. Thanks to the climate, Crimea and especially Sevastopol attracted senior people (of the total population of the peninsula people aged 60+ years now make 24%) and people with certain medical conditions, i. e. the category of population that needs social security and feels particularly sympathetic to communist ideals and Soviet practices. Their social status is vague, but their weight in the electoral process is heavy.

The fabled past is sorely missed not only by its witnesses (the older generations) but by the youths as well. After all, the declining numbers of the witnesses of the Soviet past also promotes its idealization and maximizes the equating of the Soviet Union with contemporary Russia.

Meanwhile, Ukraine took a rigid stance against the communist symbols representing the heritage of the totalitarian age. Under the laws adopted in 2015, the administrative and other official names containing any communist symbols were to be changed. A total of over one thousand settlements and raions in Ukraine got their new names (often reverting to their former, pre-Soviet era names). Treating Crimea as the integral part of Ukraine, the parliament approved renaming of **70 settlements** in the ARC and in Sevastopol area. In addition, **five raions of Crimea** received de-communized names. According to



V-Day in Simferopol kindergarten No. 79. Preschoolers honor the “heroic Soviet soldiers” by passing out the St. George ribbons, staging musical acts dressed in military uniforms, obeying the orders of their commander, and joining the local bikers in the municipal event “Immortal Regiment” (May 8, 2018)

the Decree of the Verkhovna Rada, the renaming shall become effective on the date when the occupied Crimea is back under the general jurisdiction of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian decommunization in Crimea actualized yet another, albeit similar problem—*restoration of the Crimean Tatar toponyms* wiped out of the peninsula after the 1944 deportation. most of the new names assigned by the Ukrainian parliament to settlements in Crimea were the revived Crimean Tatar names. However, de-communized names make a very modest part of the total list of pre-war Crimean Tatar names. It happens so that not every name assigned in replacement of the Crimean Tatar sounded communist. For example, the raion center *Sovietskyi* was renamed in 2016 by simply returning to its former name *Ichki*. The Ukrainian law, however, did not require renaming of the raion center *Bilohirsk* (called *Karasubazar* until the deportation of the Crimean Tatars). Some names resulting from decommunization of Crimea had no historical background. For example, Krasnoperekopsk was renamed into Yany Kapu (“Yañı Qapı” in Crimean Tatar meaning “the New Gate”). Curiously enough, this decision lead to renaming of the tugboat of the Naval Forces of

Ukraine in 2016 from *Krasnoperekopsk* to *Yany Kapu*. The tugboat achieved fame on its march from Odesa to mariupol when it was captured by the Russians on November 25, 2018.

The Russian administration of Crimea does not recognize the new names given by Ukraine. However, challenged by Kyiv, Russians solved the issue of restoration of the Crimean Tatar toponymics their own way. In 2016, the Russian Commission for Restoration of Rights of Rehabilitated Victims of Political Repressions approved the list of the *second historical names* for about **1,400 settlements in Crimea**. Despite the considerably bigger toponymic coverage, this decision carries a far smaller political weight, because it is not about *renaming* but rather about *backup* names. Tangible consequences of introduction of the backup historical names are as negligible as the consequences of declaring the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages the state languages of the “Republic of Crimea”.

A year prior to the decree on renaming of the settlements and raions in Crimea, the Ukrainian parliament named the International Airport of Simferopol after **Sultan Amet-Khan** (national hero of the Crimean Tatar people and a WW2 flying ace). Russia rejected this renaming as well. In December 2018, Russians announced their intention to name the Airport Simferopol after **Ivan Aivazovsky** (19th century Crimean seascape painter of Armenian descent).

On the whole, the renaming problem is only a tip of the more profoundly practical problems facing the residents of the peninsula. For instance, both Ukraine and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) banned all the flights to the occupied Crimea since march 2014. Due to the occupation, the Airport Simferopol is closed for international flights and services only flights to and from Russia.

Ultimately, piling up historical grievances combined with fixation on the illusory past grandeur are increasingly detrimental to mutual understanding on the peninsula itself, especially against the background of negative social and economic processes, breeding the crisis syndromes and disillusionment.

INTIMIDATED: IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND PUNITIVE METHODS IN CRIMEA

Residents of Crimea, same as the rest of Ukraine, commenced building the democratic institutions only in the 1990s. more often than not, presidential candidates

who collected the majority of votes in Crimea during the second round of voting would win the office of the President of Ukraine (Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yanukovich). Out of five presidential campaigns in 1991–2010, the ARC hopefuls won three times (four times in Sevastopol). By comparison, not a single region of Ukraine has ever made the winning bet five times in a row, and voters of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Vinnytsia Oblast, Lviv Oblast, Ternopil Oblast and Cherkasy Oblast brought their candidate to the office only twice.

The Crimean autonomy could boast a rich political life. There have almost never been stable political groups consistently representing the interests of Crimean residents. About 26 political parties managed to bring their representatives to the Crimean parliament since 1994, including the leading parties of the national scale and political organizations whose priority was the Crimean issues or problems of the national communities on the peninsula. Non-partisan candidates were consistently successful in every electoral campaign until 2006 (when the proportional election system was introduced). Same as all over mainland Ukraine, communists were gradually losing their grounds (down from 38 mandates in 1998 to 5 in 2010). Despite the domination of pro-Russian actors, representatives of other political groups had quite a number of seats in the Verkhovna Rada of the ARC (as clearly evidenced by the partisan representation starting with the 2nd and through the 6th parliament of the ARC). Infographics “Political forces in the Crimean parliaments” show the numbers of such representations and their influence (share of MPs) in the timeline of parliament convocations.

Only the 1st Supreme Council of Crimea (until the first democratic elections in 1994) was single-party, same as its historical predecessor—the Crimean Oblast Council of People’s Deputies (about 70% of seats held by the Communist Party). Today, Crimea has de facto returned to the Soviet practice of single-party leadership. Illegally elected *State Council of the Republic of Crimea* has **93% of the United Russia party members representing the political force of Vladimir Putin**. The remaining 7% represent the right-wing Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. The status of the legislature was downgraded to a regional parliament of the Russian Federation. The total number of members of parliament was cut by a quarter (from 100 to 75). This parliament can hardly claim to represent diverse interests of the local residents, as the elections were held by the Russian authorities on September 14, 2014 without any due preparations (in March 2014, the Central Electoral Commission of Ukraine closed the National Electoral Register in an effort to prevent the unlawful use of personal database). Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Sevastopol were held around the same time

Political forces in the Crimean parliaments



2

So-called "State Council of the Republic of Crimea" (2014 - 2019)

Party United Russia - 70
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia - 5

6

6th Verkhovna Rada of the ARC (2010-2014)

Party of Regions - 80
Communist Party of Ukraine - 5
People's Movement of Ukraine - 5
Party Soyuz (Union) - 5
Party Russian Unity - 3
Party Strong Ukraine - 2

8

5th Verkhovna Rada of the ARC (2006-2010)

"For Yanukovych!" Bloc - 44
Party Soyuz (Union) - 10
Electoral Bloc of Kunitsyn - 10
Communist Party of Ukraine - 9
People's Movement of Ukraine - 8
Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc - 8
People's Opposition Bloc of Natalia Vitrenko - 7
Opposition Bloc "Ne Tak!" ("Not so!") - 4

12

4th Verkhovna Rada of the ARC (2002-2006)

Independent members of parliament - 46
Communist Party of Ukraine - 15
Agrarian Party - 11
People's Democratic Party - 8
Party of Regions - 3
SDPU(u) - 3
Party For One Rus - 2
Peasant Party of Ukraine - 1
Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Ukraine - 1
Russian-Ukrainian Union Party - 1
Labor Ukraine Party - 1
Democratic Union - 1

7

3rd Verkhovna Rada of the ARC (1998-2002)

Independent members of parliament - 47
Communist Party of Ukraine - 38
Agrarian Party - 5
People's Democratic Party - 4
Party Soyuz (Union) - 4
Socialist Party of Ukraine - 1
Party of Economic Revival - 1

10

2nd Supreme Council of the ARC (1994-1998)

Russia Bloc - 54
Independent members of parliament (from workers' associations) - 21
Qurultay of Crimean Tatars - 14
Communist Party of Crimea - 2
Party of Economic Revival - 1
Russian Party of Crimea - 1
Armenians - 1
Bulgarians - 1
Greeks - 1
Germans - 1

3

Crimean Oblast Council (1989-1991) and the 1st Supreme Council (1991-1994)

Communist Party of Ukraine - 68
Independent members of parliament - 29
Leninist Young Communist League of Ukraine - 3

with almost identical results (22 seats went to the United Russia party and 2 seat—to the LDPR). The opposition forces in the ARC and Sevastopol boycotted the unlawful elections, as they *offered a choice with no alternative*.

Political and economic transformations failed in the post-Soviet Russia where nepotism prevails, democracy is devalued and international laws and treaties are ignored. Transformations of the public mindset are also impossible. The Stalinist ideology was not condemned. Instead, it was rather propped by the Eastern Orthodox Christianity and imperial myths of the Tsarist Russia. The imaginary glorious past appears to be the sole source of preservation of power, and the current authorities are hell-bent on keeping alive its specter.

A Westerner will feel ill at ease here, in Crimea, unable to relax. Packs of policemen everywhere, whose countenance alone demonstrates supremacy, the power over you, and rest assured—this power will never be on your side... It used to be an island of liberty. Even in the Soviet era, there used to be a nudist beach. Now the Russian authorities closed them all.

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous Western journalist who works in Crimea from time to time

Key ideological dogmas of the life in the occupied Crimea are easily readable in messages and statements of the Crimean puppet officials:

- ◆ Implicit absolute authority of Vladimir Putin;
- ◆ historical revenge of Russia for “humiliation” in the 1990s;
- ◆ historical revenge for the “Ukrainian occupation” of Crimea;
- ◆ mobilization against the “Ukrainian Nazism”, “Islamist terrorism” and the “American interference”;
- ◆ protection of rights of the Russian nationals, emissaries of the Russian language and culture;
- ◆ protection of the “canonic Eastern Orthodoxy”;
- ◆ safeguarding of the Soviet traditions and cults;
- ◆ opposition to Western lifestyle.

Despite these dogmas, frequently repeated on every public platform available, the crisis of legitimacy of the authorities only deepens. The gap between the declarations and the reality keeps affecting the quality and freedom of life of a regular resident of the peninsula.



Participants of the international conference dedicated to Ukraine—NATO cooperation. Sevastopol, November 6, 2013. The last of many expert events held by Sevastopol-based NGO Nomos Center. Dmitry Shtyblikov and Aleksei Bessarabov, the Nomos Center analysts, were detained by the FSB three years later in Sevastopol on charges of plotting terrorist acts in Crimea by the order from the Ukrainian intelligence service

Political Repressions

Matching the Ukrainian (2013) and the Russian (2014) statistical data, one may notice that over 50% of civic organizations in Crimea shut down or were driven out of the peninsula. Russian laws de facto rule out any peaceful assemblies of the people disloyal to the authorities, and often qualify any such movements and associations as “undesirable organizations” or “foreign agents”.

Russia keeps loudly insisting that Crimea belongs to it, and the slightest shadow of a doubt is qualified as separatism. In 2014 alone, exactly during the active stage of occupation process of the Crimean peninsula, new articles were added to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, or the older ones were modified, with more severe punishment envisaged for terrorism, separatism, extremism, rehabilitation of Nazism and other such things. most of these regulations still apply to the citizens of Ukraine who dare to voice their dissent with the Russian occupation of Crimea, while the rest serve to intimidate the local population. For example, special **Article 280.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation** came into effect in may 2014, stipulating that public calls for actions violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation is

punishable by hefty fines, or correctional labor, or arrest, or imprisonment and forfeiture of the right to hold certain official positions or conduct certain activities. Similar actions through mass media outlets, including electronic or information outlets (including the Internet) are also punishable severely: community service and forfeiture of the right to hold certain official positions or conduct certain activities, and even imprisonment.

Consequently, freedoms of speech or political dissent are only nominal declarations in the Russian laws, practically ending on the level of a mere protest post on social networks which is punishable by imprisonment. Reputable international organizations report on the increasingly frequent cases of politically motivated prosecution of the Ukrainian citizens by the Russian law enforcement agencies (European Parliament Resolution of March 16, 2017). UN Human Rights monitoring mission to Ukraine has registered **42 cases of disappearance of people** in the occupied Crimea since 2014. Just from September 2017 to June 2018, at least **94** persons suffered from violation of their right for due process and a fair trial by the Russian state actors in Crimea (specifically, judges, prosecutors, investigators, FSB and police), some guilty verdicts were brought in as punishment for political dissent and as an exemplary warning to the others. The Ukrainian citizens are most frequently detained by the Russian law enforcement agencies in Crimea. There are known cases of kidnapping and detention of the Ukrainian citizens in Russia and Belarus. Brief answers to key questions concerning the Ukrainian citizens held in prisons of Russia and the occupied Crimea for political reasons are set forth in the table below.

DEFENSELESS: DISCOMFORT AND PERILS OF ISOLATION

Crime and Violence

According to reports of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation, crime (misdemeanors or felony, such as murder, robbery, severe bodily injuries, etc.) has been steadily on the rise in Crimea since 2014. With its uncertain status, the peninsula particularly attracts criminal kingpins from all over Russia, which weakens general control over the local underworld. Only in 2018, the Office of Criminal Investigations for Republic of Crimea received 17,361 crime incident reports, resulting, ostensibly, in 1,907 criminal cases. The chances for the successful completion thereof are quite slim, considering the extent of corruption and red tape permeating the Russian law enforcement agencies.

■ Punitive legislation of the Russian Federation in Crimea *



Public refusal to recognize the «reunification of Crimea with Russia»



Refusal to recognize the «reunification of Crimea with Russia», expressed in the media or on social networks

SENTENCE



prison term of **up to 4 years**
+ disqualification from particular positions for 4 years



or
forced labor
up to 3 years



or
penalty
RUB 300,000
USD ~4,500



or
arrest
from 4 to 6 months



prison term of **up to 5 years**
+ disqualification from particular positions for 3 years



or
forced labor
up to 480 hours
+ disqualification from particular positions for 3 years

* Based on article 280.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation «Public calls for actions, aimed at violation of the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation» (introduced on the eve of annexation of Crimea)

Citizens of Ukraine as Russian Political Prisoners

International qualification and estimates of human rights activists

Russian position

Why?

Existence of political prisoners is one of the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Repressions against the population of the occupied territories aim to intimidate and keep in check a vast number of dissidents. Trials on trumped up charges only reproduce the talking points of the Russian propaganda.

Russian government denies its involvement in any political persecution. Criminal Code of the Russian Federation makes no provisions for political cases.

How many?

The scope of possible monitoring is rather limited. There are tentative estimates only, which are rechecked and updated by various organizations:

- ♦ over **80** citizens of Ukraine are illegally held in custody in the Russian Federation and Crimea, including 1 person released on own recognition, 3 persons on bail, and 6 with suspended sentences (*data provided by the Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for Human Rights, list of the LetMyPeopleGo campaign, January–February 2019*).
- ♦ **55** residents of Crimea and **15** residents of Sevastopol are politically persecuted, which is rated No. 4 among other regions of the Russian Federation (*data provided by the Russian human rights organizations PolitPressing.org, Human Rights Society memorial, etc. February 2019*)
- ♦ **24** prisoners of war—the crew of boats of the Ukrainian Naval Forces captured near the entrance to the Kerch Strait and illegally kept in Russian prisons (*PACE Resolution of January 24, 2019*).

Statistics unavailable.

According to the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation, over 4,500 citizens of Ukraine are serving their terms in the Russian penal and correctional facilities, mostly on charges of theft, robbery and sale of drugs.

Apparently, these figures do not include the citizens of Ukraine who are registered in Crimea and regarded by Russia as its citizens.

Who?

Citizens of Ukraine aged 18–64 (at the time of detention); with varying ideological and religious affiliation; mostly Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians. People of various occupations (servicemen, public activists, journalists, scientists, political experts, entrepreneurs, physicians, writers, film directors, builders, drivers, bloggers, students, pensioners, disabled persons, etc.), most of whom have never seen each other before but branded by the prosecution as accomplices.

Terrorists, war criminals, saboteurs, extremists, spies, separatists, religious and ideological fanatics, other criminals and their accomplices.

Why?

Political and religious convictions, preservation of the Ukrainian citizenship, public condemnation of the annexation, political and professional activity under the occupation, ethnic origin, randomly caught in situations convenient for trumped up criminal charges concordant with the Russian propaganda.

All activities of the Russian administration in Crimea are treated by the international community as illegal. There are no proofs of any guilt of the prisoners of occupation regime, whereas sentences are in violation of the rights of the Ukrainian citizens for fair trial, freedom of conscience, religion, expression of will, speech, association and assembly, the right to preserve one's identity, culture and traditions, etc.

Participation in activities of organizations banned in the Russian Federation (but permissible in Ukraine), such as the Right Sector, mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jamaat, etc.; organization of terrorist cells; sabotage plotting ordered by the Ukrainian intelligence services; espionage in favor of Ukraine; participation in street riots, unauthorized public events and combat; personal assault; vandalizing the monuments; illegal border crossing; political activity on social networks. Some charges are brought against the actions carried out before the annexation of Crimea, as well as in the territory beyond the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation, including participation in the Revolution of Dignity, rallies in support of integrity of Ukraine, etc.

How?

Torture, blackmail, threats, fabrication of evidence, searches, kidnapping, smuggling, delaying of investigations, denying consulate, legal and medical assistance – the Russian administration employs all of these illegal tools in Crimea. Compulsion to give false evidence is also widely practiced. Death from unnatural causes is a common occurrence in Crimean pre-trial detention facilities.

In 2014, some articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation were revised toward considerable stiffening of the punishment; some new articles were added deliberately. And these articles are actively applied against residents of Crimea and Ukraine on the whole: “Terrorist Act” (Article 205), “Organization of and Participation in a Terrorist Community” (Article 205.4); “Civil Unrest” (Article 212),

How? (Continuation)

The European Court of Human Rights made a record number of rulings in 2018 against Russia on charges of prohibited torturing (specifically recognizing the Russian Federation guilty of breach of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Gennady Afanasyev, the Crimean political prisoner, during his three transfers under guard in September and October 2015 by train across the Russian Federation in the area of Syktyvkar – in confined compartments no bigger than 0.4-0.6 sq. m, deficient of natural lighting, fresh air, potable water, heating, poor quality food, and not enough space for sleeping).

“Multiple Violation of the Established Procedure of Organization or Holding of an Assembly, Rally, Demonstration, march or Picketing” (Article 212.1); “Illegal Purchase, Transfer, Sale, Storage, Transportation or Carrying of Weapons, its main Parts, Ammunition” (Article 222); “Public Calls for Extremist Activities” (Article 280); “Dereliction of Duty to Report a Citizen of the Russian Federation Who has Citizenship (Dual Nationality) of a Foreign State, or a Permanent Resident Status, or any other Valid Document Confirming the Right for Permanent Residence in a Foreign State” (Article 330.2); “Rehabilitation of Nazism” (Article 354.1), etc.

For how long?

UN GA condemns the enforcement of the Russian ways on the occupied territory and strongly calls on the Russian Federation to uphold its duties in Crimea as an occupying state, immediately release all citizens of Ukraine detained, convicted or transferred to prisons, discontinue groundless detentions, torture and other inhuman or humiliating treatment of the prisoners, and to bring to justice the parties responsible for violation of human rights. Court rulings on the cases connected to political prisoners are often made at the time convenient for the Russian diplomacy and, therefore, are used to the benefit of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Prospects of early release of the political prisoners depend on the current political course of the Kremlin.

Film director Oleg Sentsov is one of those sentenced to the longest term – 20 years of maximum security penal colony. He was convoyed under guard to Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (5,000 km away from his home village in Bakhchysarai Raion). Since 2014, citizens of Ukraine in Crimea are subject to the following court penalties: employment ban, fines, community service, restriction of liberty, prison terms in standard and maximum security penal colonies of the Russian Federation. According to official statistics, the number of administrative offense cases has grown sharply in Crimea since 2017 (most likely against the Crimean activists).

According to the Russian Federal Statistics Service in Crimea, the number of crimes per 100,000 persons registered in the beginning of 2018 was 372, which is higher than average index in Russia (329).

Meanwhile, people in Crimea are exposed to threats to human life and health much more extensive than typical Russian underworld. On October 17, 2018 a polytechnic college in Kerch became the scene of a *mass murder*—students, teachers and other employees were shot dead. It was qualified by the Prosecutor’s Office of the ARC (temporarily based in Kyiv and Kherson) as a “terrorist act”, whereas the occupation authorities (the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation) qualified it as “homicide of two and more persons committed in a socially dangerous way”. This is one of the biggest (in terms of victims) acts of violence in contemporary European history that happened in an educational institution with 21 shot dead and 67 wounded (mostly by an explosion). One of the suspects is a student who went to the same school. Deprived of the opportunity to investigate the case in a proper manner, the Ukrainian side points out that the source of mass violence may lie in the militarization of the academic process and propaganda of aggression by the Russian mass media. Immediately after the tragedy, the occupation authorities switched from version to version, spreading blatantly fake information (e. g. a government-controlled TV channel broadcast a live interview with an alleged witness who, soon thereafter was found to have introduced herself by the name of a killed person), and finally declared “tightening of control over the youth radicalism”.

Experts often tie the aggressive attitude of the Crimean youths to the **Yunarmiya** (Young Army Cadets) movement, thoroughly promoted on the peninsula by the occupants. Under the guidance of military instructors—servicemen of the Russian Federation—young people are getting basic military training and practicing. Schoolchildren are taught how to handle firearms, put on the chemical protection suits, go on marching drills and so on.

On the whole, the occupation authorities continuously warn the Crimean residents of the threats and dangers that are peculiar to the newly annexed Russian region. National Anti-terrorist Committee of the Russian Federation started setting up its operations on the peninsula as early as April 2014. Its mission is to expose “undercover terrorist organizations” in Crimea (specifically, on the Internet), identify the people most susceptible to indoctrination of terrorism, especially in the sphere of education, youth environment, representatives of public and religious organizations and “foreigners”, including migrant workers. As a matter of practice, it’s mostly all about the citizens of Ukraine who rejected the Russian citizenship, as well as Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar activists who



4 months before to the terrorist act: students of Kerch Polytechnic College dressed in military uniforms take part in a torchlight procession organized by the Russian administration (a typical event for Crimean schoolchildren and students)

are watched particularly closely by the Russian intelligence agencies. The so-called Anti-terrorist Commission of the Republic of Crimea regularly warns of the potential terrorist acts and saboteurs, thereby keeping up the psychotic tension among the population.

After the Kerch tragedy, many people in Crimea began to wonder how it could have happened despite the rigid Russian security system. many are disillusioned and no longer trusting. Parents are now literally walking their children to that college and keep vigil nearby, paying no regard to the patrol car that is always there.

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous Western journalist who works in Crimea from time to time

Broken Proprietary Rights and Other Social and Economic Problems

Following the annexation, the Russian Federation “nationalized” land, public and private immovable property, enterprises, educational institutions, healthcare institutions, ports and recreational facilities in the ARC and Sevastopol. mineral deposits, continental shelf, water and electricity, belonging to the Ukrainian people, are now used illegally. At the end of February 2015, the nationalization process was supposedly terminated by the occupation “parliament”. Nevertheless, the list of property to be nationalized is constantly revised and updated. In fact, the occupation authorities continue to sell Ukrainian enterprises, seized Ukrainian government-owned property, cultural heritage and property of legal entities. Assets that have any commercial value are often seized by force.

After the annexation, the Crimean people had a taste of the excessive Russian bureaucracy. Now they have to fill out dozens of forms. Businesses are having it the hardest...

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous Western journalist who works in Crimea from time to time

According to the occupation authorities, over 50% of immovable property in Crimea remained unregistered in 2018. Re-issue of privatization documents is slowed and the Ukrainian authorities do not recognize them. The world condemned the annexation and further unlawful misappropriation, and the international sanctions were imposed to cut the funding of transport, telecommunication and energy infrastructure of Crimea and Sevastopol. Sanctions imposed by the European Union and the USA appear to hurt the most, as they prohibit any natural person or legal entity to invest new funds in the Crimean region; they



A Russian folk and ethnic music band performing at the opening of a fair at the “nationalized” winery masandra. On September 11, 2015, Vladimir Putin and Silvio Berlusconi visited the winery where a 1775 bottle of wine worth USD100,000 was uncorked for them. General Prosecutor’s Office of Ukraine opened a criminal case against the CEO of the winery for misappropriation of property of another owner, including for the decision to put vintage wines out for sale

further prohibit imports of any goods, services or technologies from Crimea; export, re-export, (in)direct sales and deliveries to the region; approval, funding, financial assistance or guarantees by any natural persons or legal entities, banning transactions, etc. The sanctions also hit the business that used to be important niche for economic development of the region: the Crimean seaports may be able to continue illegal handling of cargo and their thoroughly limited foreign trade, but the relevant vessels are continuously risking the the sanctions. (An important role in identification of non-compliant vessels plays the monitoring Group of **Andriy Klymenko**, part of the Ukrainian non-governmental maidan of Foreign Affairs foundation initiative).

The deterioration of social and economic situation is particularly felt by the population of the historically subsidized peninsula. The share of people seeking the government support remains significant. Quality utility services and discount rates continued only for one year following the annexation. The unemployment is growing. Local workers are often replaced by the migrant laborers. Russian prices on the goods and services are considerably higher than Ukrainian. meanwhile, the quality of food products is critically low, compared to the Ukrainian products. In 2016–2017, the Russian officials also raised the excise duty rates. The international sanctions caused the reduction in numbers of the financial agencies and considerable decline in quality of banking services.

Environmental Challenges

The ecological situation in the ARC and Sevastopol, as well as the adjacent off-shore zones, was reported to have started its decline in 2014. Facts of pollution of the land, air and water are being registered. The exacerbating pollution may be attributed to improper storage of *chemical and nuclear weapons* since 2014. Negative environmental impact is also caused by stationing and training of

the military personnel of the Russian Armed Forces and the Border Guard Service of the FSB, including in the area of Opuk Nature Reserve and other Crimean reserves.

Environment pollution caused by toxic emissions from the **Crimean Titan** (Titanium Investments plc under the Russian registration) in Armiansk continues to be a major



Dried up North Crimean Canal, march 2017.
Photo by Valentina Okhlopkova

hazard for the life and health of people. An environmental disaster happened on August 24, 2018. more emissions followed in September 2018. Representatives of the ministry of Defense of Ukraine were the first to report the hazardous situation at the plant.



Approx. 3,500 thousand sq. m of the roofing structure collapsed in August 2017 at a workshop of the Crimean Titan (manufacturer of titanium dioxide)

On August 31, 2018, at the administrative border between Kherson Oblast and

Crimea, the State Environmental Inspectorate of Ukraine detected the soil sulfates concentrations in more than double excess of permissible norms. The occupation authorities ordered evacuation of children from Armyansk only 18 days after the first emission. The source and the cause of pollution have not been officially established. The accident affected the health of Crimean residents (some of them were hospitalized), Ukrainian border guards in Kherson Oblast were poisoned, metal items in Armiansk and Krasnoperekopsk oxidized, trees shed their leaves, and a strong smell of acid hung in the air for days. The material damage was extensive as well. Toxic emissions affected the residents of the peninsula (a considerable part of Krasnoperekopsk Raion of the occupied Crimea) as well as the residents of Kherson Oblast (part of Kalanchak Raion and Chaplynka Raion).

Problems with water supply to Crimea have been recognized on the international level. Ukraine has cut the supply of water from the Dnieper River to the occupied peninsula, so the load on subsurface water sources has increased considerably (to the point of the aquifers drying up totally during the dry period). The environmental situation is further aggravated by implementation of the alternative water supply projects and extensive infrastructural projects, such as the construction of the Crimean Bridge and federal highway Taurida. Another hazard comes from subsurface water pollution by chemical compounds, industrial waste and agricultural by-products, etc.

The electric power supply from mainland Ukraine to Crimea was cut off in December 2015 due to the damage caused to a power tower in Kherson Oblast. Despite the commissioning of the fourth line of the power bridge from Russia in spring 2016, scheduled outages still go on. For example, *Sevastopolenergo* is issuing power outage schedules every month. On the average, residents of various districts of Sevastopol may be officially cut off the power supply three

days a month, up to nine hours per such day. So far, the needs of Crimea are covered by its own generation facilities, generators from Russia and the power bridge from Krasnodar Krai.

Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the ARC reports on the environmental hazards on a regular basis. According to his monitoring reports, the unlawful construction of the infrastructural facilities causes an immense harm to the vegetation on the peninsula. Local ecosystem is also deteriorating due to the unlawful open quarries (about 25 commissioned in 2017 alone, with 135 more under active development). It has been reliably established that extraction of the sand polluted by toxic waste from metallurgical plants goes on near the Upper-Churbaske and the Lower-Churbaske tailing dumps, to be further used in the construction of the Crimean Bridge.

The number of the Red Book **fauna species** in Crimea is decreasing. mass mortality of dolphins has been observed in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov over the last few years. The same hazards are reported by the local volunteers organization *Serene Sea*, which registered over 680 dead cetaceans on the shores of Crimea over 2017 and 2018 (25 more mammals beached themselves alive over the same period). Among main reasons of such mortality are illegal catching and exports of dolphins to be further exploited in dolphinariums, collision with sea vessels, deteriorating food supply, pollution of water bodies, extraction of sand, industrial waste, acoustic contamination of the sea from the construction of the Crimean Bridge and military drills. Crimean scientists and environmentalists are also complaining about the Russian laws that excessively bureaucratize the Red Book fauna species preservation efforts.

Crimea appears to be remarkably unappealing in a number of Russian inter-regional ratings. **The Crisis of healthcare system in Crimea** is being caused not only by understaffing and low pay for medical personnel or rejection of the Ukrainian medicines traditionally used in the region. Numerous international patient care programs have been scrapped on the occupied peninsula. Ultimately, in the absence of vital international assistance, the HIV occurrence rate in Crimea jumped from 28.5 per 100,000 persons in 2013 to 41 per 100,000 persons in 2018, which is higher than in any region of the Russian Federation. Only 55% of Crimean residents that are subject to regular medical check-ups in the State Center for AIDS Prevention and Control are getting antiretroviral treatment (for comparison, Ukraine provides such treatment to at least 81% of those who sign up for the relevant program, not to mention that the share of people who are aware of their HIV status is exponentially higher). According to the *Sober Russia* federal project, in 2017, Crimea was one of the least “sober” regions in Russia (No. 73 out of 85). And in 2018, Sevastopol followed suit by



Selbst den Besatzern unterstehende Organisationen registrieren eine Rekordzahl an unnatürlichen Toden von Delfinen an der Küste der Krim (Foto: sereneseadolphins, Sewastopol, Oktober 2017).

dropping in the rating from No. 13 to No. 17. This problem has an impact both on the public order and the health of the residents of the peninsula.

Even the organizations totally controlled by the occupants register the record unnatural mortality among the dolphins on the coasts of Crimea (Photo by sereneseadolphins, Sevastopol, October 2017)

For the majority of Crimean residents, the occupation period means years of permanent losses. People lose their relatives, property, real estate and business. Families and friendships are torn apart. It is not possible to monitor the situation with natural resources, historical and cultural heritage sites on the peninsula. The sense of freedom is on the decline along with the sense of identity.

My ex-friends who stayed in Crimea, consciously voted for the occupants at the so-called "referendum". Over the years, their mindset started to change. However, like the majority of Russians, they admit no guilt whatsoever. On the contrary, they prefer to play cheated victims. Relatives would not talk to us at all. Our family only keeps in touch online with our former neighbor. She used to be so happy with the Russian occupation. Now she says life only got worse.

Fragment of an interview with an anonymous IDP from Crimea

MOBILIZED: MILITARIZATION OF CRIMEA

The opportunity for political annexation of Crimea opened up after the military operation by the Russian Armed Forces. The decision to occupy the Ukrainian territory was made in Moscow, factoring in the military and political considerations of such deed—the *imaginary threat of the NATO forces taking hold on the Ukrainian peninsula and ousting of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation*. Now Putinist Russia is preparing to protect the annexed peninsula militarily, suppress any dissent of the local population, and be proactive in the Black Sea region. That is why the life of Crimean people under the occupation goes on in a paradigm of vigorous military buildup and tightening security.

Under the Russian governance, hundreds of kilometers of fences sprung up all over Crimea, weapons and military hardware, as well as military servicemen and law enforcement personnel have been shipped in from various regions of the Russian Federation in considerable strength. **military drills** take place on land and in the air above Crimea all the time. The occupants are also training to *counter terrorism*, practicing roundup raids on the imaginary extremists and saboteurs.

Defense contracts are now the main economic driver on the peninsula. Enterprises of the military industrial complex and military infrastructure are being restored. Defense contracts go to big enterprises, such as the *Zaliv Shipbuilding yard* (Kerch), *Sevastopol Shipyard*, etc. modernization of the old and construction of the new infrastructure proceed in accordance with the plans of further militarization of the peninsula.

Russian militarization also affects citizens of Ukraine residing on the occupied territory. Between the spring of 2015 and spring of 2019, there were **nine illegal draft campaigns** to the Russian Army. Over 16,000 men were enlisted in the ARC alone (Sevastopol excluded). It is a fairly common practice to send conscripts from Crimea to various regions of Russia for military service, specifically to the areas where they are exposed to the *risk of deployment in active combat* (North Caucasus, territories along the border with Ukraine, the Navy, etc.). meanwhile, conscripts from all over Russia are sent to do their service in military units within the occupied Crimea.

As the enlistment of the residents of the occupied territories to the armed forces of the occupying country is a grave violation of the international laws, such as the *Geneva Conventions*, Ukraine filed a suit with the International Criminal Court.

Russian Federation treats occupied Crimea as part of its Southern military District, it has lined up a powerful **joint force grouping** on the peninsula, prioritizing the missile, aviation and naval components. The ground forces, apart from the defense capability, possess a considerable offensive potential (marines and airborne troops).

Facilities of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation and former stations of the Ukrainian Naval and Air Defense Forces, as well as Russian units relocated to Crimea after 2014, were used for formation (restoration) of:

- ◆ 171st Air Assault Battalion (Feodosia);
- ◆ 126th Coastal Defense Brigade (Perevalne);
- ◆ 127th Reconnaissance Brigade (Sevastopol);
- ◆ 8th Artillery Regiment of the Coastal Forces (Simferopol);
- ◆ 15th missile Brigade of Coastal Defense (Sevastopol);
- ◆ 30th Surface Ship Division (Sevastopol);
- ◆ 27th mixed Aviation Division (Belbek, Sevastopol);
- ◆ 43rd Naval Attack Aviation Regiment (Saky);
- ◆ 318th mixed Aviation Regiment (Kacha, Sevastopol);
- ◆ 31st Air Defense Division (Sevastopol);
- ◆ 68th marine Engineer Regiment (Yevpatoria);
- ◆ 4th Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Regiment (Sevastopol);

The core of the **land component** is made up of the 810th marine Brigade (Sevastopol) and the *171st Air Assault Battalion* created in 2017 as part of the 7th Guards Air Assault Division. The intention is to set up the 97th Air Assault Regiment on the basis of the battalion. In addition, 126th Coastal Defense Brigade, 15th missile Brigade of Coastal Defense, 127th Reconnaissance Brigade, 1096th Air Defense Regiment (Sevastopol), 8th Artillery Regiment, 68th marine Engineer Regiment, 4th Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Regiment are stationed in Crimea. The air defense of the peninsula is provided by 31st Air Defense Division, with units stationed in Sevastopol, Feodosia and Yevpatoria.

Other types of weapons deployed by the Russian forces in Crimea include the latest modification of armored personnel carrier BTR-82A, surface-to-air missile systems S-300PMU, S-400, Buk-2M and *Pantsir-S1M*. **Coastal missile systems *Bastion*** and *Bal* were deployed on the shoreline. *Onyx* anti-ship missiles of the coastal missile system *Bastion* are capable of hitting targets up to 600 km away—essentially covering the entire water body of the Black Sea. Russia is also planning to deploy short-range ballistic missile systems *Iskander-K* carrying R-500 missiles capable of hitting targets up to 2,000 km away.

The Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation retains a considerable offensive capability through combination of the marine component and means for its delivery—197th Brigade of Landing Ships. The buildup of the **naval attack forces**, primarily with Project 21631 (*Buyan-M*) and Project 22800 (*Karakurt*) fast attack craft carrying the *Caliber* cruise missiles (effective striking range—up to 2,600 km), has been a clear tendency ever since 2014. modern Project 636.3 submarines of the 4th Submarine Brigade of the Black Sea Fleet carry the same type of cruise missiles as well. In addition to the Black Sea Fleet, the naval potential of Russia is further boosted by the ships and boats of the FSB Coast Guard and the Russian National Guard. The Russians also developed and tested a logistics capability to bring the artillery boats of the Caspian Flotilla of the Russian Navy to the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea (by railroad and by the Volga-Don Canal).

The **air component** of the Russian occupation forces in Crimea is represented by the units of the 27th mixed Aviation Division of the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army based on the peninsula and the Naval Air Force of the Black Sea Fleet. Units of the 27th Division are stationed in Hvardiiske (37th mixed Aviation Regiment), Belbek (38th Fighter Aviation Regiment) and Dzhankoi (39th Helicopter Regiment). The Division is armed with Su-24M, Su-25SM, Su-27SM, Su-30M2 and other types of airplanes, as well as mi-35M, Ka-52, mi-28N and mi-8AMTSh helicopters. Two naval air force regiments (43rd and 318th) are deployed on the basis of the former 7057th air base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. In addition, there are plans to deploy a regiment of Tu-22M3 *strategic bombers* in Hvardiiske.

Signals coming from the occupied Crimea may indicate that Russia is deploying **weapons of mass destruction** on the peninsula. In particular, in 2016, **InformNapalm** registered activities of the Russian National Guard and CBRN defense servicemen at the former nuclear armory **Feodosia-13** in the Kyzyltash area near Sudak. (Ukraine voluntarily gave up its nuclear arsenal inherited from the former USSR. Under the bilateral treaties, the Russian Federation took up the commitment to keep its Black Sea Fleet forces in Ukraine free of nuclear weapons).

Russia kept systems capable of carrying **nuclear weapons** in Crimea even before 2014: missile systems of the *moskva* missile cruiser and of patrol boats of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Su-24 and Be-12 planes and Ka-27 helicopters. Currently deployed *Bastion* and *Iskander-K* missile systems, ships and submarines carrying the *Caliber* missiles are also capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Occupied and closed to the international observers, Crimea is a potentially convenient place for covert storage of non-conventional weapons. In 2016,

Militarization of Crimea*



SERVICEMEN

31,500 September 2018
12,500 before occupation



ARTILLERY

162 September 2018
(including MLRS - 55)
24 before occupation



AIRCRAFT

122 September 2018
22 before occupation



HELICOPTERS

62 September 2018
37 before occupation



TANKS

40 September 2018
0 before occupation



ARMORED VEHICLES

583 September 2018
92 before occupation



SUBMARINES

8 September 2018
2 before occupation



SHIPS

71 September 2018
26 before occupation



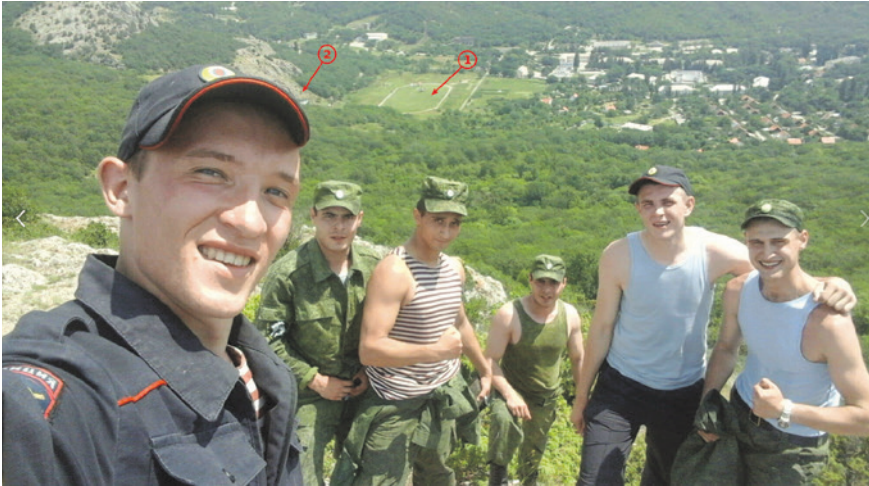
AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS

16 September 2018
0 before occupation

* Russian military presence build-up in Crimea. Status as of September 2018, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. Status before the occupation reflects the military assets of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Based on UKRINFORM's infographics.

InformNapalm reported the facts of a potential shipment of chemical weapons from Syria to Feodosia. Back then, the suspicious cargo was carried by a civilian freight vessel the *Nadalina* flying the flag of Sierra Leone.

Considering the powerful uproar worldwide in response to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, shipments of non-conventional ammunition between the



Ivan Isarov, serviceman of the North Caucasus Region Command of the Russian National Guard, and his colleagues posing outside of the Feodosia-13 facility. 2016. Photo provided by the InformNapalm volunteer intelligence community

Black Sea and the mediterranean Sea had to proceed in enhanced secrecy mode. The use of civilian vessels for this purpose is typical for special operations approved by the topmost military and political levels.

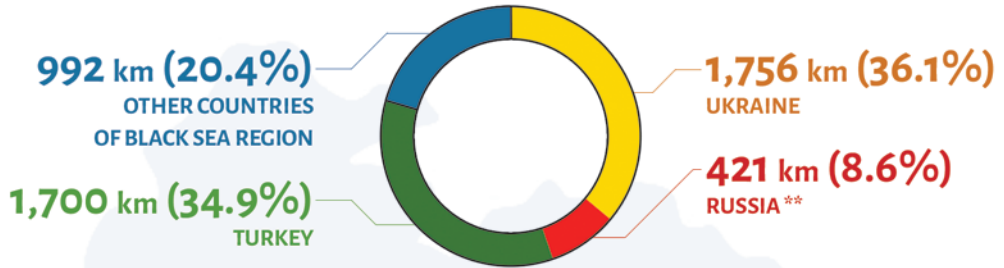
The geographic position of the occupied Crimea paves the way for **Russian domination over the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov**. By controlling both shores of the Kerch Strait and a large part of the Azov coast, moscow has turned the Sea of Azov into a “Russian lake”.

In addition, Russia got hold of the extra 750 km of the Black Sea shoreline and became the country with the second longest Black Sea shoreline after Turkey. For Ukraine, this state of affairs represents the risk of repeating of the *undeclared blockade* scenario for its Black Sea ports (Odesa, mykolaiv, Kherson), in the same way as it happened to the Azov seaports (Mariupol, Berdiansk, Henichesk). Formally, Russia may plead the “security” of the offshore fields and the production infrastructure of the seized Crimean company *Chornomor-naftogaz* in the north-western part of the Black Sea. The Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation is already closing considerable areas in these waters for gun exercises from time to time.

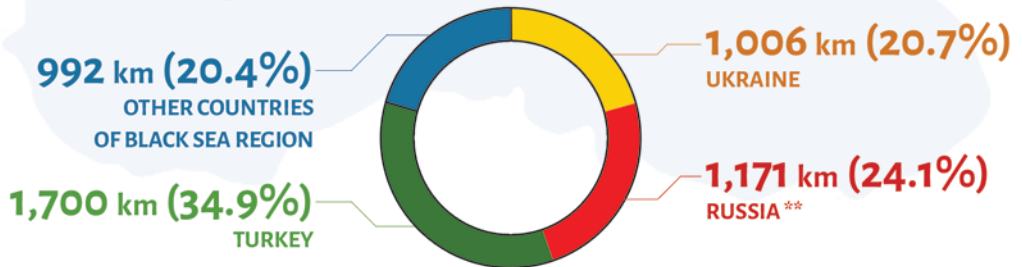
Continuous presence of the naval and other forces of the Russian Federation in the immediate proximity to the mainland Ukraine shorelines is not only a threat to economic activities and communications in the Black Sea. It also poses a **risk of direct or hybrid (covert) intervention** of the Russian Federation from the

Coastline of Black Sea*: --- change in control due to the occupation of Crimea

Before occupation



After occupation



* TOTAL - 4,869 KM

** EXCLUDING OCCUPIED TERRITORY OF GEORGIA (ABKHAZIA)

south. The naval component is reinforced by the presence of the Russian troops in Crimea, Transnistria and occupied part of Donetsk Oblast. Given the 2014 experience, the invasion will be most likely accompanied by the enhanced activity of the underground cells and saboteurs behind the lines, deep into the Ukrainian territory, weakening the hold of the central authorities over the affected territories. The goals of the operation may vary: from causing damage to the Ukrainian economy and creating new hot spots for armed confrontation, and up to “cutting the overland corridor” between the Russian Federation and Crimea, or establishing control over the North Crimean Canal in Kherson Oblast.

The Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation keeps providing the logistics to naval presence of Russia in the mediterranean Sea, specifically its involvement in armed conflicts in Syria and Libya. Restrictions imposed by Ukraine on the activities of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation within its territory ceased to exist after 2014, and Crimea started to play an increasingly significant role in the “**Syrian transit**”. Over the first year of occupation of the peninsula, the arrivals of the landing ships of the Russian Navy in *Tartus* (Syria) increased by 37% (data by **InformNapalm**). In addition to other Russian units, servicemen of the 810th marine Brigade (Sevastopol) take part in the land operation in Syria.

Crimea became the logistics base to support Russia’s warmongering not only in Syria but in the east of Ukraine as well. Armed conflict in **Donbas** broke out in April 2014 with the arrival of a detachment of Russian mercenaries headed by Igor Girkin. As the Russian chieftain himself admitted it, his men received firearms from the Crimean arms depots. Shortly before coming to Sloviansk, Girkin took part in the invasion operation of Crimea.

Crimea remains the place where mercenaries fighting in Donbas are recruited, trained, and stay for rest, recreation and medical treatment. There is evidence that **Vitaly Zakharchenko**, former Interior minister of Ukraine suspected of involvement in the maidan massacre, organized a mobilization center for the mercenaries in Sevastopol office of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. The story of **Vadim Pogodin**, leader of the terrorist group, allegedly involved in murders and torturing, specifically shooting of **Stepan Chubenko**, a 16-year-old resident of Kramatorsk, caused a big public outcry. Pogodin came to Donbas from Crimea in April 2014, only to flee back to the peninsula when his crimes made media headlines.

In addition to mercenaries, servicemen of the regular Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are coming to fight in Donbas from the occupied peninsula. According to **InformNapalm** investigations, servicemen of the 810th marine Brigade were seen around Alchevsk and mariupol. Apparently, they were

deployed on missions to Donbas in the manner similar to the servicemen from military units located in mainland Russia.

In addition to personnel, there are also **weapons, ammunition and military equipment** coming from Crimea to the east of Ukraine, taken, from the depots of the Ukrainian military units seized by the Russians in February and March 2014. Out of 6,917 items of the Ukrainian weapons and military equipment (missile and artillery systems, armored vehicles, trucks, etc.) seized in Crimea, Russia returned just about 30%. In addition, Ukraine kept over 10,000 tons of ammunition in Crimea. Part of that property turned up in Donbas—in the hands of the militants and Russian troops. In the area of the Anti-Terrorist Operation, *National Police* of Ukraine recorded over 60 facts of confiscation of weapons originating from the Ukrainian military units in Crimea.

In its attempt to assert its role as a regional leader, Russia has been turning Crimea into the *unsinkable aircraft carrier*. However, the occupied Ukrainian peninsula has turned into a *gray area*, the source of international tension, home to the militants and a depot of illegal weapons which keep turning up in various hot spots. **meanwhile, residents of Crimea have become hostages and reluctant accessories to military gamble of the Kremlin.**

P.S.: FUTURE OF CRIMEA:

Over five years have passed since Russia occupied Crimea and a lot has changed in the world over this period. The geography of the Russian hybrid operations has expanded. After moldova, Georgia, Syria and Ukraine, some countries in Africa, South America and the Balkans fell victims, to a greater or a lesser degree. Involvement of the Russian leaders in political murders and assassination attempts in the EU, as well as interference in the U. S. elections, is being investigated.

Years of negotiations within the framework of *minsk Process* and repeated vetoes of the UN Security Council Resolutions by the Russian delegation made it clear to the international community that Russia is totally not ready for a constructive dialog.

The strategy of moscow is based on pursuing the goals through alternating confrontations which disrupt the existing status quo, and *détentes* which help legitimize the intermediate gains. moscow is fairly confident it has all the time for such a long-term strategy, for the power in democratic states is changing constantly, but in Russia the regime remains unchanged for many years.

Unlike in march 2014, the dangers posed by the Russian ruling regime to the world order have now become much more apparent. This creates favorable conditions for the governments around the world to join their efforts and develop a joint strategy to counter the aggression. Only considered and coordinated resistance will neutralize the plans of Russia to break the unity of the West and to restore its own sphere of influence in Europe that existed in the times of the *Iron Curtain*.

The civilized world shall not condone the annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea, for it will only embolden the Russian regime to further expansion.

The security environment can be improved, the authority of international laws and Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea can be restored only through constant pressure on Russia as the aggressor state:

- ◆ economic pressure (expansion of sanctions);
- ◆ political pressure (exclusion of Russia from international organizations and termination of contracts that are beneficial to Russia);

- ◆ legal pressure (lawsuits filed with international courts and courts of individual states);
- ◆ military pressure (capability buildup and development of the common strategy of military response to a potential escalation).

Combined efforts and systemic pressure on Russia will promote restoration of territorial integrity and security of Ukraine and a number of other countries that are now suffering from the aggression.

On its own part, Ukraine needs to have its own comprehensive plan of reintegration of the liberated territories with due consideration of the future risks and the past mistakes.

Annex

LIST OF INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL AGREEMENTS SIGNED BY RUSSIA AND VIOLATED BY THE OCCUPATION AND ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

By occupying and annexing Crimea, Russia has broken 407 bilateral treaties and agreements with Ukraine and 80 international treaties. Here is the list of only the major documents.

| Date and place of signing, status | Title and parties | Selected Provisions |
|--|--|--|
| Tuesday, December 21, 1965 New York City (NY, USA) Active  | Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty, adopted by the 20th Session of the UN General Assembly | No State has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. Consequently, not only armed intervention, but also all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the State or against its political, economic and cultural elements, are condemned. |
| Saturday, October 24, 1970 Geneva (Switzerland) Active  | Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations | All States enjoy sovereign equality. They have equal rights and duties and are equal members of the international community, notwithstanding differences of an economic, social, political or other nature. The territorial integrity and political independence of the State are inviolable. |

Friday, August 1, 1975
Helsinki (Finland)
Active



Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (Helsinki Final Act) with Participation of 33 European States, the USA and Canada

Wide range of standards of international conduct and mutual obligations: respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity of the States, inviolability of borders, strengthening of mutual trust, especially in political and military spheres, respect of human rights, cooperation in various spheres, etc.

Wednesday,
December 9, 1981
New York City
(NY, USA)
Active



Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution 36/103

The Resolution spells out specific rights and obligations in full observance of the principles of non-intervention and non-interference in the internal and external affairs of sovereign States and peoples, either directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly.

Sunday, December 8,
1991
Minsk (Belarus)
Active



Agreement Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (Belovezha Accords)

Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, in their capacity of the founders of the USSR, declared the latter effectively ceasing to exist, recognizing and respecting territorial integrity of each other, inviolability of the existing borders within the CIS, and undertaking to cooperate in pursuance of international peace and security (Article 5 and Article 6).

Saturday,
December 21, 1991
Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan)
Active



Alma-Ata Declaration of the 11 former Soviet republics (in addition to the three mentioned above, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan)

Recognizing and respecting territorial integrity of each other, and inviolability of the existing borders, the parties declared that the USSR ceased to exist and CIS was established, further guaranteeing the performance of international obligations arising out of treaties and agreements of the former USSR.

Friday, February 14,
1992
Moscow (Russian
Federation)
Active



**Declaration of Compliance
with the Principles of Cooper-
ation within Framework of the
Commonwealth of Indepen-
dent States,
11 Member States**

Guarantees of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other; respect of territorial integrity and inviolability of the state borders; unconditional compliance with international standards in the sphere of human rights and fundamental freedoms (including the rights of national minorities); objective and balanced coverage of public and political life of the CIS states in mass media, prevention dissemination of information capable of inciting any discord between the nations; abolition of any political parties and groups advocating the ideas of fascism, racism, intolerance and enmity in international relations.

Friday, April 15, 1994
Moscow (Russian
Federation)
Active



**Declaration on respect for sov-
ereignty, territorial integrity
and immunity of borders of the
State Parties of the Common-
wealth of Independent States,
12 Member States of the CIS
(with Georgia, in addition to
those mentioned above)**

Maintenance of mutual relationship in full observance of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the state borders; intent to refrain from military, political, economic or any other form of pressure, including blockade, support and use of separatism against territorial integrity, inviolability and political independence of the states. No forceful annexation of territory shall be recognized, and occupation of a territory of a state shall not be used for international recognition or forceful revision of its legal status.

Monday,
December 5, 1994
Budapest (Hungary)
Active



Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Budapest memorandum) Ukraine, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America

Taking into account the commitment of Ukraine to eliminate all nuclear weapons from its territory within a specified period of time, the parties reaffirmed their commitment ... to respect the Independence and Sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine; ... to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine; ... none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine; ... to refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate to their own interest the exercise by Ukraine of the rights inherent in its sovereignty and thus to secure advantages of any kind; ... to seek immediate United Nations Security Council action to provide assistance to Ukraine, as a nonnuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, if Ukraine should become a victim of an act of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used.

Wednesday, may 28, 1997
Kyiv (Ukraine)
Concluded for the period of 20 years (effective from July 12, 1997); renewed by Kharkiv Accord of April 21, 2010 until may 28, 2042; denounced unilaterally by the State Duma of the Russian Federation on march 31, 2014.



Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the Status and Conditions of the Presence of the Russian Federation Black Sea Fleet on the Territory of Ukraine

Military units of the Russian Federation are to respect sovereignty of Ukraine, comply with its laws, avoid interfering in internal affairs of Ukraine, conduct their activities in their assigned locations (Article 6), and have no nuclear weapons on the territory of Ukraine (Article 5). Warships and naval vessels may move in territorial waters of Ukraine with the intent of docking in (sailing out of) the Ukrainian sea-ports wherein the military units are stations, only subject to prior notice to the competent authorities (Article 8). Service vehicles of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation shall have a clearly visible identification markings (Article 12), etc.

Saturday, may 31, 1997
Kyiv (Ukraine)
Concluded for the
effective period of 10
years, renewable
automatically for
the next 10 years
by mutual consent of
the parties; suspended
on April 1, 2019 on
the basis of the Law
of Ukraine dated
December 6, 2018 due
to the aggression of
the Russian Federation
against Ukraine.



Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation ("the Big Treaty")

As friendly, equal and sovereign states, the High Contracting Parties shall build their relations on the basis of principles of mutual respect of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force or threat of force, including economic and other forms of pressure ... non-interference into internal affairs ... and performance of international obligations in good faith (Article 2, Article 3). The parties further undertake to strengthen the international peace and security, promote global disarmament (Article 4); take measures for the prevention and termination of any actions inciting or involving violence (Article 11); ensure protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of ethnic minorities within their respective territories, creating equal conditions for the study of the Ukrainian language in the Russian Federation and the Russian language in Ukraine (Article 12); create comprehensive international environmental safety system (Article 25); cooperate on the matters of restoration of rights of the deported peoples (Article 28); protect the environment in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea (Article 29); fight the terrorism and contraband, including smuggling of items of cultural, historical and artistic value (Article 33); cooperate in the legal sphere (Article 24), etc. No High Contracting Party shall allow its territory to be used against the security of the other High Contracting Party (Article 6). The Parties further undertake to solve any and all disputes exclusively in a peaceful manner (Article 4).

Tuesday, January 28,
2003
Kyiv (Ukraine)
Active



**Treaty Between Ukraine and
the Russian Federation of the
Russia-Ukraine State Border**

Delimitation of the state border was completed and the Crimean Peninsula was explicitly recognized as the Ukrainian territory. The Ukraine-Russia border is defined as a line and a vertical surface along the said line, separating the sovereign territories of the Parties from the point where the state borders of Ukraine, Russian Federation and Belarus converge, and up to the point on the shore of the Gulf of Taganrog (Article 1). The Parties reaffirmed their position regarding the status of the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, defining them as the internal waters of the two states.

Wednesday,
December 24, 2003
Kerch (Ukraine)
Active



**Treaty between Ukraine and
the Russian Federation of Co-
operation in the Use of the Sea
of Azov and the Kerch Strait**

The Parties have agreed that the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait are historical internal waters of Ukraine and the Russian Federation (Article 1), and all and any disputes arising in connection with them “shall be resolved by way of consultations and negotiations, or any other peaceful means at the sole discretion of the Parties”.

Friday, December 22,
2006
Kyiv (Ukraine)
Active



**Protocol between the Cabinet
of ministers of Ukraine and
the Government of the Russian
Federation on Amendment
and modification of the Treaty
between the Government of
Ukraine and the Government
of the Russian Federation on
the Checkpoints on the State
Border between Ukraine and
the Russian Federation dated
February 8, 1995.**

Ferry checkpoint Crimea-Kuban was set up to facilitate the crossing of the border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation for individuals and motor vehicles for transportation of goods and cargo, regardless of their nationality.

Monday, may 17, 2010
Kyiv (Ukraine)
Active



Treaty on Demarcation of the State Border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation

The Parties reaffirmed their commitment to demarcate the state border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation established in 2003. To delimit the said border, the Parties create the Joint Russian-Ukrainian Demarcation Commission (Article 2).

Tuesday, October 18,
2011
Donetsk (Ukraine)
Active



Treaty between the Cabinet of ministers of Ukraine and the Government of the Russian Federation on the Procedure of Crossing of the Ukraine-Russia State border by Residents of the Border Regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation

The Parties have agreed on the list of the border regions of the two states. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is explicitly defined as the border territory of Ukraine. Local checkpoints: Port Krym – Port Kavkaz; Port mariupol – Port Yeysk; Port Yalta – Port Novorossiysk.

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.