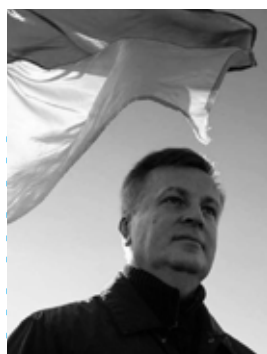


**VALENTYN
NALYVAICHENKO**
The fight for the
future



**VIOLA VON
GRAMON-TAUBADEL**
Before Putin's war
with bombs, there
was a war with
disinformation



**GRIGORY
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Crimea: Eight
years later



**MYKHAILO
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Offshore motive
for the occupation
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BALTIC RIM ECONOMIES

The Pan-European Institute publishes the Baltic Rim Economies (BRE) review which deals with the development of the Baltic Sea region. In the BRE review, public and corporate decision makers, representatives of Academia, as well as several other experts contribute to the discussion.

Pan-European Institute

ISSN 1459-9759

Editor-in-Chief | Kari Liuhto
(responsible for writer invitations)

Technical Editor | Sonja Lavonen

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[Data protection description](#)



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VALENTYN NALYVAICHENKO

The fight for the future

Expert article • 3193

On February 24th 2022 Russia ruthlessly bombed and invaded Ukraine. Russian military encroached into peace and freedom of Ukraine, killing innocent people, destroying cities and threatening the security of the entire civilised world.

They called it a military operation, having fabricated and continuing to fabricate pretexts for such invasion and seizure of our land.

But this is a real, bloody, brutal, cynical war started by a mad dictator, a war criminal putin.

The russian aggressor has already killed 150 innocent Ukrainian children. And that's just according to the official information. And how many more children tortured by the russians died in the temporarily occupied cities?

Russian soldiers mercilessly shoot columns of civilian Ukrainians escaping from the hell of the so-called liberators.

Russian missiles and bombs wipe the entire cities off the map. The whole world already knows Mariupol as a martyr city. Almost everything is destructed there, its citizens are in real hell!

Why is this happening now? Why is the system of collective security in Europe and the world so vulnerable today? Why did one mad dictator make such significant progress in his invasion plans?

I have one answer. The Western world's policy on pacification of putin has led to such outcome.

Three surrenders of the Ukrainian Crimea

Actually, the war for Ukraine, for our independence and our belonging to the European family, and not to the putin-russian empire, began not on February 24, 2022.

This all began in 2010. It was the first surrender of our Crimea

Yanukovich signs an agreement with the Russian Federation on extending the basing of the Russian Navy Black Sea Fleet in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol until 2042 (!) — these are the so-called Kharkiv Agreements ratified in April 2010 by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

This was when Yanukovich returned the russian secret services to the Crimea. It should be noted that according to my decisions as the Head of the Security Service of Ukraine in 2009, these secret services were expelled from the peninsula, and the agreement on cooperation with the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation was denounced. Let me also recall that even before 2009, during my first chairmanship in the Security Service of Ukraine, I initiated and defended the termination of the agreement on the Russian Navy Black Sea Fleet basing, closure of the russian military bases and complete withdrawal of the russian troops and secret services from Crimea. I have repeatedly warned the Ukrainian leadership of the risk and threats posed by the continued presence of the russian troops and Navy the Black Sea Fleet in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

The second surrender of Crimea lasted from May 2010 to January 2014

Then President Yanukovich, his party together with the Communist Party seized all decision-making positions in the parliament and government of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Yanukovich

assigned russian-oriented officials and agents of the Russian Federation as heads of the Security Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other law enforcement agencies in Kyiv and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. They resumed cooperation with the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation and returned its officers to Crimea.

The third surrender of Crimea was in February 2014. It was a historic period for Ukraine — a violent confrontation between security forces and protesters, the final stage of the Revolution of Dignity. As a result of these events, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dismissed the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, on February 22 and scheduled pre-term presidential elections for May 25th 2014.

President Yanukovich, the head of the Security Service of Ukraine Yakymenko and his deputies, as well as other security officers, defected to the russian aggressor. First from Kyiv to Simferopol and Sevastopol. In Sevastopol they stayed at a military base of the Russian Federation.

Later, Yanukovich was hiding in Rostov and submitted a signed letter to the President of the Russian Federation with a 'request' to send troops. Security officers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) assigned by Yanukovich, 70% of the Security Service of Ukraine's personnel in the ARC and the Crimean Centre of Special Operations 'A' (Alpha) in full betrayed the oath and defected to the aggressor, and the head of the Sevastopol Department of the Security Service of Ukraine entered the service in the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

All three surrenders of Crimea are the russian occupation project that has been prepared for many years.

An attack on Ukraine, on which putin has not stopped

The unpunished annexation of Crimea gave rise to putin's big and ambitious plan to conquer Ukraine.

This was followed by his attack on the East of Ukraine, occupation of parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the creation of controlled republics — Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

And what was the response of the civilised nations to the annexation of our territories, to the open military occupation of a part of Ukraine, to terrorism against our people in the Donbas, to the capture and torture of the Ukrainians?

We've heard the world leaders' 'deep concern' about the ongoing in Ukraine, and the package of sanctions imposed against the russian leader and his henchmen by our American and European partners was obviously pitiful, and certainly did not stop putin from his desire to impose pressure on the West and destroy Ukraine.

Today, the world stands with Ukraine

We feel the support of the entire world today. The Armed Forces of Ukraine courageously and professionally counter the russian aggressor.

We have already undermined putin's ambitious plans to seize the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, in a matter of hours. And Kyiv confidently holds the line. The Armed Forces and the Territorial Defense Forces kill russian invaders, already accounting to more than 16,000 killed soldiers of the aggressor. Our military massively and ruthlessly

destroy the russian military hardware.

The Parliament continues to work in wartime and adopts dozens of laws which Ukraine requires for its protection and defensive capability.

What else does Ukraine need to end the war victoriously and to stop the insatiable dictator?

Closed sky and humanitarian corridors

We are calling upon every international organisation and foreign government to urgently act and help civilians in Ukraine.

The most vital and time-pressing decision is to be made by NATO - to declare a No-Fly Zone over Ukraine. We all understand the risks in making this decision, but we are also clear that the risks are much higher, if such a decision is not made at the right time, which is NOW!

We all see and understand that Russia specifically targets civilians in Ukraine, firing bombs and missiles. Russia's cruel intention is to break and kill the Ukrainian people.

Under a No-Fly Zone civilians and assailable areas in Ukraine will be protected.

We urge for a No-Fly Zone to be immediately declared to create protected areas for civilians.

We urge to stop the genocide of the Ukrainian nation, to preserve critical infrastructure such as nuclear power plants, gas and chemical industry to avoid a large-scale technogenic disaster.

We urge to protect objects of cultural heritage under the protection of UNESCO.

Along with a No-Fly Zone, air-space humanitarian corridors should be established to rapidly transport injured people and deliver humanitarian aid.

International humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross should take a lead in this. Such an 'air bridge' successfully worked in the West Berlin in 1948 saving almost 3 million people that the Soviet Union tried to starve to death. Just like then, rescue and support emergency aircrafts should land every 3 minutes!

It is time to establish a No-Fly Zone in Ukraine and stand united against Russian aggression!

If the world today does not sufficiently counteract the furious dictator who directs the destruction of our state from his bunker, then what will happen next?

Both the Baltic partner countries and our Polish neighbours feel already threatened by the possible immense growth of putin's 'hunger': to seize and 'liberate' their independent and successful European countries. ■



VALENTYN NALYVAICHENKO

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Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee for Ukraine's integration into the EU

VIOLA VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL

Before Putin's war with bombs, there was a war with disinformation

Expert article • 3194

In June 2020, the European Parliament decided to combat disinformation by foreign actors and set up a "Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation", more aptly abbreviated as INGE. 18 months later, the findings of the Committee, in which I was rapporteur for the Greens/EFA Group, proved to be unambiguous: There is an overwhelming lack of awareness in all fibres of society within the EU when it comes to the severity of threat posed by authoritarian regimes and their disinformation attempts. For too long, the EU and its Member States have turned a blind eye to increased attempts of foreign interference in the information space and have underestimated, how impactful threats of disinformation are.

Since February 24 2022, Putin's unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine has provided undeniable testimony for INGE's existence. As part of its myriad tactics of hybrid warfare, Putin's regime fights not only with guns, but also with words. It actively weaponises energy, economic ties in the EU and especially information. The Kremlin's large-scale, coordinated information manipulation and disinformation campaigns have reached dystopian levels:

Russia was actively spreading disinformation during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in multiple EU countries and its neighbours. When it claimed victory by announcing the half-baked vaccine Sputnik V, its disinformation machine supported by Russian state media broadcasting abroad and troll factories started attacking the vaccines developed in the west.¹

As for the current developments, the propagation of ridiculous narratives about a Nazi Regime in Ukraine led by a President with Jewish roots and starting a senseless war branded as a "special military operation" was carefully prepared through selected fabrications of history. Putin himself published an [essay](#) that disregards historic facts and questions the ethnic and state sovereignty of Ukraine. His complete reversal of cause and effect, of aggressor and defender, is based on the denial of Ukraine's right to exist. In this way, the Kremlin has prepared the ideological ground for the annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbass and eventually its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The war thus undoubtedly makes clear: Disinformation has devastating real-life ramifications; it can cost the lives of thousands of civilians. This is reinforced by the fact that Russian disinformation is spread without being challenged in certain third countries that have so far failed to condemn or even facilitated Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine. It encourages mercenaries to fight against the democratically elected government of Ukraine and aids Putin's regime to evade the justly imposed Western sanctions.

The fact that we see a stronger recognition, discussion and contextualisation of the nexus between disinformation and the course of the war in recent weeks is important. Beyond this, however, it must also become clearer: There is an urgent need for firm and resolved action by the EU to increase its resilience as well as support Ukraine in the fight against disinformation. The European Parliament's earlier call

for deterrence tools, particularly sanctions, has proven to be on spot through the dramatic events. As the underlying problem persists, the European Parliament's urge to introduce an effective legal sanctions regime against foreign actors spreading disinformation remains valid: Actors such as Russia or China will continue to act with impunity as without deterrence their disinformation campaigns within the EU face an attractive calculation of very low costs and high rewards.

While continuous effort is needed to tackle this problem, the EU needs to take further steps in the short-term to counter Russian disinformation. The EU-wide ban of RT and Sputnik as well as sanctions against crucial figures of government propaganda (among them Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov and RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan) was a necessary action. Without contesting that media bans are far-reaching measures that should never be decided lightly and as any other action to counter disinformation must itself respect fundamental freedoms of expression, we must communicate clearly: What we face aren't differences in opinions, but blatant lies and conspiracy theories disguised as journalistic reporting as part of the Russian regime's disinformation machinery supporting its war of aggression in Ukraine.

Beyond that, the implementation of other measures that INGE calls for in principle must be accelerated in the face of the war. The EU must use and extend its institutional resources to combat foreign interference. Until more comprehensive legal regulatory mechanisms are in place, we must urge social media platforms, which are easy targets for manipulation by foreign hostile actors and play a crucial role in spreading disinformation, to actively contain lies used for political ends. Moreover, the EU must advocate for the best possible protection of the journalists, fixers and other media personnel active on the ground in Ukraine. Since information is the best antidote to disinformation, independent, fact-based journalism within and outside the EU is crucial. Let me also emphasize, that although our access is further limited by Putin's crackdown on civil society, the EU must engage in tackling disinformation within Russia too, as we observe that the Kremlin is stepping up its propaganda campaign on its domestic audience given its military failures.

It is self-evident that neither this nor any other war can be won only by fighting propaganda. Nevertheless, the EU's comprehensive support for Ukraine against Putin's aggression must also encompass its cooperation in combatting Russian disinformation in the short-, medium- and long-term. Too long treated as a hollow platitude, the war in Ukraine is a painful reminder that disinformation not countered undermines the core of democracy and constitutes a serious threat to our security and sovereignty. ■



VIOLA VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL

Member of the European Parliament

¹ We have commissioned a study on this subject that can be accessed here: https://violavoncramon.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Sputnik-V_FINAL_EN.pdf

GRIGORY YAVLINSKY

Crimea: Eight years later

Expert article • 3195

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 laid the foundation for the current "special military operation in Ukraine", or rather, aggression against an independent and democratic state. Watching the unfolding tragedy, we must remember this step as the first clear violation, when Russia ceased to comply with universally recognized laws and standards, and brute force played a decisive role.

The seizure of the territory of a neighboring country was presented in official propaganda as a major "geopolitical victory" and the restoration of historical justice. In fact, it marked the moment when Russia began to separate from the modern world, broke with reality and began to rudely destroy relations between the Ukrainian and Russian peoples.

What has happened in Crimea since 2014? According to various estimates, by the beginning of 2022, direct investments under the Federal Target Program "Socio-economic development of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol until 2022" exceeded 1.3 trillion rubles (\$11.1 billion as on March 8, 2022). Crimea also receives annual aid from the Russian budget in the amount of more than 700 billion rubles (\$ 6.3 billion), and Sevastopol - 140 billion rubles (\$ 1.2 billion). Major infrastructure projects have been implemented: the Crimean Bridge, the Tavrida highway, two power plants, an airport terminal in Simferopol, an energy bridge to Crimea, reconstruction of social infrastructure, etc. Approximately 70% of the regional budget of Crimea and Sevastopol comes from the federal budget of Russia. The region is among the five most subsidized in Russia. And yet Crimea has not become the gold standard for resorts, or a hotbed of innovative technologies, or even a gambling mecca that local politicians have been touting for so long.

Meanwhile, world-famous Crimean wine brands are being sold for a song to the Kremlin elite as a reward for loyalty. Similarly, state sanatoriums are distributed to oligarchs for the construction of private resorts, especially since more and more Russian officials and businessmen are blacklisted.

Politically, the regime implements three proven strategies in the "Russian Crimea".

Politics and the media were eradicated: even the loyal artificial opposition, acting as "courtiers", was sometimes allowed to utter only meaningless statements. The work of an objective press, not to mention independent media, is impossible, while hundreds of public activists are constantly harassed by law enforcement agencies and receive prison sentences.

The border region is being militarized: according to open sources, the concentration of military formations and weapons has increased many times compared to the period before 2014. Crimea has turned into an "unsinkable aircraft carrier."

Even by Russian standards, the complete incompetence of Crimean officials stands out (which is confirmed by the numerous resignations of "ministers" of the Crimean "government" – some positions changed hands seven times in eight years), as well as the level of corruption, confirmed by regular reports of the arrest of officials for bribery or abuse of office - and I mean here only the last four months of 2021.

One could say that Russia has completed the assimilation of the region, although it is very doubtful that the population of Crimea expected such integration.

What's going on now? Since the beginning of the "military special operation in Ukraine" Crimea is moving from a "gray zone" to a black one - a territory that will never attract investment and new technologies. After losing the opportunity to travel freely around the world in 2014, now its residents will have to wait forever to do so.

The Russian authorities demand that the Ukrainian leadership recognize Crimea as part of Russia as one of the key conditions for ending the "special operation". Most likely, this will not happen, because Kiev will not succumb to direct political pressure and threats from Russia. Any other scenarios crystallize a single act: eight years later, the "Crimean issue" is still unresolved; Russia's public separation from the whole world only exacerbates the problems created in 2014 and leads to a dead end. In fact, current events will postpone the decision indefinitely. However, the answer must be found. The solution of the "Crimean issue" with due consideration for the interests of the local population depends on holding a special international conference and making a decision that will not only set a precedent for Crimea and Sevastopol, but also serve as a roadmap for resolving similar issues between other countries.

However, what is crucial now is how the current tragic so-called "special military operation" will end. A lot depends on this, and not only for Crimea. ■



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MYKHAILO GONCHAR

Offshore motive for the occupation of Ukraine's Crimea

Expert article • 3196

The renewed Russian military invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24, 2022 goes along with the war on the sea. The activity of Russia's fleet poses a threat not only to Ukraine, but also to other neighboring countries bordering the Black Sea. In particular, this concerns offshore gas exploration projects. Minelaying in the north-western sector of the Black Sea is aimed at blockage of the Ukrainian ports. Another threat is that mines drift towards the Bosphorus through the Romanian, Bulgarian and Turkish sectors, where the offshore exploration by investors takes place.

The most extensive offshore exploration took place in the Ukrainian sector. The first Production Sharing Agreements (PSA) were signed between the Ukrainian Government and companies from the US and the EU at the beginning of 2010's. One of them related to the Black Sea shelf. The development of the Ukrainian Black Sea sector could fully provide country's demand for natural gas. Ukraine was estimated to possess natural gas reserves around 2.3 trillion cubic meters. A consortium comprising ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, OMV Petrom has won a tender on extraction of hydrocarbons within the Scythian gas area in the Black Sea.

According to American IHS CERA forecast made in 2012, by 2030 Ukraine's gas production could have surpassed (!) 70 bcm annually. This is comparable to gas production of all EU member-states. In such circumstances, this domestic gas production could not only have met Ukraine's needs, but also be exported to the neighboring EU countries, displacing Russian gas.

American forecast regarding Ukraine's prospects to increase gas production as well as strong international consortium and purchase of two modern drilling rigs by Naftogaz in Singapore have not gone unnoticed in Russia. Moscow considered that such scenario could lead to the loss of the Ukrainian market for Gazprom, which additionally may lose its EU market share.

The occupation of the Crimean Peninsula and exclusive economic zone of Ukraine gave Russia an opportunity to put an end to ambitious gas development projects of American and European investors in the Black Sea region and simultaneously displace western competitors to Russian state companies. This has also made Ukraine's access to the majority of offshore gas fields impossible.

Captured in March 2014 Ukrainian extraction platforms and drilling rigs still remain under Russian control. The illegal economic activity on the Ukraine shelf is covered-up by the efforts of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and missile boats of the FSB Coast Guard. The drilling rigs are under constant guard of Russian Special Forces and Navy.

Russians illegally extract gas. They have already extracted about 15 bcm in the offshore gas fields since the occupation. Ukraine has respectively appealed to the international judicial institutions.

Despite the difficult security situation in the north-western sector of the Black Sea, the Ukrainian government has made an attempt to continue exploration and attract investors to offshore projects. Taking into account high military and political risks, it was difficult to hope

for serious foreign investments. Consequently, in 2020 Naftogaz of Ukraine received permission for exploration and production. However, the new wave of Russian aggression undermines these plans to develop offshore fields.

In August 2020, Turkey announced discovery of the largest-ever Black Sea gas field Tuna-1. If Turkey manages to put it into operation in 2023, the country will be able to slash Russian gas imports. The Russian Federation will make every effort to not allow success of Ukrainian offshore projects and complicate offshore gas extraction in Turkey and Romania. Creating unacceptable military risks for investors - one of the reasons why Russia is intensifying the militarization of the Black Sea.

Another reason for further militarization is the protection of Russia's energy and transport infrastructure, which is allegedly under threat coming from Ukraine, the U.S. and NATO. The pipelines Blue Stream, TurkStream, underwater energy bridge and gas pipeline from Russian Taman to Ukrainian Kerch as well as the bridge across the Kerch Strait are meant.

The conclusion, made by the Center for Global Studies Strategy XXI and Center for Defense Strategies within the joint project aimed at assistance to the Crimea Platform, is that with militarization of Crimea and the Black Sea, Russia tries to transform it into the 'Russian lake' and displace NATO and the EU from it.

In order to counteract Russia's military plans, it is necessary to create A2/AD in north-west sector of the Black Sea from Constanta (Romania) to Skadovsk (Ukraine). NATO should increase its military presence in the Black Sea, first of all the U.S. and the UK, providing naval and air patrols from the Bosphorus to Constanta, Odesa and Ochakiv. ■



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NEIL KENT

Orthodoxy, the Kremlin and Ukraine

Expert article • 3197

The Invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has shocked most of the world by reason of its extreme brutality, an event taking place at this very moment in the bosom of Europe. Like the invasion of Sudetenland by Hitler and Nazi Germany, it's *raison d'être* is two fold: the pretense of coming to the aid of one's racial brothers, said to be persecuted by others amongst whom they live in the same state, but, in reality, an attempt to recreate a deceased empire, a political entity loathed by its neighbours and buried over a generation ago in ignominy. However, whereas the ideology of Nazi Germany was based on an atheistic deification of the German nation, this one is based on a messianic ideology of Holy Mother Russia, wedded to the Russian Orthodox Church. It purports to see itself in a life and death struggle with an alien and hostile ideology in the west, one in which atheistic secular values, amongst the most scandalous of which is toleration of sexual diversity and a rejection of traditional Christian values. This is why, in part, in 2012, Patriarch Kirill, the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, notoriously praised President Vladimir as a saviour of Russia. Others, however, like the late Vladimir Sharov in his novels, lament this. As the Moscow liberal commentator Mikhail Epstein has written an essay on Sharov, translated by Oliver Ready, Putin's sees a nuclear war in messianic terms, of the saints versus the sinners: "We'll go to heaven as martyrs, while they'll just die". If this is true, then President Putin has much in common with modern Islamists.

Yet a closer examination of the Kremlin presents a rather different picture than one of Russian holy men promoting ancient and venerated Orthodox values to the decadent West. After all, many of the most prominent members of the Kremlin are in long and short term relationships with mistresses, some with offspring. According to the teachings of Orthodoxy this is a grievous commission of the sin of adultery, but in these cases nobody seems to mind. Also, strange is the fact that the offspring of many live and have much of their wealth in the very same western countries excoriated for their decadence. They even send their children there to school - a seeming paradox! Moreover, in the territories of Russia's closest allies, North Korea, Eritrea and Venezuela, for example, none have set up residence. Yet in Ukraine the Russian military bomb and set fire to entire cities, wreaking a devastation not seen in Europe since the Second World War, making the bombing of Serbia by NATO during the 1990s seem like a few mosquito bites in comparison, a military action, if must be said, now generally regretted in the West. Interestingly, however, whereas in Russian imperial days, before the Revolution, members of the imperial family and others of the higher nobility frequently fought and died in their wars, this seems never to be the case with Russia's current ruling and economic elite who leave it to the poor to fight and die.

Of course, the threat of NATO increasing its forces on Russia's western littoral is also seen as a major reason for war by the Kremlin. However, the logic of the invasion seems faulty. Not only has the so-called 'operation' left both patient and doctor severely wounded but it has led to the creating of unified NATO not seen in decades and one which is rearming, including formerly more or less pacifist Germany, to an extraordinary degree. Thus, the effect of Russia's on-going invasion has achieved the opposite to what was the desired

goal. Moreover, it has devastated the economy of an already feeble Russian economy to a degree that was undreamed of a few months ago. Furthermore, if the goal of the promotion of Orthodox values was paramount, it has led to the almost complete destruction of the Moscow led Church in Ukraine, with even the most conservative and formerly loyal prelates of the country heaping opprobrium upon the patriarch, not only there but worldwide. In late September, just before the invasion began, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the second most senior prelate in the Moscow-led Russian Orthodox Church, warned on the Patriarchal Internet Site that war in Ukraine should be avoided at all costs, not least because its outcome could turn out very differently to what was desired. How sad then that his wise words - crying in the wilderness - found no resonance at the time in either the Kremlin or the Patriarchal Palace itself. ■

NEIL KENT

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JAMES SHERR

The Putin obsession and the problem of Russia

Expert article • 3198

In the early 1990s a great lady asked me, “*why do you disagree with me about Yeltsin?*” My reply provoked a pronounced pause: “*I don’t disagree with you about Yeltsin; I disagree with you about Russia*”. “*What do you mean to say?*”, she asked. My answer then is one that I would repeat now: “*If Yeltsin cannot change the interests and outlook of the elites and institutions that govern Russia, he will fail, however reformist or radical his aims are*”.

On the face of it, the rise of Putin’s autocracy vindicated my prognosis. But it also reproduced the mythology it sought to discredit. Today ‘Putin’ has displaced ‘Russia’ in public discourse. The view that everything in Russia is decided by one man is endlessly repeated. To those transfixed by images of Security Council members quivering before the President, it is self-evident. Yet the perspective is deeply flawed.

Vladimir Putin is not an existential phenomenon, but the product of a historical experience and an institutional milieu. That his outlook and methodology were shaped by the KGB is widely accepted. Yet he also is the product of the ‘chaos’ of the 1990s (which he excoriates) and a member of the ‘new class’ that it produced: monied, self-confident, nationalistic, ‘pragmatic’ (which in Russia is synonymous with ‘unprincipled’) and freed from any nostalgia about Communism. And like much of this milieu, he is also in fair part a product of Russia’s criminal world (as Alexei Navalny’s videos amply demonstrate).

Moreover, he was what Russians call a ‘project’. Listen to Metropolitan (now Patriarch) Kirill’s speech to the military collegium in January 1992, well before the all-powerful Putin was known even to himself. There you will hear the *leitmotifs* of ‘his’ political theology: the Motherland, erected on the pillars of ‘Orthodoxy, army and state’, *obshchnost*’ (the ‘historical communion’ of its peoples) and not least, the ‘common baptism of Kiev’. To say that Putin was ‘specially selected’ as *perestroika* and the USSR were collapsing and Russian democracy barely established is not to deny him agency or even the power at his disposal. But it does explain how he became president of Russia, and it helps to explain the consolidation of his authority from that moment onwards. For want of a simple alternative, the author devised the term ‘the collective Putin’: ‘the Russia of grievance, ambition and resentment...that was born the day the Soviet Union died’. In the view of the Russian historian Andrey Zorin, its seeds were planted well before, during the era of Brezhnevite ‘stagnation’.

Therefore, to understand ‘Putin’, we need to understand the diverse establishments and elites that make up the Putin system, and we need to understand a large portion of Russian society as well.

This contention stands in marked contradiction to a second myth, articulated by President Biden in his Warsaw speech: the myth of ‘the Russian people’. Yet these people are not an ‘anti-Putin’. As Igor Gretskey has painstakingly documented, they are in the main subservient supporters of ‘strong’ leadership and a ‘strong’ Russia’, but they also embrace a diverse assortment of interests, aspirations and apprehensions, with pronounced divergences across social

and generational lines. Moreover, as Biden doubtless knows, these people find themselves in a psychotropic information environment. Where, then, does Biden’s faith in ‘the Russian people’ come from?

Given this assortment of factors, we are obliged to ask what ‘regime change’ actually means. The fulfilment of Biden’s wish — ‘this man cannot remain in power’ — would represent an essential prerequisite of regime change, but a great deal more would have to take place before its consummation. Well before the USSR collapsed, the Soviet elite had become frayed and demoralised. Yet under Putin, the opposite has occurred; elites have been pruned, purged, narrowed and consolidated. Only that part of the business establishment that derives its wealth from the West diverges from the premises of the reconsolidated Putin system that emerged after 2012 — and far from all of them.

Today of course, views regarding Ukraine are especially salient. Putin’s views are little more than a doctrinal restatement of the ideology formulated by advisers to Nikolay I and Aleksandr II. Some of the tenets of Putin’s orthodoxy are word-for-word plagiarisms. Yet there is a difference between the views of these tsarist advisers and those of Putin. In the nineteenth century, not to say the eighteenth, the ‘common’ identity of Ukrainians and Russians had to be created. Catherine the Great’s absorption of the territory that became known as Novorossiia was, like many of Russia’s imperial wars, what we have called ‘a war of narratives and arms’. As she defined it, the aim of the war was to ‘eradicate from memory’ the period of the Hetmans. But by the time of Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, this ‘common’ identity was taken for granted by the Russian establishment. From this ideational and ‘moral’ perspective, the views of Yeltsin and Putin are indistinguishable. As Yeltsin stated in 1997: “*We cannot get it out of our system that Ukrainians are the same as we are ... It is in our hearts that Ukrainians are our own people. Our identities are inseparable*.”

It will be objected that by then, Ukraine was recognised internationally (and by Russia itself) as an independent state. Nevertheless, Yeltsin’s reformists assumed (in the words of his State Secretary, Gennadiy Burbulis), that ‘there is a logic’ that would lead Ukraine to pursue close integration with Russia, and that the West would encourage this process. By the end of Yeltsin’s tenure, he understood that this ‘logic’ would not prevail without pressure and ‘independence’ from the West itself. From the outset, Putin was resolved to make this pressure irresistible. Nevertheless, its ‘logic’ did not produce submission but resistance. By 2014, the only tool left in Russia’s tool box was war.

Therefore, the view that Putin’s departure will produce ‘normal’ relations with Ukraine is possibly the greatest fallacy of them all. History from the 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav, perhaps Russia itself, would have to be reinvented for this prognosis to make any sense. To be sure, a case can be made — and the author has made it himself — that a different successor to Yeltsin, and a different leadership group, might have gradually accepted Ukraine’s independence with

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disgruntled civility; indeed, in these circumstances, Ukraine might have had no need to abandon the 'multi-vector' policy that Leonid Kuchma made his own. But on the morrow of Putin's departure, we will be left with his leadership group and the elites they empowered: autocratic, predatory, messianic and embittered. The 'logic' in this case does not point towards a comforting 'normality' but a new time of troubles and strife. At the least, as we wrote in 2013, Russia's internal order will remain 'in a state of tension with its international surroundings'. The West will need a policy for Russia as well as its leaders. ■

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STEVEN PIFER

Why Putin went to war against Ukraine

Expert article • 3199

Vladimir Putin laid out the Kremlin's rationale for going to war against Ukraine early on February 24, just as Russia's armed forces invaded its neighbor. He justified the invasion by citing NATO enlargement and false charges of genocide, neo-Nazis and nuclear weapons. None of those reasons were true.

In reality, the Kremlin launched this war because it feared that Ukraine was slipping irretrievably out of Moscow's orbit. Domestic political concerns provided a second key motivating factor. Finally, there was Putin's badly distorted view of Ukraine.

What threat?

To be clear, Ukraine posed no security threat to Russia. Active duty personnel in Russia's armed forces number four times as many as in Ukraine's military, and the Russian military enjoyed a defense budget ten times larger. By 2021, the Russian military had almost completed a large-scale modernization of its conventional ground and air forces.

Moreover, Russia has 4,400 nuclear weapons in its active stockpile. Ukraine has none. In the early 1990s, Ukraine had on its territory the world's third largest nuclear arsenal. However, it gave up the nuclear weapons—in large part because Russia committed to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to not use or threaten to use force against Ukraine.

This was no war of necessity. It was a war of choice. Putin's choice.

NATO enlargement

In explaining his decision to go to war, Putin pointed to NATO enlargement and the movement of its military infrastructure toward Russian borders. However, the last NATO member that borders Russia or the Kaliningrad exclave to join the Alliance did so in 2004, more than 17 years ago. NATO maintained virtually no ground forces on the territory of the new member states until 2014, when it deployed small multinational battlegroups in the Baltic states and Poland following the Russian military's seizure of Crimea and involvement in the conflict in Donbas.

Putin did not always regard NATO enlargement as a problem. In May 2002, he joined a summit with NATO leaders and signed a declaration entitled "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality." He did so despite knowing that the Alliance later that year would issue a new round of membership invitations, most likely including to the Baltic states.

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's attitude toward NATO membership has evolved from ambivalence to strong support, virtually everyone knew Ukraine had no near-term prospects. With Russian forces occupying Ukrainian territory, Ukraine's entry would have raised immediate Article 5 considerations, and allies were not ready to go to war with Russia.

More falsehoods

Putin offered a string of outright lies to justify war. He claimed that Kyiv was committing genocide in eastern Ukraine. The murder of six

million Jews during World War II was genocide. The death of some 14,000 Ukrainians in an eight-year conflict in Donbas sparked and sustained by Russia is a tragedy but certainly not genocide.

Putin charged that neo-Nazis were in charge in Kyiv. Zelensky, who won a run-off election with 73 percent, is Jewish, as is the former prime minister. Like many countries, Ukraine has a far-right element, but far-right candidates collectively received less than two percent of the vote in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections.

Putin claimed without evidence that Ukraine aspired to acquire nuclear arms. True, many Ukrainians regret giving up a nuclear arsenal in the 1990s, but they do not seek nuclear arms now. If they did, Putin could have pointed to a facility to enrich uranium or reprocess spent nuclear fuel to extract plutonium. He did not and could not.

Motives for war

Three reasons explain why Russia attacked Ukraine. First, the inner circle in the Kremlin wants Ukraine in Moscow's sphere of influence but feared Ukraine was irretrievably moving away from Russia and toward the West. That was true, but nothing has done more to push Kyiv away from Moscow and toward the West than Russia's seizure of Crimea and the Donbas conflict. In 2010, the Rada (Ukraine's parliament) adopted a law on non-bloc status. At that time, less than 20 percent of Ukrainians favored joining NATO. In late 2014, the Rada overturned the law in light of Russian actions in Crimea and Donbas. Earlier this year, just before Russia invaded, polls showed that as many as 62 percent supporting NATO membership.

A second major driver behind Russia's war is fear of a successful neighboring state. A European-oriented, democratic and economically robust Ukraine poses a nightmare for the Kremlin. Russians might well ask why they could not have the same political voice and democratic rights as Ukrainians. This war is in part about regime survival for the Kremlin.

The third factor is Putin himself. He wrote a lengthy essay on Ukraine in July 2021 that all but denied a right for a sovereign Ukrainian state to exist and presented a history of the country that few historians would recognize. Ukraine and its stubborn desire to set its own foreign and domestic policy course draw emotional, even angry, responses from the Russian president.

The Kremlin has tried to construct a narrative justifying its unjustifiable attack on Ukraine. It is a false narrative that seeks to hide the real and illegitimate reasons for this tragic war. ■

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YANA PRYMACHENKO

Ukraine is not Russia vs One Nation: political prose as the prelude to the Russo-Ukrainian War

Expert article • 3200

In September 2003, the publishing house *Vremya* in Moscow published a book with the eloquent title *Ukraine Is Not Russia*. The author of the book was Leonid Kuchma who was finishing his second term as president of Ukraine. The book was written in the genre of political prose and presented views of Ukraine's second president on the events of the twentieth century as well as differences between Russians and Ukrainians. Kuchma concluded that most Russians, even highly educated, perceived Ukraine as "historically an inseparable part of Russia, ceded only through some strange misunderstanding or even crankiness, as just a lost child. Russians see Ukrainians as village kinsfolk. But these nice kinsfolk let some 'Banderites' confuse them..."

Kuchma did not mistake the Russian perception of Ukraine, but he believed that this misunderstanding was caused by "lack of knowledge, not excessive arrogance". His optimism can be explained by the fact that in 2003 the Weimar Syndrome of post-Soviet Russia was not so obvious. Kuchma's attempt to present Ukrainians as a separate nation with their own history, culture, and language found response neither among Russian elites nor among ordinary Russians.

A 2005 Russian opinion poll showed that 74% of Russians felt resentment for the loss of the great power status, while in 2007 Russians supported economic and political pressure of the Russian Federation on the former Soviet republics as a method of restoring Russian influence. The instrumentalization of this resentment turned into a new Russian "national idea". In 2008 another opinion poll showed that 81% of Russians supported the idea of the annexation of Crimea as "an act of restoring historical justice".

The Weimar Syndrome had become clearly outlined with the creation of the "Russian world" idea in 2007. Based on the concept of common cultural identity, the "Russian world" had to extend Russian neo-imperial ambitions not only in the post-Soviet space but also all over the world. According to this concept, Ukrainians were treated like a "fraternal nation" that has been deceived and duped by the West.

The idea of the "Russian world" reached its climax during the Revolution of Dignity, when Russian media narratives divided Ukrainians into the good and the bad ones (the mythological neo-Nazis and direct descendants of "Banderites"), who allegedly installed a "fascist junta" to eliminate the Russian-speaking people. Of course, neither of that was true. But these narratives were used to justify the annexation of Crimea and the aggression in Donbas.

Before subjecting the Ukrainian population to indiscriminate shelling since 24 February 2022, the Russian "special military operation" to "denazify" Ukraine was preceded by two articles signed by Vladimir Putin. They were written in the pseudo-political prose genre and signaled the upcoming war.

The first article, "The Real Lessons of the 75th Anniversary of World War II", was published in June 2020 in *The National Interest*, the American conservative magazine published by the American-

Russian political scientist Dmitry Simes. Putin used standard arguments of Soviet historiography, which placed the primary responsibility for World War II incitement on Western countries. In particular, the emphasis was on the "Munich Betrayal" – the 1938 Munich Agreement that liquidated Czechoslovak statehood.

It is no coincidence that Putin draws parallels between the Red Army, which fought against Nazism, and modern Russian soldiers who are "fighting international terrorism" in the North Caucasus and Syria. As experts rightly note, Putin used historical arguments to bring UN Security Council members to the negotiating table and divide the world again. It was an invitation to Yalta-2 that Western powers ignored.

In July 2021, a new article has appeared directly on the Kremlin website. This time it was published in Russian and Ukrainian and had an eloquent title "On the Historical Unity of Russian and Ukrainian Peoples". The key message of the article is that Ukrainians and Russians are one nation separated due to the influence of external factors. The modern Ukrainian state was presented as nationalistic and Russophobic. Putin accused the West of turning Ukraine into a barrier between Europe and Russia. He stated that "the time inevitably came when the concept of 'Ukraine is not Russia' was no longer satisfactory. An 'anti-Russia' was needed, which we will never accept".

Thus, Putin openly declared the destruction of independent Ukraine as a Russian policy objective. It was also called "the final solution of the Ukrainian question" in February 2022 Russian propagandistic materials. This statement has shown that the neo-imperial ambitions of the Russian elites will have never allowed them to accept the fact that Ukraine is an independent sovereign state, as well as that Ukrainians even are a separate nation. So, the only way for Ukraine to remain a state and avoid incorporation into Russia or a puppet statelet is to win this war. Otherwise, Ukrainians will face genocide and forced conversion into "one nation". ■

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ELEANOR KNOTT

From annexation to war

Expert article • 3201

With Russia seeking to invade, “neutralise”, and wage war against Ukraine in 2022, it is also eight years since Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea. It is eight years since Russia occupied Crimea’s streets with “little green men” as part of the “Operation Polite People”. It is eight years since Russia claimed it was saving Crimea from the alleged horrors of Ukrainization of language and culture, and a supposed Kosovo-like massacre.

Before annexation, ethnic Russians and Russian speakers faced no such threat. In Crimea, they could speak Russian freely, work in Russian freely, and receive education in Russian freely. One Crimean resident told me in 2012 that there was neither a “gagging” of Russian language nor “strangulation” of Russian culture. Indeed, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages were less protected by local legislation.

Pro-Russian or corrupt?

Arguments that Crimeans were threatened and discriminated against by Ukrainization were made only by those on the pro-Russian fringe of Crimean politics, by politicians like Sergei Aksenov. Prior to annexation, Aksenov headed *Russkoe Edinstvo* (Russian Unity) – a party that only received 4% of votes in Crimea’s 2010 parliamentary elections. In 2014, Aksenov would be catapulted into power by his support for annexation and remains Crimea’s republican leader since annexation.

But one cannot talk about Aksenov’s pro-Russian credentials without mentioning his criminal past (and present). Known also as “Goblin”, Aksenov has been highly implicated in organised crime and corruption schemes as a member of Crimea’s renowned “Salem” gang.

While the 1990s was a period of conflict between Crimea’s rival gangs, the 2000s was about their transition to semi-legitimacy as suit-wearing businessmen-come-politicians. As [Mark Galeotti](#) argued in 2014, “gangsters-turned-businessmen” like Aksenov came to dominate Crimea because such a transformation offered “protection and privileged access to underworld and underworld resources”.

Crimean residents across the political spectrum explained to me how pro-Russian politicians and organisations in Crimea were little more than “professional Russians”. They saw such pro-Russian organisations, like *Russkoe Edinstvo* and its cultural sister *Russkaia Obshchina Kryma* (Russian Community of Crimea), as corrupt and nepotistic laundering schemes for money from Russia.

The grim realities of annexation

On the one hand, annexation caused little fighting and few deaths, partly because Ukrainian forces – following orders from Kyiv – did not resist in order to avoid escalation and protect mainland Ukraine. On the other hand, annexation brought a new violent reality: armed occupation, arrests, repression and human rights abuses, especially for dissident and Crimean Tatars.

For example, it is also eight years since the Putin regime claimed Crimean Tatars – a community of pacifist and largely secular Muslims native to Crimea – were extremist and needed to be policed as such, including banning the [Mejlis](#).

It is eight years since 50,000-60,000 left their homes in Crimea as formally and informally internally displaced people (IDPs) for mainland Ukraine – both Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainian citizens – afraid and disgusted by the new and violent realities of annexation. As the journalist [Ayder Muzdabaev](#) wrote in 2016, for Crimean Tatars residing in Crimea: “There are no barbed-wire fences in this new hybrid ghetto of Vladimir Putin’s – yet. Instead of wire there is hate-filled TV propaganda, total surveillance and constant harassment.”

Annexation forced Crimea’s residents to choose under duress: remain and become a Russian citizen, or register as a foreigner. Those who refused Russian citizenship lacked equality before the law. Meanwhile, Russia breached the Geneva Convention by making several thousand state employees in Crimea forcibly renounce Ukrainian citizenship.

Annexation, conflict, war

It was not long after annexation that Russian-sponsored conflict spread to the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Such conflict included the downing of the MH17 plane, an act for which the Putin regime is culpable.

It is important to remember these acts of pertained conflict since 2014 because Russian-sponsored violence never went away in Ukraine.

Moreover, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and subsequent militarisation of the peninsula no doubt facilitated their engagement in conflict in Syria. Would the scale and scope of Russia’s engagement in Syria have been possible without annexation of Crimea?

While many forgot about Russia’s conflict in Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk in the last eight years, would Russia’s war against Ukraine be possible without these acts? If the EU, Canada, US, and UK had reacted more strongly than targeted sanctions to Russia’s illegal actions since 2014, would Ukraine be facing an invasion?

Lastly, we must remember the violence wrought against Crimean Tatars, a community that was deported en masse and decimated in 1944 for propagandic and false claims they were “Nazi collaborators”. Crimean Tatars were only able to return to Crimea in the late 1980s. Many now live in exile again. Chillingly, Russia is coming once again with renewed force against Crimean Tatars, claiming they are the very “Nazis” that Russia is seeking to “de-Nazify” Ukraine of. ■

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Debunking the constructed war against Ukraine: Evidence from the pre-invasion Crimea and Donbas

Expert article • 3202

It has been over a month now since the Russian Federation started its unprovoked premeditated war against Ukraine. Cities across the country are being bombed, causing growing civilian casualties among adults and children, destroyed infrastructure, and demolished residential areas. According to the UN, 10.5 million people (which is more than a quarter of the Ukrainian population) have been forcibly displaced, among those nearly 6.5 million IDPs and more than 4 million refugees.

The Russian list of ceasefire conditions is transforming now from a paradoxical demand for Ukraine to be 'de-Nazified' and 'demilitarized' to 'keeping non-aligned' status (something which was a part of Ukraine's geopolitical doctrine for a long time but, apparently, failed to provide long-term security and peace nearby the neighbor whose leadership publicly denies the country's right for sovereignty). Yet, the two cornerstones are being kept as the main alleged pretext for escalation and as a last resort to give some meaning to this war: it is 'defense' of Crimea and 'liberation' Donbas 'suffering genocide of the Russian-speaking population'.

During the years of escalation, the myth of the 'primordially pro-Russian and anti-West' regions, poorly studied but willingly exploited in discussions, infiltrated public perceptions, both locally and internationally. As a result, the vague usage of the terms "civil war", "conflict", "separatists insurgency" in the context of the ongoing war have been widely legalized not only by Russian officials but, occasionally, by the international community (including the UN high representatives, politicians, foreign observers and scholars). Sadly, such false reality paved the way to the other blatant lie, blaming Ukrainian authorities for being 'fascists' and physically threatening Russia itself.

The ongoing escalation of February-March 2022 should be seen and understood in a context of a longer-term Russian conquest scenario based on the distorted picture of the historical legacies. Punishing and dismantling the Ukrainian state which does not fit the colonialist design of the Russian totalitarian project, has become an *idée fixe* for the Russian dictator. For decades, it has been dispersed by the blaring propaganda machine and, as the Russian public polls demonstrate, is widely supported by the domestic public. Those who resist totalization and brainwashing face intimidation and extermination.

Since the illegal annexation of Crimea in February-March 2014 (as the first phase of aggression) and the creeping occupation of Donbas from April 2014 onwards (second phase), Russia has used its diverse yet habitual military, political, and informational tactics to construct false justifications for its imperialistic expansion in the post-Soviet space. Construction of a parallel social reality as a pretext for its predatory revisionism at the expense of the sovereign states

involved, among other tools, the violation of the human rights of the local population (including widely reported illegal detentions, forced displacement, kidnapping, persecution, tortures, and murders of Ukrainian citizens, including the representatives of ethnic minorities and religious groups, who refused to cooperate); deployment of shock troops made of mercenaries, paramilitary detachments and other hybrid forces as well as the regular army playing assigned roles in a way that ignores the international legal standards for humanitarian treatment in war; and, on and on, massive disinformation, censorship, and punishment to disloyal.

Such oppressive policies leave little room for objective analysis: social consequences of the war and attitudes of the occupied areas remain hard to study. However, what can be analyzed is the pre-war situation in Crimea and Donbas before the Russian invasion, which during those years was anything but unanimous anti-West and anti-Ukrainian rhetoric. First, during the 1991 referendum, the call for Ukraine's National Independence was supported, although with a different enthusiasm, by a majority of the local population in all 'disputed' now regions: 84% of the voters in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, 57% in Sevastopol, and 54% in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea said 'yes' to the sovereign Ukrainian state (compare this to 76% in Kharkiv, another largely Russian-speaking border region in the east, and 90% national average). The results of the social surveys conducted in Ukraine prior to 2014 were a reflection of the uneasy but progressive democratic processes marked over the years with the fluctuating public trust in the government and local authorities and a high pluralism of thoughts (with some 'drops and downs' during the pro-Russian Yanukovich's rule, though). Although a need to shape regional consciousness in Donbas and Crimea as an integral part of the Ukrainian political nation has never become a priority, neither for the local nor for the central authority (at least not until the Russian aggression in 2014), the available *Ukrainian Society Survey* data (conducted by the Institute of Sociology annually from the early 1990s) showed a colorful picture of changing public attitudes that confronts the black-and-white Russian narratives. Besides a significant role of local mindsets, Ukrainian political identity (in a hierarchy of other personal identities, "being a citizen of Ukraine first") has been increasing in all regions over time, including Donbas and Crimea. Although it remains the lowest as compared to the other macrorregions, the progress over the decades was rather impressive. In Donbas, it has grown from 27% in 1992 to 37% in 2012 (in 2021 in the government-controlled areas (GCA) of Donbas it reached 57%). In Crimea, the Ukrainian identity has increased from 27% in 1992 to 34% in 2012 (no data were available since the annexation). The pro-EU attitudes have been steadily strong since the early 2000s, with 49% of supporters in Donbas and 47% and Crimea in 2000 (in

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2012, during the Yanukovych period, it dropped to 27% in Donbas and 37% in Crimea). In 2000, 13% of respondents in both regions had positive attitudes toward Ukraine joining NATO. Due to the massive anti-NATO rhetoric in the Yanukovych-time media, this dropped to 6% in both regions in 2012 (and increased to 27% in Donbas GCA in 2021; while no data are available for Crimea since then). Importantly, before the annexation of Crimea and occupation of Donbas, the number of respondents who reported that they would leave their place of residents because of the langue issue remained below the significance level (from 0,3 to 0,6%).

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues and is getting closer to the West, the international community should finally learn the bitter lessons of the first two phases of aggression in Crimea and Donbas, which have been poorly digested so far. Apparently, Russia plays similar conquest scenarios across other regions of Ukraine now (from Mariupol in the east to Kherson and other cities in the south, north and center of Ukraine) and, likely, will go beyond (to the Baltic states, Poland, etc.), using the same 'constructed' pretexts and justifications. Will the international actors accept that? What should be done now to prevent this catastrophic scenario(s)? The first essential step involves stopping being trapped in the imposed Kremlin's narratives and developing a critical perception of the Russian state that can never again be treated and heard as usual while its constructed wars are spreading across the world. ■

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A view from the author's window in Kyiv after the Russian rocket hit the residential building on Saturday morning, 26 February 2022.

IHOR HURAK

"Policy of appeasement" as one of the factors of Russia's aggression against Ukraine

Expert article • 3203

Shortly after the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Western officials, diplomats, and experts have voiced concerns that V. Putin may soon order an attack on an EU/NATO country. As the incumbent Russian president has crossed a number of "red lines" over the past twenty years, such a development is quite possible. In the context of the threats outlined above, the article focuses on the steps the West has taken to heighten the Kremlin's geopolitical ambitions and indirectly contribute to what is happening in Ukraine.

For a long time, politicians and diplomats of the leading Western countries did not understand or pretended not to understand the threatening trends in Russia's development. Back in 2004, having analysed Russian internal changes under Putin's rule, Z. Brzezinski called him the "Moscow Mussolini". Putin's words that the collapse of the USSR was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the XX century (2005) made political scientists and experts suspect him of seeking to restore the Soviet Union¹. In February 2007, the Russian president delivered the infamous "Munich speech", which is considered a turning point in Russia's foreign policy. The above-mentioned steps of the official Kremlin did not receive a proper reaction from the West.

Western leaders also failed to respond adequately to Russia's illegal actions against Georgia in August 2008. Leaders of the leading EU countries blocked the granting of MAP to Ukraine and Georgia in April 2008, yet during the EU-Russia summit in November 2008 they have expressed their support for the Russian Federation, including plans to build new foundations for European security together with Moscow. In July 2009, Presidents B. Obama and D. Medvedev officially launched a policy of "reset", and in September 2009 the US President announced that the United States was abandoning plans to build radars and missile interceptors bases in Poland and the Czech Republic. In November 2009, the European Union and the Russian Federation launched the Partnership for Modernization initiative. In October 2010, the leaders of Germany, Russia and France discussed the creation of a united area of cooperation in the field of economy and security. Such steps of the West gave the Kremlin leadership confidence and they were one of the reasons why Putin ordered to invade and occupy Crimea in February 2014.

For several months after the Russian blitzkrieg in Crimea, the West continued to pursue the "policy of appeasement". The situation changed after the plane on an MH-17 flight was shot. Then Russia faced sectoral sanctions, it was excluded from the G8, the EU refused to hold summits with Russia and suspended negotiations on a new agreement, the Russian delegation was denied access to the PACE. In democracy, such restrictions would become a severe blow to its leadership and force it to renounce illegal actions. However, Putin's authoritarian regime, strengthened by petrodollars and systematic

propaganda, has coped with them. However, it is important to state that the restrictions were not aimed at Russia's leadership directly, the government managed to evade many sanctions, while sanctions on the Kremlin's important energy bloc had little effect².

The limited sanctions policy has proved ineffective, and the West has been willing to restart the dialogue with Moscow instead of stepping up in response to further Russian violations and misconduct. This was the pattern created mainly by the idea of the President of France to build a new security and defense architecture" (2018) together with Russia³, the return of the Russian delegation to full participation in PACE (2019), the US President's proposal to return Russia to the G7 (2019). Russia saw such initiatives as manifestations of the West's weakness, and in February 2022, Putin ordered a large-scale invasion of Ukraine. In response to this move, leading Western powers have imposed an unprecedented list of sanctions against Russia. Economic experts agree that sanctions pressure could lead to Russia's default in the near future. Combined with the negative effects of the military campaign in Ukraine, this could potentially lead to the disappearance of Russia as it is now from the modern world map.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the "policy of appeasement" that the leading Western capitals have long demonstrated toward Russia has not been a key factor in Russia's aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, such a misguided approach certainly played a negative role. Now there is a need for right conclusions. The current events around Ukraine marked the beginning of the formation of a new world order. In this context, it is fundamentally important to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine that renounced nuclear weapons back in 1994 and became the object of aggression later. To form a sustainable "coordinate system" on the European continent, the United States and the EU must change their approach to addressing issues in Eastern Europe. Along with financial, humanitarian and military assistance, Ukraine should receive at least the EU candidate status. Ukrainians also deserve a MAP. On the other hand, given Russia's barbaric treatment of Ukraine, the question of Russia's role in the UN Security Council must be raised. It should be borne in mind that the current UN Charter lists the USSR, not Russia, among the five permanent members of this body. ■

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¹ It is worth noting that a number of Putin's allegations and actions indicate that he prefers the Russian Empire with its unitary system over the formally federal USSR.

² The EU has not imposed restrictions on Gazprom, which since Putin's presidency has been and remains the financial base and instrument of influence for his team.

EVHEN TSYBULENKO

War of civilizations

Expert article • 3204

This article was submitted for publication in the middle of March. I do not know what the current situation on the fronts of the Russo-Ukrainian war is, but I am absolutely sure – Ukraine will never surrender, and Russia will be defeated.

Russia's attack on Ukraine is not merely a local high-intensity armed conflict. This is not Afghanistan, Iraq, or Syria. A full-scale invasion of independent Ukraine, with the use of its full arsenal, alongside Russia's demonstrable grave breaches of all possible rules and customs of war, is in fact an attack on the whole of Europe.

The fact that Russian missiles and bombs are not hitting Suomi just yet, should not mislead you. Hybrid warfare is always followed by a kinetic phase. The hybrid war reached its climax in the Euro-Atlantic world. The choice that Europeans are facing is very simple – it is either to fall victim or resist.

How does this affect Finland, a non-NATO nation? The Ukrainian example shows that no informal status, like the one laid down in the Budapest Memorandum, can in practice protect a country from a Russian attack.

Therefore, what is the ominous prospect for the Finns? Russia is rapidly turning into North Korea. That is, it will soon close its markets. In particular, Russian raw materials will no longer be supplied to Finland.

The rapid deterioration of Russia's economy will lead to an outflow of economic refugees to neighbouring countries, where they could hypothetically be accepted. We all know what a Russian tourist is. Now, there will be economic refugees with their infamous customs and claims. The need for the de-Putinization of Russian society, similar to the denazification of Germany after WWII, is imperative, as the brainwashed Russian population is a dangerous mixture of nazism, fascism, communism, religious obscurantism and imperial ambition.

Russia's seizure of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and attacks on other nuclear facilities, including missile attacks on nuclear reactors, make the prospect of a nuclear fallout look terrifyingly realistic. It should also be remembered that in Ukraine, the winds traditionally lead the airflows from the southwest in the northerly direction. We will thus be forced to forget about the world's long-term fight for a clean environment as it is just hot air for Russia.

Now that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has finally revealed a deep systemic crisis in international relations in the political, economic, and social spheres, it has called into question the existing outlines of global security. A similar situation was observed in regard to the League of Nations before WWII. Today, however, the devastating effects of Russia's war will hit all nations, at all levels. Everyone will be affected by this shock wave, and now it is only a matter of time.

Russia's infamous objective is to re-establish the USSR. The military tools of this re-establishment are aimed at not only seizing territory, but also at blackmailing the West. Russia has long considered European democracies its geopolitical periphery. To this end, Moscow has been for years corrupting European politicians and planting its agents of influence. And now it has resorted to an act of armed aggression, which it is prepared to pursue until it gains the required concessions.

The offensive potential of the Russian army is currently being exhausted. Serious tactical blunders and a lack of human and material military resources were exposed during the initial period of hostilities. Russia is now demonstrating preparations for a protracted, positional war of attrition. At the same time, the Kremlin simply is not ready for this – either mentally or physically.

Therefore, scorched earth tactics are being applied, aimed at the total destruction of civil infrastructure and residential areas. Artillery shelling and air strikes have led to massive civilian casualties, accompanied by ever increasing cases of extrajudicial executions of unarmed civilians out in the streets. This, in turn, increases the already massive outflow of internally displaced persons to the western regions of Ukraine and refugees – to the EU. NATO is reluctant to introduce a no-fly zone and confront Russia, even if Russia does not have either the economic, or military capacity to confront NATO. Innocent Ukrainian civilians, women, and children die from Russian bombs, and it is a growing source of shame for the Western allies.

Russia sees no other solution to a problem, than the use of force. Europe will soon face the largest influx of refugees since World War II and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

The scale of this war will only continue to grow. This will inevitably hinder the spring sowing campaigns of Ukrainian farmers. Russian farmers will also be affected. Food and feed grain shortages will soon hit global markets. Europe and the Middle East, as well as parts of China, could face a major food crisis.

The war that Russia is waging in Ukraine is a war of civilizations. It is a frontier between the past and the future. The path the world will have to walk now depends on all of us. ■

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ROMAN MARTYNOVSKYY

The logic of barbarism and human rights

Expert article • 3205

Human rights today are a product of the civilized development of mankind. At the same time, any rights are, after all, just a declaration if their implementation and observance are not protected by special mechanisms that provide adequate protection. They need to be constantly improved or substituted in the spirit of the times.

In conditions of armed conflict, human rights continue to be observed but in conjunction with international humanitarian law, based on the principle of *lex specialis*. This is explained by the nature of IHL, based on the principle of humanism, which is also characteristic of human rights in general.

In the recent eight years, the world community has witnessed how the Russian Federation ignored almost all the obligations imposed on it by IHL and violated human rights on a massive scale in the territory of occupied Crimea. All attempts to use the existing mechanisms for the protection of human rights not only did not bring a positive result but also convinced the "international bully" of complete impunity for their massive violations, including war crimes.

Impunity became the reason for the subsequent large-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, which the Russian Federation resorted to from February 24, 2022.

After the Second World War, most countries of the world adopted fundamental acts of peaceful coexistence of various systems. They created appropriate mechanisms for their maintenance and observance, including acts in the field of human rights protection. By the end of the 70s - the beginning of the 90s, the world, or rather, its civilized part, began to perceive human rights as a value. The paradox of the situation lies in the fact that at the same time, the number of conflict situations in the world, which resulted in large-scale violations of human rights, has increased markedly.

The behaviour of the leaders of the countries that are pacesetting in terms of the scale of such violations fit into the logic of barbarism. They execute seizure, suppression, enslavement, plunder, and humiliation. These goals, in essence, are the antipodes of such a value as human rights. The logic of barbarism, which forms the basis of their domestic policy, cannot eventually exist only within its framework and therefore extends to the sphere of foreign policy. This sooner or later leads to wars, destruction, and large-scale human suffering. The names of Milosevic, Hussein, Gaddafi as well as Assad and Putin, who joined them, evoke horror and disgust throughout the civilized world.

At the turn of the first and second decade of the 21st century, it turned out that the existing mechanisms cannot protect against gross violations of human rights generated by regimes based on the logic of barbarism. Judicial decisions proved powerless in the face of behaviour based on such logic.

The problem is that unlike the situation with an ordinary thief, murderer, or rapist, it is impossible to negotiate with a kleptomaniac, a serial killer, and a serial rapist since their behaviour is often based

on the motive of barbarism that they realize and internally justify. Any conversations with them lead only to the loss of time and strengthen them in their impunity. Obviously, the main goal in such cases should be the isolation of the "bully", a harsh collective reaction to such behaviour, and the creation of safe living conditions for others.

Today, the leader of the Russian Federation, who adheres to the principles of barbarism and who has questioned the very existence of the Ukrainian nation and state, gives orders for the massacres of civilians in Ukraine, the destruction of its economy, its historical and cultural values. This behaviour is also reinforced by threats of the use of nuclear weapons.

It is quite obvious that the previously accumulated problems with the effectiveness of the mechanisms used to protect human rights, as well as the unjustified and brutal aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine, should result in a revision of these mechanisms and the current system of world security. The ultimate goal of this revision should be to achieve the greater efficiency of the existing mechanisms and to create new ones that can influence the behaviour of "troublemaking states", keep the world within a civilized framework, and oppose the logic of barbarism. This thesis is also confirmed by the publicly announced intentions of the Russian Federation to withdraw from the system of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In this regard, the expansion of methods of collective coercion and severe financial sanctions seems preferable, capable of cooling hot heads.

The March vote in the UN General Assembly on the issue of condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine indicates the existence of a universal consensus regarding the role of the Russian Federation in the armed conflict as an aggressor in relation to Ukraine, and a complete rejection of the use of force as a method of resolving disputes.

The existing consensus provides a unique opportunity to put the following issues on the international community's agenda, which could strengthen the foundations of sustainable peace and human rights protection.

Firstly, the issue of the permanent membership of the Russian Federation in the UN Security Council, the role of the Council itself as a whole, and the principles of its design and functioning should be reconsidered. The right of veto has long become a vestige of the past – the fate of mankind should not depend on the will of one state, especially in conditions when this state itself poses a threat to humanity.

Secondly, more attention needs to be paid to the enforcement of decisions of regional and international judicial bodies by the countries to which they concern. Justice is done not when the decision of the court is announced but when it is executed. All coercive mechanisms to enforce the decisions should be activated as soon as the deadline for voluntary enforcement expires. It is not worth wasting human and material resources on the generation of decisions that cost nothing.

Thirdly, the methods of collective coercion and the application of financial sanctions for human rights violations should be expanded. The funds received from the application of such sanctions could go to a special fund. It could be used both to pay compensation to victims of violations and to finance activities to promote respect for human rights.

In the modern world and in the world of the future, there can be no place for the behaviour based on the logic of barbarism. And it doesn't matter where it is coming from, a third world state or a state that is still a member of the UN Security Council.

At the same time, a society that is ready to get rid of dictators and tyrants that has embarked (or returned) on the path of civilized development should not be subjected to an unbearable burden for the mistakes of the past. Punishment should not turn into an instrument of humiliation and destruction. Otherwise, a humiliated society may eventually return to the path of dictatorship and war. ■

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YORDAN GUNAWAN

The legitimacy and recognition of Crimea: A conundrum

Expert article • 3206

The Crimean Peninsula was an autonomous territory of the Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic in October 1921, as part of the territory of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. By a unilateral decision from the highest Soviet Presidium in 1954, Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader at the time, transferred the Peninsula to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Such issue hardly mattered until the Soviet Union broke up in 1991. Following the referendum on independence held by Ukraine at the end of the year, Crimea agreed to remain part of Ukraine, but with significant autonomy, including its own constitution and legislature.

Due to financial problems faced by Ukraine in 2013, the State tried to work out a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but Russia offered them a \$15 billion bailout and subsidies for oil. The majority of people in Ukraine wanted to work with the European Union (EU). The Ukrainian Government, however, opposed working out the trade deal with the EU and took side with Russia instead on the grounds Ukraine did not have its own independent source for oil and had been dependent on Russia to provide it. Such decision then was protested by a lot of people. The protests which were peaceful turned violent and even escalated the urgency of the crisis. Accordingly, the Government negotiated with the protestors.

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, who was establishing a post-communist Eurasian Union at the time was enraged since it meant that Ukraine would switch its allegiance from Russia to the European Union and the IMF. Even though Putin had earned support for the Union in other post-communist States, the protests in Ukraine might undo some of his gains. Moreover, such situation could deter potential post-communist States from joining the Union. In response, he exerted military pressure to ensure that the protests would not leak to the other Eastern European States. Subsequently, Russian forces dramatically escalated the standoff between the two States. Russia's military interventions started with sending troops to two military bases in Crimea. Following that, about 150 Russian troops and more than 20 military vehicles were reported to be dispatched around the Perevalnoe base, where a heated standoff was taking place.

International law generally recognizes a "defense of nationals" concept, under which one State may enter another State without consent in order to protect its nationals against an imminent threat, at least where the territorial State is unwilling or unable to protect those nationals itself. Although the use of armed force in conducting humanitarian intervention may be acceptable, the use of such intervention shall be conducted as the last resort. Therefore, Russia's humanitarian intervention through aggression against Ukraine is considered a breach of international law. It is due to the fact that Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter states there is a firm prohibition to not using force or other means that fundamentally would violate the territorial integrity or political independence of a State. Consequently, the armed forces identified as Russian Special Forces that took over the

Crimean Peninsula were considered a breach of territorial integrity. Moreover, the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 also emphasized that the signatories, including the Russian Federation, should respect the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine's territory.

Furthermore, Article 2 (7) of the UN Charter also prohibits any State to intervene in domestic affairs such as politics, law, economics, social, and culture of other States. Nevertheless, there is an exception for the non-intervention principle i.e., the Security Council or State, either individually or collectively, may conduct the use of armed force based on the authorization of all members of the Security Council. The intervention, however, cannot be done unilaterally and it also should be applied in the case of Russian aggression. Since the United States, as one of the members of the Security Council, condemned Russia's action and did not authorize Russia to intervene in the sovereignty of Ukraine, Russia's intervention was considered against Article 2 (4) and Article 2 (7) of UN Charter.

In addition to the use of force authorized by the UN Security Council, Article 51 of the UN Charter permits the use of armed force in the form of self-defense against armed attacks from other States. Thereof, Ukraine as a member of the UN is entitled to the right to self-defense against the armed attack that was conducted by Russia. In fact, Ukraine had asked for the help from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to look at all possible means to help in protecting its territorial integrity, sovereignty, people, and nuclear facilities within Ukrainian territory. Even so, Ukraine is only allowed to use armed force to defend itself until the Security Council takes the necessary actions to preserve and maintain international peace and security. ■



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Russia and Ukraine: War and media

Expert article • 3207

The ill-advised boast from the then Russian Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, in late 1994 that a single regiment of paratroopers could capture Grozny in two hours came back to haunt him. In fact, the army took heavy casualties as it sought to subdue the rebellious city at Russia's southern edge.

Thereafter, the Russian military started to learn lessons: both in the need to adapt its Soviet-era forces to the changing demands of modern warfare, and in improving the efficacy of its engagement with the news media. In our 2021 paper, 'Russia's rising military and communication power, from Chechnya to Crimea' my co-author Dr Alexander Lanoszka and I argued that since that first war in Chechnya in the mid-1990s, 'Russia has developed its military and media policies in a coordinated manner: learning from its mistakes and failures as it went along, and becoming more efficient each time.'

In particular, we considered the war against Georgia in the summer of 2008—over the separatist territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia—and the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. We wrote that the campaign in Georgia ended in a strategic victory for Russia, even if that victory was delivered, 'ultimately by dint of enjoying significant numerical superiority over an adversary in a conventional war.'

Unless you are inside President Vladimir Putin's inner circle—or perhaps even inside his head—it is impossible to know whether the opening stages of the invasion of Ukraine went according to plan. It is reasonable to speculate, though, that it has not gone according to schedule. Surely this was supposed to be over in a matter of days: the Ukrainian government capitulating, and Russian troops greeted as liberators by a significant section of the population. Neither happened, of course.

On February 28th, the respected scholar of Russia and the Caucasus, Thomas de Waal, shared on Twitter a remarkable news story prepared by the RIA Novosti news agency, and apparently published in error, with a date of 0800 on February 26th (around 48 hours, in other words, after the start of the invasion). The author of the extraordinary article hailed, 'A new world being born before our eyes,' and went on to praise the achievements of the 'military operation.'

Things did not turn out that way. Two days after the Russian army launched the invasion, the world was instead waking up to the reality of Ukrainian resistance in the face of much larger and more powerful enemy. Questions about the Russian army's capabilities had already started to creep in, though. Opening my copy of the British newspaper *The Times* in the early days of the war, I saw a photograph that recalled the decade of sometimes violent chaos that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Two very young-looking Russian soldiers—presumably hapless conscripts who had not expected their compulsory military service to involve invading a neighbouring country—stared into the photographer's lens. They had been captured by the Ukrainian army—their part in the war over almost as soon as it had begun.

The picture took me back to the most terrifying day of my 20 years in journalism: a cold day in the Chechen capital Grozny, in January 1995. That day, Chechen fighters brought out young conscripts they had captured to show the news media. Shortly afterwards, Russian

warplanes attacked the square where we stood. We were lucky to escape. Others close by were killed in the strike. I reflected that the young men I saw in the paper in February this year would not even have been born that day—yet perhaps, in respect of the use of conscripts in major combat operations, not everything had changed in the intervening 27 years.

That first Chechen campaign was the low point of Russia's post-Soviet military history. The second Chechen war, beginning in the fall of 1999, changed Russia in many ways. Firstly, it provided Putin—then prime minister—with the opportunity to take a tough line with the restive region—and that in turn helped him to victory in the presidential election in March 2000. It also marked the start of the rebuilding of the Russian military—slowly at first—accompanied by a determined attempt to control the narratives that would shape public perceptions of future campaigns in Georgia in 2008, in Crimea in 2014, and in Syria from 2015.

Looking back, all these campaigns may be seen as preparation for the invasion of Ukraine. In the same way, the chaotically free news media of Russia in the 1990s have been brought under control, or even—in the case of Radio Ekho Moskv or TV Rain, Russia's last two proudly independent broadcast voices—simply closed down. All combatants since the dawn of time have tried to tell the stories of war the way they want them told. In our media-saturated age, it seems to have become even more of a priority.

The Kremlin has launched the kind of war that Europe hoped it had left back in history. It was not supposed to happen in the 21st century. The Kremlin is also trying to defy conventional wisdom about our age by controlling information in the era of the smartphone. ■



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Ukrainian resistance to Russian aggression: What can civil society representatives do?

Expert article • 3208

Russia's aggression against Ukraine began in 2014. Crimea, as well as part of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were occupied. Thousands of Ukrainians were killed, thousands of our citizens became internally displaced persons or refugees. Political persecutions, large-scale human rights violations, and torture have become commonplace in the occupied territories.

In accordance with the right to self-defense, enshrined in the Article 51 of the UN Charter, the Ukrainian armed forces have been defending our country since 2014. From the very beginning of the international armed conflict, the occupying army of the Russian Federation has been neglecting international humanitarian law, committing crimes against humanity and war crimes.

At the same time, Ukraine has consistently sought to resolve the conflict through diplomacy. Respecting the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes (which is a peremptory norm of international law / *jus cogens*), Ukraine tried to hold negotiations at various levels. In particular, the Minsk process (negotiations in the Normandy format) began, and the Minsk arrangements were signed. However, the aggressor state did not adhere to any agreements. The most important part of the Minsk arrangements was the security component. Unfortunately, these provisions were never implemented due to the position of the Russian Federation.

With a view to increasing the effectiveness of the international response to the ongoing Russian aggression and achieving de-occupation of Crimea and full restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty over the peninsula, the Crimea Platform (as a new consultative and coordination format) was initiated by Ukraine. The Crimea Platform was launched at its inaugural summit on August 23, 2021, in Kyiv, and became one of the biggest diplomatic successes of Ukraine.

It is important that the Crimea Platform was based on several levels (governmental, parliamentary, expert). In fact, civil society has become the driving force behind this initiative, and the synergies of different levels of the Platform have made this initiative unique. That is why it was crucial for East Europe Foundation to join this process. In particular, the Crimea Platform Support Program was established, ensuring cooperation between state institutions, civil society, and international partners of Ukraine. The main goal of the Program was to provide support to the Crimea Platform Expert Network activities. The Program included such areas: 1) expert research; 2) expert diplomacy; 3) capacity building of the Crimea Platform Expert Network; 4) communication support to the Crimea Platform.

Unfortunately, efficient implementation of the Program was stopped by the Russian invasion. February 24, 2022 is a date that changed Ukraine forever. Russia has launched a full-scale aggression, bombing Ukrainian peaceful cities, killing civilians and destroying infrastructure. Thousands were killed and millions were forced to flee their homes. At the same time, Russian aggression united the entire Ukrainian people, and civil society became a reliable

assistant and support for the Ukrainian army. Humanitarian aid, organization of arms supplies, documentation of Russian crimes – these are just a few of the areas in which civil society helps the state. East Europe Foundation also keeps working to support the country in these hard times. The Shelter Project, aimed at supporting IDPs (safe spaces, psycho-social support, reintegration, etc.) was launched. East Europe Foundation is also focused on the following areas: 1) building community resilience (the needs assessment and outline are under development); 2) introducing e-tools for community mobilization and emergency communication; 3) developing e-learning materials on the emerging issues. All Ukrainian civil society is united as never before. Our goal is the victory of Ukraine, as well as its successful development.

It can be predicted that after the war the civil society will focus its efforts on the following areas:

- implementation of the legal responsibility of the aggressor state, ensuring justice, assisting Ukrainian authorities in preparing the appropriate legal framework for post-conflict settlement;
- Taking an active part in community mobilisation activities during the recovery and development phase, namely:
 - facilitation of the restoration of destroyed infrastructure;
 - control (oversight and scrutiny) over the use of finances provided to Ukraine by international partners;
 - helping in establishing the best business environment in Ukrainian communities;
 - creation and promotion promoting the development of new small businesses and social entrepreneurship;
 - Continue to promote volunteering at various levels.

In general, civil society is making a vital contribution to Ukraine's future victory. Today, Ukrainian civil society activists protect not only democracy in Ukraine, but also the freedom of Europe and the world.

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DEBORAH SANDERS

The Russian invasion of Ukraine: Implications for the Black Sea

Expert article • 3209

The war President Putin is fighting in Ukraine isn't the war he expected, or, as we have seen, planned for. Russia expected a quick and decisive 'special military operation' that would seize key political centres and decapitate the Ukrainian government. They assumed that Ukrainian morale would be quickly broken, and resistance would evaporate without requiring extended and costly military operations. What Russia has actually faced on the ground, however, is a protracted and attritional campaign. Where Russian forces have had some success, however, is on Ukraine's coast, although Ukrainian resistance is notable here as well as in major cities. Given that Russia has seized swathes of Ukraine's coastline what does this mean for the Black Sea?

Starting with Ukraine, it is clear that Kyiv has lost all access to the Sea of Azov. This was always likely to be a prime Russian objective in any conflict. Over the last few years, Russia has engaged in aggressive action to limit Ukraine's access to the sea, including building a bridge to Crimea which limits the height of maritime transport into the area, imposing an inspection regime on all commercial vessels transiting the Kerch Straits heading to Ukrainian ports, actually attacking and then capturing three Ukrainian naval vessels and its sailors in 2018, and, perhaps most significantly, closing off the Sea of Azov to all maritime traffic under the pretext of military exercises.

Russia has long wanted a land bridge linking Crimea to Russia and due to its success in seizing Ukrainian territory it is now on the verge of obtaining one. The loss of key Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov, in particular Berdyansk and Mariupol, will have a damaging effect on the Ukrainian economy as Ukraine is highly dependent on exports and much of its grain and sunflower oil goes by sea – these losses will, of course, affect Ukraine's ability to rebuild economically after the war.¹

The recent demands by Russia that Ukraine accept the independence of the separatist republics of Donetsk and Lugansk as part of any ceasefire agreement will also reinforce the loss of Ukraine's access to the Sea of Azov, its commercial ports, and planned new naval base there. The constitutional border of Donetsk oblast, as opposed to the former line of contact that Ukrainian forces held against the separatists, includes Mariupol.² Working closely with the UK, Ukraine was looking to build a new Ukrainian naval base in the Sea of Azov; this clearly is no longer an option and the Ukrainian navy, or at least what remains of the navy after this conflict, will be forced to relocate to the Black Sea.³

Picking up on the previous point, Ukraine will forfeit the progress it has made in restructuring its maritime forces. Navies are difficult and costly to construct, and Ukraine has faced many challenges rebuilding its capabilities since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.⁴ The scuttling of the Ukrainian flagship, *Hetman Sahaidachny* (U130), was a huge psychological blow to the navy and a clear sign of the immense challenges small navies face when confronted by reality of the application of superior maritime power.⁵ Ukraine's ability to rebuild its navy will ultimately be dependent on the outcome of the conflict and what 'ceasing military action' and 'neutrality' (two key demands Russia has made to end hostilities) actually mean in practice.⁶

The Russian Federation has moderated its initial stated war objective of 'demilitarising' Ukraine and more recently President Putin has settled for 'ceasing military action'. It is not clear at the moment what the relationship is between these two objectives. The demilitarisation of Ukraine would affect the type of maritime capabilities and assets Ukraine could be allowed to retain or be able to acquire in the near future. Whereas 'ceasing military action' suggests that Ukraine will be allowed to retain whatever is left of its maritime power (albeit in truncated form) and will be able to continue to operate and protect its interests in the maritime domain. Ukraine's ability to protect its interests in the maritime domain and address what are also pressing non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Black Sea will be severely affected if it does not retain its navy.⁷

A change to the Ukrainian constitution to enshrine neutrality could have a pernicious effect on the ability of the Ukrainian government to rebuild its military forces, including its navy and coastal defence systems. The Ukrainian navy has benefited enormously from capacity building, most notably with the UK, from the donation of maritime platforms from the US and from the Ukrainian navy's participation in NATO maritime training and maritime security operations. It is not clear if any of these options will be allowed to continue under Moscow's interpretation of what constitutes a 'neutral state' on its border. While neutral states, such as Finland, do actively engage with NATO training exercises, it is worth remembering that neutrality was not imposed on Helsinki by a larger more powerful neighbour and Finland is not Ukraine.

1 'Explainer: Will Ukraine lose Sea of Azov to Russia?', 20 July 2018, as reported on BBC Monitoring, monitoring.bbc.co.uk/.

2 'Ukraine: The line', The International Crisis Group, Briefing number 81, 18 July 2016.

3 Claire Mills, 'Military assistance to Ukraine', House of Commons Library Research Briefing, 7135, 14 February 2022.

4 Deborah Sanders, 'Rebuilding the Ukrainian Navy', in Robert McCabe et al, *Europe, Small Navies and Maritime Security*, (Routledge, 2020), 168-184.

5 Tyler Rogoway, 'The Ukrainian navy's flagship appears to have been scuttled', *The War Zone*, 3 March 2022.

6 Holly Bancroft, 'Russia issue four key demands Ukraine must follow to halt invasion ahead of peace talks', *The Independent*, 8 March 2022.

7 Deborah Sanders, 'Maritime Security in the Black Sea: Out with the new, In with the Old', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 28/2 Autumn 2017, 4-29.

So what are the wider implications for the Black Sea from the Russian invasion of Ukraine? If Russian ceasefire demands are met and Ukraine is forced to recognise Crimea as Russian, then Romania will share a maritime border with Moscow. As Romania and Bulgaria, like Ukraine, operate what can best be described as small navies and have limited coastal defence capabilities, they will be forced to develop more advanced land-based options to substitute and augment their limited maritime power, creating an even more militarised maritime domain. Suggestions have included looking at how Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, enhance their coastal defence systems and their ability to counter Russian sea control with overlapping Coastal Defence Cruise Missile coverage.⁸ There is also highly likely to be a further increase in NATO, and in particular US, forward presence in Romania and Bulgaria to send a very clear message about what NATO's red lines are in the Black Sea.

Further Russian advances along Ukraine's coastline in the west, including the seizure of Odesa, will also give Russian control of both the western and eastern side of the Black Sea, in essence giving it sea control over the whole of the Black Sea. While Russia's ability to project power in the Black Sea has increased significantly since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, control over the western side of the Black Sea could make this enclosed sea a no-go area for NATO ships.

More widely, and whatever the outcome of the current conflict, the enmity that now characterises Russia's relationship with the West will make the Black Sea an even more hostile environment for the operation of NATO maritime forces, with even the most peaceful of deployments likely to result in difficult confrontations. ■

8 Brian Harrington, 'The US and NATO must counter Russia's dominance in the Black Sea', *The Hill*, 4 November 2021.

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Russia's maritime expansionism in the Black Sea region

Expert article • 3210

The geopolitical landscape in Europe's southeastern corner has undergone dramatic changes in the more than eight years that have passed since the Russia's illegal occupation and annexation of the Crimean peninsula in February–March 2014. The country's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, which started on 24 February this year, has further contributed to a deterioration of the security situation in this and other parts of Europe.

Europe's second largest country, Ukraine, has become the victim of an unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression. Russia's territorial expansionism, on land as well as at sea, has already had a devastating effect on Ukraine's economy and security. Russia, for its part, is being faced with an international sanctions package, which will soon bring the Russian economy to its knees.

Much has been said and written about the underlying causes of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the way in which it has played out in the period between 2014 and 2022. In short, the situation has gone from bad to worse at every possible opportunity, particularly in the winter of 2021–2022. At every crossroad, Russia chose escalation over de-escalation, and ignored all possible “off-ramps” that could have been taken. Putin was dead set on invading Ukraine.

The long-term geopolitical impacts of this invasion are hard to assess at this point. The humanitarian repercussions of the war are certainly massive, with large numbers of civilian and military casualties, refugees, and internally displaced people. The amount of damage done to Ukraine's infrastructure and civilian property is also horrific, particularly in the northern, eastern, and southern parts of the country. And, perhaps most importantly, the war has caused irreparable harm to the bilateral relationship between Russia and Ukraine, not to mention Russia's relationship with the West.

Within the maritime domain, Ukraine currently finds itself in a blockade-like situation. Ever since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has strengthened its military presence in the region and sought to assert dominance over the maritime spaces of the Azov-Black Sea basin. Massively violating the [Law of the Sea Convention](#) and previous bilateral agreements with Ukraine, Russia has not only taken control of most of Ukraine's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the coast of Crimea, but also effectively strangled much of Ukraine's sea-born foreign trade through the Azov Sea ports of Mariupol and Berdyansk. The Russia-controlled Kerch Strait, which connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Azov, has become an almost impenetrable choke point for Ukrainian and third-country merchant and naval vessels.

In order to get a better understanding of the driving forces behind Russia's maritime expansionism in the northern part of the Black Sea region, and how it has affected Ukraine and the four other coastal states (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Georgia) in the past eight years, we have to go back to the annexation of Crimea. Russia's post-2014 quest for regional dominance in and around the Black Sea has been – and remains – a multidimensional endeavor. Backed

by military and economic power, efforts have been made to replace the previously functioning legal order of the region with a new order, defined and enforced by Russia.

Russia does not share what seems to be the prevailing view among Western scholars and political leaders, namely that the country's 2014 annexation of Crimea was “[unlawful and therefore invalid](#)”. Exercising *de facto* authority over the peninsula, Russia claims that a legal transfer of the territory has taken place, implying that Crimea is no longer a part of Ukraine, and that the legal status of the maritime zones off the coast of the peninsula has changed because of this.

West of Crimea, Russia's illegally claimed EEZ is now directly adjacent to the EEZ of Romania. In this area, Ukraine and Romania had earlier agreed on a maritime boundary, established with the help of the International Court of Justice. In Ukraine's view, the 2009 delimitation agreement with Romania is still in force, and Ukraine still holds a legal claim to this and other parts of its pre-2014 EEZ.

East of Crimea, Russia has since March 2014 been in control of both sides of the Kerch Strait. This has made it easier for Russia to impose restrictions on the commercial ship traffic between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov through the Kerch Strait, which is an important export route for Ukrainian coal, steel, and agricultural products. As demonstrated during the “[Kerch Strait clash](#)” in November 2018, Russia has also taken forcible measures to restrict Ukrainian naval vessels' ability to transit the strait. Thus, the transit restrictions in this area has clearly also become a security issue for Ukraine.

As regards the economic dimensions of Russia's maritime expansionism in the Black Sea, it seems to have been an important strategic objective for the Kremlin to get access to petroleum deposits on the Ukrainian continental shelf. By annexing Crimea, tripling the length of its Black Sea coastline, expropriating Chornomornaftogaz (the Crimean arm of Ukraine's state-owned oil and gas company Naftogaz), and pushing Russia's maritime boundaries well into the Black Sea, Russia has been able to significantly increase its economic potential in the region and deal a devastating blow to Ukraine's hopes for energy independence. By pursuing its revisionist objectives through the use of military force, Russia has also upended the security environment in – and well beyond – the Black Sea region.



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Legal assessment of Russian ongoing aggression in the Black and Azov Seas

Expert article • 3211

Until 2022, domestic and foreign experts have repeatedly written about the excessive militarization of Crimea by the aggressor since 2014, primarily in expanding the capacity of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The aggressor's fleet was saturated with new weapons and ships throughout the years of occupation of Crimea, and before invading mainland Ukraine in February 2022, Russia concentrated an unprecedented group of ships in the Black Sea – more than 40 units, including more than 10 landing ships.¹

It is crucial for the aggressor state to take full control of the entire coast of the Sea of Azov. Under such conditions, aggressor state prepared for new encroachments on the territorial integrity of Ukraine in a covert form. As for the Kherson Region, these criminal intentions are currently considered by the aggressor in a criminal "alternative": either in forms of forming another fake "people's republic", or in an attempt to "join" these territories to the Russia-controlled so-called "Republic of Crimea"². The occupied Crimean peninsula is used by Russian troops as a key bridgehead for military operations at sea.

The aggressor uses 'Tu-22' bombers to bomb mainland Ukraine, which maneuver over the sea³. The Russian Navy's 636.3 'Varshavyanka' submarines, which launch 'Caliber' missiles, were also used for rocket attacks to hit mainland Ukraine's facilities, including civilian infrastructure,⁴ and Russia actively uses Black Sea Fleet bombing and fighter aircraft where the Russian army suffers significant losses also⁵. For operations in the sea, the Russians are actively using surface ships, with occupied Sevastopol as the basis of their base⁶. In particular, on March 15, a group of the Russian fleet fired missiles at settlements in the Belgorod-Dniester region, which caused casualties, and the aggressor state continues to prepare for landing operations in Odessa and Mykolaiv regions of Ukraine⁷.

Russia continues to store weapons on the maritime oil platforms of 'Chornomornaftogaz' and at the same time Russian troops prepare them for destruction in the event of a change in the strategic situation. The occupiers are also urgently calculating the logistics of a significant increase in the capacity of the Kerch Strait for military needs, and are working on blocking all approaches to the Strait for commercial shipping. The aggressor's navy captured the Ukraine's Zmiiny island in Black Sea and ensures the blockade of Ukrainian ports and the capture of individual merchant ships that came out of them⁸, using anchored and floating mines.

The Russian aggressor threatened several merchant ships flying Ukrainian flags, such as the AFINA bulk carrier IMO number 8029272

and the PRINCESS NIKOL bulk carrier IMO number 8319392, and it promised to destroy the ships with missile weapons. The military authorities of the aggressor announced a so-called "anti-terrorist operation" in the Black Sea region adjacent to mainland Ukraine, where any merchant ship could be destroyed by the aggressor's navy and aviation. Maritime looting is taking place, for example, on March 13, the occupiers took a floating dredger and two merchant ships from the part of Berdyansk to occupied Kerch, and then the tug "Korets" also⁹.

Russia's aggressive military actions are causing significant environmental damage, including an unprecedented number of dead dolphins killed off the coast of the Western Crimea, which were apparently damaged during active Russian naval operations in the Northwestern Black Sea. In addition, ornithologists noted that the traditional annual migration of birds did not take place through the Crimea as birds chose other routes from south to north¹⁰.

The aggressor state also began broadcasting propaganda statements through maritime communication channels from Novorossiysk, intended for navigational messages. Examples include the coastal warning from the Russian Federation AA89, which does not contain specific information for merchant shipping, but states the alleged "genocide of the civilian population of Donbass, which was carried out by Ukraine for eight years", and it also points on Russia's military operation on alleged "denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine" since February 24.

In particular, the AA89 warning of the aggressor's maritime administration provides information about the alleged losses of Ukraine during the conflict, and thus Russia uses maritime communications for its propaganda, designed exclusively to ensure maritime security. It is noteworthy that the aggressor claimed in the corresponding warning AA89 and other broadcasts on maritime security channels about the alleged "genocide", disinformation about which has already been considered by the UN International Court of Justice at the suit of Ukraine. The aggressor also points out in the warning about the "military" and not about the "special" operation against Ukraine¹¹.

Thus, the escalation of Russian aggression since February 24 has radically worsened the state of maritime security in the Black Sea region. Under such conditions, the Maritime Administration of Ukraine, trade unions, expert and human rights structures appealed to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and called on almost all foreign administrations and shipping registers to stop cooperating with the shipping companies of the aggressor state.

1 <https://arc.construction/26835>

2 <https://arc.construction/27359>

3 <https://arc.construction/26820>

4 <https://arc.construction/26809>

5 <https://arc.construction/27007>

6 <https://arc.construction/27077>

7 <https://arc.construction/27274>

8 <https://arc.construction/26797>

9 <https://arc.construction/27204>

10 <https://arc.construction/26843>

11 <https://arc.construction/27077>

The Association of Reintegration of Crimea also appealed to the IMO and its member states to suspend Russia's membership in the organization, to stop any cooperation between the IMO and the aggressor, including financial, and it recommend the maritime administrations to not recognize documents issued by Russian classification societies. Similar appeals were addressed to the world's leading maritime administrations¹². On March 16, the Minister of Defense of Ukraine Oleksiy Reznikov addressed the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol whom the occupiers are involving in aggression at sea, including forcibly conscription¹³.

On February 27, Turkey approved a decision to apply a wartime regime to the Black Sea straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. This means, according to the Montreux Convention, which Turkey declares to be a key normative act in this area, that it may prohibit military trade in Black Sea¹⁴.

Also, the current Russian aggression has led to the collapse of the entire OSCE system, formed in the 1970s, and to the destruction of relevant security mechanisms in Europe, particularly at sea. In particular, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which had a mandate and offices in Odesa, Kherson and Mariupol, was suspended on 7 March¹⁵.

These crimes violate the requirements of international humanitarian law, including the Hague and Geneva Conventions, as well as the requirements of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and International Law on Saving Human Life at Sea and Preventing Marine Pollution. This led to the response of international structures, in particular, taking into account the appeals of the Ukrainian authorities, human rights and expert structures.

For example, due to Russian aggression, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on March 4, 2022 adopted Resolution 49/1¹⁶. In this resolution, the UN HRC called for the rapid and controlled withdrawal of Russian troops and Russian-backed armed forces from all over Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters to prevent further human rights abuses and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. UN HRC stressed the urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities against Ukraine¹⁷. Those demands were totally ignored by Russia.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) held an extraordinary session of its Council on March 10 and 11 to consider the impact of the situation in the Black and Azov Seas on merchant shipping and seafarers¹⁸. At this session, the IMO Council adopted resolution C/ES.35, which strongly condemned Russia's violation

of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, which extends to its territorial waters, contrary to the principles of the UN Charter and IMO principles, and poses a serious threat to life and safety of navigation and marine environment. The IMO expressed regret over Russia's attacks on commercial vessels, their seizures, including search and rescue vessels, which endangered the safety and well-being of seafarers and the marine environment¹⁹.

The IMO Council called on Russia to cease its illegal activities to ensure the safety and well-being of seafarers, as well as the safety of international shipping and the marine environment in all affected areas, and to honor its obligations under relevant international treaties and conventions. The IMO also emphasized the crucial importance of maintaining the safety and well-being of seafarers and called on IMO Member States and observer organizations to provide maximum assistance to seafarers in conflict.

The IMO Council stressed the need to maintain the security of international shipping and the maritime community, as well as supply chains supported by other countries, including those that provide the population of Ukraine with essential food and medicine. The IMO expressed serious concern about the side effects of hostilities in Ukraine on global shipping, logistics and supply chains, including the impact on the supply of goods and food to developing countries and the impact on energy supply; the organization stressed that ships, seafarers and port workers engaged in legitimate trade should not be side victims of the political and military crisis.

The IMO reminded that Ukraine has the right to exercise without delay all its rights to implement the documents adopted under the IMO, as flag state, port state and coastal state. The IMO also requested its committees to consider ways to strengthen the efforts of own Member States and observer organizations to support affected seafarers and commercial vessels, and to consider the implications of this situation for the implementation of IMO instruments.

The IMO Council agreed to encourage the establishment, as a temporary and urgent measure, of a blue safe maritime corridor to allow the safe evacuation of seafarers and ships from high-risk areas and affected areas in the Black and Azov Seas to a safe place to protect seafarers' lives and commercialize navigation of vessels intending to use this corridor, avoiding military attacks, as well as protecting and securing the maritime economy.

The IMO Council welcomed the proposal to take a number of steps to reduce the suffering of seafarers and their families, and noted that ships should be allowed to leave Ukrainian ports as

12 <https://arc.construction/26782>

13 <https://arc.construction/27341>

14 <https://arc.construction/26765>

15 <https://arc.construction/26892>

16 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session49/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>

17 <https://arc.construction/27122>

18 <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/pages/ECSSStatement.aspx>

19 <https://arc.construction/27053>

soon as possible without the threat of attack. The IMO stated that humanitarian corridors should be established for those ships that could not leave immediately, or where this would be dangerous due to the presence of sea mines or other dangers, to ensure the safety of seafarers, allowing them to leave the conflict zone and return home if necessary; and seafarers affected by the conflict should be given free access to contact with their families.

The IMO stated in the resolution that if port State control officers are presented with overdue documentation, a pragmatic approach to the inspection should be taken, given the exceptional nature of the situation.

In response to the violations described above, on March 9, the European Union imposed sanctions on the Russian Maritime Register of Shipping (RMSC) by approving EU Council Regulation 2022/394. This not only means corresponding restrictions on Russian commercial shipping and shipbuilding, but also deprives Russia of at least tens of millions of dollars in direct revenue each year. It also destroys the network of Russian special services that operated under the umbrella of "offices" of the register in many European countries²⁰. Also on March 11, the International Association of Classification Societies, after relevant appeals from the state authorities and the expert community of Ukraine, expelled RMRS from its membership²¹.

After the beginning of the broad Russian aggression against Ukraine, the authorized state authorities, non-governmental organizations, including our Association, reasonably appealed to the Danube Commission to assess Russia's participation in this organization, incompatible with the principles of international law, maritime and river safety and interstate transport.

On March 17, the twelfth extraordinary session of the Danube Commission took place in connection with Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, at which a special decision was made. The Danube Commission rejected the powers of any Russian representative on the Commission, as well as any of their deputies, and it removed Russian representatives from all meetings of the Danube Commission and its working bodies until the restoration of peace, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The Commission asked the Contracting States to begin preparations for the revision of the Belgrade Convention with a request to examine whether Russia, as a state without the Danube, could continue to be a Contracting State to the Convention. Danube Commission also instructed the Director-General of its Secretariat to draw up proposals for the implementation of Article 9 of the Belgrade Convention in order to prepare for the dismissal of all Russian Secretariat staff in compliance with the Rules of Procedure and existing employment agreements²².

Thus, Russia's aggression on the Black Sea and Sea of Azov is another gross violation of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Convention on Training and Certification of Seafarers and Watchkeeping, 1978, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, and the Agreement on Cooperation regarding Maritime Search and Rescue Services among Black Sea Coastal States, 1998, the Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control in the Black Sea Region, the V, VI, VII and IX Hague Conventions of 1907, the II Geneva Convention of 1949. Russia's actions mean the aggressor's disregard for the San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflict at Sea, 1995 and Russia's waiver of all bilateral agreements on the status of the Sea of Azov, including the 2003 Agreement on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait and the 1993 Interdepartmental Agreement on Fisheries in the Sea of Azov.

These violations have already received legal assessment from the International Maritime Organization, the Danube Commission, the EU, UN agencies and civilized maritime nations. Such recommendations to the authorities of Ukraine seem to be important. Denunciation of the 2003 Agreement on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait and the 1993 Interdepartmental Agreement on Fisheries in the Sea of Azov must be done.

Ukraine must commence proceedings against Russia at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on captured, damaged and destroyed merchant vessels flying flag of Ukraine and other relevant states. Initiation of similar proceedings by third countries under whose flag the vessels have been damaged, blocked or seized is also important.

Interaction with the maritime administrations of all civilized countries of the world on the strict implementation of IMO Resolution C/ES.35 and the decision of the Danube Commission to suspend membership of the Russian Federation must be held. Ukraine and other states must enforce the cooperation with EU countries on the implementation of sanctions against Russia in the maritime sector against Russian shipping and insurance companies and RMRS, promoting the spread of these sanctions.

Discussion of Russia's aggression at sea, with the adoption of relevant resolutions by specialized UN agencies such as FAO (on violations of the rights of Ukrainian fishermen), ILO (on violations of the rights of Ukrainian seafarers) and the World Telecommunication Union (on violations of maritime communications) communication and communication systems) and the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control must be started; immediate Ukraine's ratification of the UN Maritime Labor Convention is important for this.

20 <https://arc.construction/26989>

21 <https://lloydlist.maritimeintelligence.informa.com/LL1140123/Russian-class-expelled-from-IACS>

22 <https://arc.construction/27407>

Expert article • 3211

Ukraine's officials, trade unions and experts should inform the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court about Russian war crimes at sea committed in violation of the requirements of V, VI, VII and IX Hague Conventions of 1907, II Geneva Convention of 1949. Lobbying for humanitarian "blue" corridors to the ports of Ukraine under the flags of the UN and the ICRC for the delivery of humanitarian goods, including basic necessities and food, medicines must be initiated by the civilized nation and intergovernmental agencies, maritime labour and business associations. ■

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SAJAL KABIRAJ

Russia-Ukraine conflict and its impact on global supply chains

Expert article • 3212

Supply chains are likely to be disrupted causing system inefficiencies, disrupting production and delivery schedules due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the need of the hour is to build supply chain resilience. The conflict has emphasized the importance of having crisis plans when uncertain times occur, as humanitarian logistics will take the center stage to compensate significant losses. The supply chains must be designed based on an adaptive modelling technique with RIA viz; Response – Speed of delivery, Impact – Lives of people impacted per population density and Assessment – Economic damage assessment and monitoring as future supply chain tactics.

Ukraine is a top exporter of corn, wheat, barley, and rye. Exports are likely to be affected, which would cause food security issues across the globe, especially in Middle East and African countries. Crops that could have a potential impact are sunflower and rapeseed, which will also escalate cooking oil prices. Procurement spending would increase as would government spending toward supply chain expenses, resulting in reduced competitiveness.

Supply disruption on oil markets from the conflict would result in surging crude prices across the EU. Russia caters to about 30% of oil and 35% of natural gas demand of Europe and 50% of Germany's natural gas supply. More than 40% of the gas supply to the EU from Russia runs through pipelines, many passing through Ukraine. This would be cut off if the conflict escalates, which will manifest as higher oil and gas prices at the wholesale level. Long term effect may persist if the EU imposes sanctions on Russian gas. The Russian economy relies heavily on the oil and gas industry and hence complete supply disruption to the EU is undesirable. The main buyers of Russian crude include EU countries like Germany, Hungary, and Italy, which will try to secure supplies through advance procurement thereby increasing prices. Reduced gas supplies from Russia will lead to higher input cost and transporting natural gas from the USA to EU is feasible only via specialized LNG tankers, which will involve higher freight costs, once again escalating price pressures.

Due to sanctions, Russia will not be able to access the payment mechanisms, which in turn will reduce exports and imports, thereby impacting its economic growth. Russia being a major producer and exporter of fertilizers such as ammonia, potash, urea, and phosphates, the conflict could affect Russian exports of fertilizers, which would cause global supply shortages, affecting crop production in countries like Australia. Similarly, the metals market would be heavily impacted, which will affect exports of raw material and intermediate goods for manufacturing industries, lead to supply constraints for semi-conductors and cause price hikes in kitchenware, mobile phones, medical equipment, vehicles, electronics, construction materials, and metal packaging products. Base metals, like aluminum, copper, and nickel will be impacted due to higher commodity prices, thereby affecting downstream manufacturing sectors like automobile, machinery, and equipment manufacturing.

Supply Chain Strategy should be designed so that global supply chains can respond to these sorts of uncertain or unfortunate situations, and countries are prepared and have a crisis plans for addressing the needs of the people at the Bottom of the Pyramid. Humanitarian logistics operations are measured by number of human lives saved. The EU strategy should incorporate more supply routes to assist disaster management and build supply chain capacity to think together. There would be some trade-offs to make between risks and rewards.

Supply chain tactics that EU countries might use to achieve the supply chain strategy would be to devise a crisis plan for unpredictable situations, like collaborative replenishment methods with competitors, potential transportation methods, rerouting, cross docking or re-analyzing the stocks. The tactics with a clear purpose will aid the strategy and provide a finite timeline for economic recovery. Proper supply tactics will bring the EU economies closer to achieving the supply chain strategy.

The immediate impact of the conflict on Europe generally will affect consumer economic growth and supply chains of consumer goods, such as clothing, general supplies, electronics, furniture etc. Shortages on products will lead to extension in their order times. It is advisable to form shorter supply chains and evaluate short term inventory requirements focusing on tactics rather than long term requirements. Strategic sourcing with key suppliers, encouraging onshoring of key raw materials, preparing to switch to alternative sourcing and make to order deliveries would help mitigate the supply chain risks for economies as well as EU companies. ■



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Occupation of Crimea: Strategic consequences

Expert article • 3213

The unilateral declaration by the Russian Federation of its sovereignty over Ukraine's Crimean peninsula has had three main strategic consequences. The first and the most obvious: it was an attempt to alter national borders by force, which is extremely dangerous for the rule-based world order.

Second: the illegal occupation of Crimea violated the agreements that Russia signed to safeguard the territorial integrity of Ukraine and created an iteration of the Alsace–Lorraine question in Ukraine–Russia relations, which implanted a deep mistrust of Russia in Ukrainian society.

Last but not least: the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol emerged as an essential factor in the escalation of Russia's hostile policy towards the West. By waging armed conflict in Donbas, by fueling Syria's refugee crises, by interfering in election campaigns in western countries or by massing troops along the Ukrainian border, the Kremlin has always gotten one positive result for itself. The USA and its allies tend to negotiate with Russia the more urgent crises rather than such intractable and relatively less pressing issues as Crimea.

The perceived "Western threat" is an apt way to explain to Russian citizens why they should make sacrifices for the occupation of a region, where they always used to be welcomed and honored guests. This is also a useful tool for other aspects of the Kremlin's internal policy. The Russian regime may be more cooperative toward West to some limited degree only in return for concessions including at least tacit consent for the new status quo in Crimea.

However, for the Kremlin, Crimea and even all of Ukraine is not enough. The "security guarantees" demanded by the Russian Foreign Ministry in December 2021 imply Russian military domination on the European continent.

The threat of a chain reaction of armed territorial conflicts in Europe and other parts of the world was contained but not defused in the period starting from March 2014. Russia has paid a very substantial but not prohibitive price for the occupation of foreign land. The costs however have a tendency to accumulate over time. So far, nobody has tried to repeat this precedent of attempted annexation.

Nevertheless, if the Kremlin succeeds at some point in turning the Western response to the Crimean occupation into something like the US non-recognition policy toward Soviet occupation of the Baltic States in 1940–1991, it could change the calculus for other international players. Some autocratic regimes may believe that tolerating international sanctions and condemnation for some period of time is a fair price for consolidating their power. From this perspective, sending troops to grab a disputed territory from a weaker neighbor would appear a viable option.

The current Russian regime has no exit strategy for Crimea. It simply could not afford any major foreign policy defeat because this would undermine one of the regime's essential pillars. The Russian

people should believe that the Kremlin will always prevail, can, or lest they themselves dare to challenge its grip.

But no political regime is forever. And the issue of Crimea will not go away. That is why the Crimea Platform so important. It is Ukraine's responsibility to take every possible step to restore its territorial integrity and, by extension, the international order and, ultimately, pave the way for normalizing its relations with its larger neighbor.

The Crimea Platform may not bring about a fast solution. But the necessity for the Russian Federation to engage with it pushes Russia's elites to acknowledge the fact that the illegal possession of the peninsula is a liability. Only after such acknowledgement the Platform could transform itself from an instrument of pressure to a space for negotiation.

The natural course of events as well as deliberate actions by the Russian state, including anti-Ukrainian propaganda, the conscription of Ukrainian citizens in Crimea into the Russian military and the resettlement of Russian citizens in the occupied territories, even now makes a return to the status quo ante the occupation hardly achievable.

It will be an enormous task to reconcile restoring Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea and Sevastopol with saving face for Russia. No Russian government would be able to survive an unconditional surrender of a territory irrespective of whether or not it would politically appropriate. A change of the status-quo should be accepted by the Russian electorate. Or process simply could not proceed further.

To prevent recurring crises a negotiated plan should combine protecting human rights and honoring the aspirations of the local population, including the currently oppressed Crimean Tatars, while ensuring political and economic sustainability. The Belfast Agreement of 1998 on Northern Ireland or the provision of the autonomous status to Åland by Finland in 1920 gives us hope that even the long lasting disputes can still be resolved when the moment is ripe. ■

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Hybrid warfare: An orientating or misleading concept in analysing Russia's military actions in Ukraine / in Crimea?

Expert article • 3214

Hybrid warfare is perhaps the most frequently used concept in seeking to explain and define Russia's military actions in Ukraine in 2014. This article thoroughly analyses the development of the theory of hybrid warfare and circumstances of its formation, draws a line between hybrid warfare and hybrid threats, and discusses the perception of hybrid warfare in the armies of Western states and Russia. Actions of the Russian army in Crimea are analysed on the grounds of the provisions of the theory of hybrid warfare formulated by Frank Hoffman through revealing the impact on a military operation not only of the changing warfare tendencies but also of political, cultural, demographic and military conditions that existed on the Crimean peninsula.

Geopolitical changes in the world that occurred at the end of the 20th century essentially transformed the security environment and forced Western states to get involved in a new type of asymmetric military conflicts with non-state actors, terrorist organizations and criminal syndicates. New-type threats, variety of military conflicts and the search for an effective response require reconsideration, generalization, and assessment of the most recent military experience and formulation of theoretical concepts that would help prepare and operate effectively within the zone of military conflicts. These conditions led to the formulation and establishment of new military theories, including the theory of hybrid war. The theory of the hybrid war developed by Hoffman includes four aspects: conventional forces, non-regular tactics, terrorism and criminal acts within a single battle space.

The concept of the hybrid war was created and established in the USA in 2005–2011, and its formation was determined by the aspiration of the USA to explain the threats that the US army had encountered while fighting the “global war on terrorism”. It should be pointed out that NATO does not use the term hybrid war concept; however, on the basis of the experience acquired in the Afghanistan War, it names new-type hybrid threats. The text written by a high-ranking Russian military officials such gen. Valery Gerasimov confirms the fact that on the basis of the experience of Western states, high military command of Russia reflects on and perceives the changing nature of warfare but doesn't mean that they integrated in military doctrine. In academic circles of warfare researchers, there is a general consensus that Russia's military actions in Crimea were different from the Russo-Georgian War that took place in 2008; however, the question arises whether the military actions of Russia in Crimea can be called a hybrid war?

Having analysed Russia's military actions on the basis of Hoffman's concept of the hybrid war, we can state that actions executed by Russia completely correspond to two aspects of the theory of the hybrid war as formulated by Hoffman: the activity of conventional military forces and irregular military formations. Meanwhile, the character of the activity of non-regular criminal groups and poor evidence of terrorist activity in Crimea differed from the provisions established in Hoffman's concept of hybrid war. This means that the theory of the hybrid war can only partly explain the actions of the Russian army during the occupation of Crimea.

During the military operation, Russia employed conventional military forces and non-regular military formations, but the character of crimes committed by criminal actors as well as scarce evidence of terrorist actions differed from those defined in Hoffman's theory. Our comprehensive study of Russia's military actions in Crimea raises doubts about the analytical value of Hoffman's theory of hybrid war, since the essential fact in choosing the mode of military operation was the specific conditions characteristic of the Crimean peninsula, taking advantage of which the military operation was executed. Therefore, in attempting to forecast possible military conflicts in the post-Soviet space and seeking to better understand future threats, we should analyse not only the newest warfare theories, but also thoroughly study political, economic, social and military conditions and Russian historical traditions of warfighting that can provide a basis for the opponent to make military interventions or destabilize the situation in the Baltic States. At the same time initial observations from Ukrainian and Russian war in 2022 also initiation thinking that Russian military operations are based more on operational tradition and technical availability than on the newest warfighting theories. ■

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JULIA KAZDOBINA

Push for Crimea's liberation despite the war

Expert article • 3215

February 24, 2022 marks the beginning of the Russian aggression for those who have not followed the situation in Ukraine. For Ukrainians, however, the aggression started 8 years ago with the Russian invasion and attempted annexation of Crimea followed by the hybrid Russian occupation of several districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions under the guise of separatism. Lessons learned over the years indicate that no amount of mediation and negotiations is able to resolve the deliberately muddled conflict. Which, unfortunately, means that the score will have to be settled on the battlefield with the winner dictating its conditions to the loser. And all efforts both symbolic and material have to be aimed at making sure that the principles underpinning peaceful coexistence are restored.

Although the occupation of Crimea and the situation in the Donbas had the same roots, namely covert aggression of the Russian Federation, it was the situation in the Donbass that attracted most attention. This was only natural because Crimea had been captured very quickly with the weakened central Ukrainian government unable to put up any resistance. The situation in Donbass, on the other hand, had escalated into a full-fledged armed conflict. This created urgency for the international community and the Ukrainian government to stop the bloodshed by applying the standard approach to conflict resolution, namely impose a ceasefire and work out a diplomatic settlement.

The result, however, was a trap. Russia has learned to game the system by making nonsensical and illegitimate demands backed up by its ability to escalate. And while the parties battled over the unresolvable provisions of the muddled deal, Russia proceeded to move towards its goals of Crimea's militarization, ruthless elimination of resistance, russification of the population and integration of the occupied territories. Simultaneously it made sure the Donbas wound was bleeding just enough to keep everyone's attention focused.

Disinformation played a key role. Destructive narratives depicting the Revolution of Dignity in Kyiv as a Nazi coup that posed a threat to the predominantly Russian speaking regions became dominant on the Russian state media. They were widely watched in the east and south of Ukraine at that time. The flight of President Yanukovich created a window of opportunity and the Russian operatives were sent in to foment and lead the unrest creating the image of separatism. Russian arms backed up the groundless demands for federalization of Ukraine, special status for Luhansk and Donetsk regions and for the Russian language in Ukraine. A major escalation preceded both rounds of the Minsk negotiations to make the Russian position even more "convincing".

In the current situation the playbook did not change too much. Lies of the Ukrainian genocide in the Donbass region have been widely circulated in the Russian media to justify the invasion. Request of the so-called separatist republics for protection was a pretext. The narrative of the "Nazi regime" in Kyiv carried over from 2014 and this time was accompanied by demand of denazification. To anybody familiar with the situation in Ukraine it makes absolutely no sense and cannot be met in principle. Demands for disarmament and reduction of the size of the Ukrainian military are clearly untenable given the scale of the Russian threat to Ukraine's existence as an independent state.

Demands to recognize Crimea as a Russian territory, recognize independence of the so-called republics within the boundaries of the entire Luhansk and Donetsk regions, to protect the Russian language in Ukraine and to make sure Ukraine does not join NATO are as groundless. However, they have wider implications. Their goal is to make it acceptable to violate borders of another state by force and for an outside power to dictate another state's foreign and domestic policies. That is, to call into question those fundamental principles that underpin peaceful coexistence between states.

Another difference from 2014 is that Russia is no longer hiding behind the backs of proxies. It's now a clear and overt aggression. Russia continues to openly destroy Ukraine to bomb and torture it into submission. And hopes the west will help by putting pressure on Ukraine to go again for conflict resolution, i.e. to look for middle ground between reality and lies, to meet nonsensical demands that undermine not only the future of Ukraine but also the very principles of peaceful coexistence.

Although it's clear that any war ends though negotiations it matters what is on the table and what kind of settlement is reached. Just like Minsk, the current situation does not have a middle of the road solution. Any attempt to look for compromises will produce a mix of unacceptable provisions because Russian demands are based in lies and lack legitimacy. Also, just like in Minsk, Russia will still preserve ability to escalate in the absence of a credible deterrent. Minsk situation has also demonstrated the Russia has the ability to wait and make another move when it decides to do so. And this makes its defeat a necessary condition for the lasting peace.

Defeating Russia will take a lot of effort both symbolic and material. While Ukrainians are fighting and the West is helping them with arms and sanctions additional steps should be taken. Continuously pushing for the liberation of Crimea is one of those steps. It is important not only to demonstrate to Putin that his intimidation does not have the desired effect but also to restore the principles undermined by the Russian occupation of Crimea.

One way to do it is for one or several of NATO countries to organize a meeting of the Crimea Platform. Initiated last year, the Platform was supposed to have annual meetings to discuss the situation and to push for liberation of Crimea. For understandable reasons Ukraine is unable to organize another summit this year. However, for the sake of peace in Europe, the initiative should continue and produce a statement that for Europe to be safe, Russia has to be defeated, de-Putinized, de-Stalinized, Crimea should be returned to its rightful owner and thus the rules underpinning peaceful coexistence respected and restored.



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ANDRII RYZHENKO

Russian Crimean Bastion and its role in the ongoing invasion in Ukraine

Expert article • 3216

Since the early 2000s Russian political elite activated neo-imperialistic campaign to restore the Soviet empire. Ukraine has become a territory of key importance for Russia. Dominance over Ukraine has ideological and symbolic significance for Russia. It constantly strives to maintain and strengthen political and economic influence, and to stop Ukraine's rapprochement with the West. The leasing of Crimea to the Russian Federation in 1997 became part of the strategy for the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russia's intensive militarization of Crimea from 2014 to 2022 changed the balance of power in the Black Sea region in favor of Russia. Crimea gained the features of a Soviet-era military base, whose forces are directed against NATO and individual members of the Alliance, primarily against the United States and Great Britain. Crimean Bastion plays a critical role as a power projector for Russians during an invasion of Ukraine that started on 24th February 2022.

In September 2016, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov, announced the creation of the A2/AD zone in the Black Sea, known as the Crimean Bastion. At the end of 2019, the formation of a deep-tiered A2/AD zone was completed. It consists of the main area around the Crimean peninsula and three mobile zones - around the occupied platforms in the Black Sea, the Kerch Strait, and the Eastern Mediterranean (off the coast of Syria). Moscow is improving the capabilities of these components of the Crimean Bastion and its Command and Control system. The echeloned approach of the Russian A2/AD system is based on the principle of forming a "fortress of the fleet".

The major threat from Crimean Bastion was the capture of territories in southern Ukraine by landing, amphibious or airmobile operations. By 24th February 2022, Russians concentrated 25 different battalion tactical groups from the 22nd Army corps, 810th naval infantry brigade (both belong to Black sea Fleet), and 58th Army, for offensive operations in southern Ukraine (Kherson and Mykolaiv district). Notably, the 35,000-strong group of Russian troops located in Crimea is larger in number than the armed forces of most Balkan countries. Russian troops in Crimea had some modern or upgraded weapons, including combat aircraft, missiles, MLRS, tanks, and artillery. After 24th of February 2022, additional 12-15 battalion tactical groups from the 49th Army and 7th Airborne division were deployed to southern Ukraine via Crimea to enforce the creation of a land corridor from Crimea to Russia along the Azov sea coast. Most of these units were deployed by land, alternative ways to deploy using railways and the seaport of Berdyansk (Azov sea) were denied by Ukrainian troops' fire. On 26th of February 2022, Russian troops projected from Crimean Bastion captured critical water supply infrastructure of the North Crimean Canal and established full control over the canal, starting from the city of Tavriysk (Kherson region). The dam blocking the flow of water to Crimea was exploded. On 15 March 2022 Russian authorities reported that stolen from Ukraine water reached central Crimea.

This major threat of the Crimean Bastion was realized completely in March 2022 during the first week of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia took under their control 100 kilometers width strip of land from Kherson to Krasnodar district (Russia).

Another threat of Crimean Bastion is significant missile strike potential against Ukraine and European countries. There are four ground-based and five naval-based missile systems in occupied Crimea. Additionally, Russian strike aircraft (Tu-22M3, Su-30, Su-24, MiG-29) carry various missile weapons. The total volley already exceeds 800 missiles, designed to fire at sea, air targets, and on land. The most serious danger is posed by missiles with a nuclear warhead, in particular up to 48 Caliber-PL missiles. They can be fired from the Project 636.3 submarines from a submarine (underwater) position. With a radius of 2,500 km (potentially 4,500 km), they can reach most cities on the European continent. During the invasion in February-April 2022 Russian submarines, surface warships, strike aircraft, and ground missile systems launched at least 400 missiles on Ukraine. All of them are based in the Crimean Bastion. On only 3rd of April 2022 Russians launched from sea and western Crimea around 50 missiles on Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kremenchuk, and Ochakiv. Crimea Bastion's Air Defense and Electronic Warfare assets aimed to defend mentioned before offensive capabilities against possible counterstrikes.

From the beginning of the war, Russian Black Sea Fleet blocked any economic activities of all Ukrainian ports located on Black and Azov seas. Few vessels were attacked by missiles or artillery from Russian warships for attempts to go. Vessel Helt under Panama flag was sunk on 3rd March 2022 after an attack by 2 missiles from a Russian missile boat. It happened within 14 miles of the port of Odesa (Ukraine). Russians always keep 1-4 warships on blockade patrol in the vicinity of Serpent Island which they captured on 25th February 2022. Between 60 to 90 commercial vessels are still in Ukrainian ports unable to leave due to the Russian threat.

Russia still plans to conduct a major amphibious landing on the Ukrainian coast in the Odesa area. Three attempts of landing were not successful on 1st, 13th, and 22nd of March 2022. After approaching to Ukrainian coast at a distance of visual contact, Russian warships turned around and ceased landing operations. At least during one landing attempt on 1st of March, the mutiny of Russian naval infantry (810th brigade from Sevastopol) aboard was reported. 6-7 Landing warships still are in readiness to conduct landing with 1-2 battalion tactical groups aboard. Another 10-12 warships and auxiliaries are standing by to support amphibious operations (fire support, mine countermeasures, search and rescue).

Ukrainian primary sea denial capability against Russian attacks from sea is performed by coastal artillery 152 mm, MLRS, UAVs, and sea mines. The maximum effective range is limited to 15-20 km. As of 3rd of April, Ukraine reported destruction/damage of 3 landing ships (1 destroyed and 2 damaged), 3 destroyed Raptor amphibious boats, and one damaged missile ship. Ukraine conducted a unique operation on 24th of March 2022 during which the Saratov landing ship

(Alligator class) was destroyed with 2000 tons of military cargo. Two Ropucha class landing ships were damaged. Ukraine also deployed a defensive mine laying close to its coastline from Odesa to Skadovsk to counteract Russian amphibious landing forces. Merchant mariners were informed about closed navigation areas.

Crimean Bastion has many common features in tasks, capabilities, and structure with Baltic Bastion (Kaliningrad area) and Barents Bastion (Cola Peninsula area). Ukrainian experiences with Crimea Bastion in 2014-2022 and lessons from the Russian invasion using power projection from Crimea have to be considered seriously to deter possible aggression. ■

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MAKSYM KYIAK

Crimea will be free

Expert article • 3217

This February has marked the eighth anniversary since Russian forces seized government buildings in Crimea and occupied the Crimean peninsula. Immediately after the events of February 27, 2014, Russia significantly strengthened its military control over Crimea by illegally deploying more troops and further forcing out the Ukrainian military. The events 2014 divided not only the history of the present-day independent Ukraine into “before” and “after” the temporary occupation, but also have led to the Russian full-scale war on Ukraine in 2022.

During eight years, Russian authorities have committed numerous human rights violations. According to Ukrainian human rights organizations, at least 140 Ukrainian citizens, the majority of which are Crimean Tatars, are being held in prison as part of politically motivated criminal proceedings. Due to the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation accusing Ukrainian citizens of sabotage, storing weapons and spying for the Ukrainian special services, at least 18 people have been imprisoned in trumped-up cases. Among them, there is Vladyslav Yesypenko, a sentenced Ukrainian journalist, freelance correspondent of Radio Svoboda. In September 2021 it has been already 2 years since the last release of political prisoners. Since the last exchange in September 2019, the Russian Federation has not released a single political prisoner from Crimea.

One of the latest detentions took place after the inaugural summit of the Crimean platform that had been held in Kyiv on August 23. Based on the Summit results, the heads of 46 delegations adopted a Declaration on the establishment of the Crimean Platform as a consultative and coordination format to end peacefully the Russian Federation's occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol and to restore Ukraine's control over the territory in full compliance with international law. Russia has repeatedly stated that it will not allow the Crimean Platform to become operative, blackmailing and threatening countries that supported the Summit.

Given that for the years of occupation of the peninsula, Russia has developed a system of politically motivated persecution of all those who disagree with the occupation of Crimea, the persecution of Crimean residents for their support of the Crimean platform could be a new wave of fabricated criminal cases. Illegal searches, abductions, and a steady increase in the number of political prisoners in Crimea show that efforts by Ukraine and the international community turned out to be insufficient to end arbitrariness on the occupied peninsula. Russia continues to despise international law, and therefore the restoration of the rule of law and respect for human dignity in Crimea can happen only if the peninsula has been de-occupied.

Russian Federation is systematically ruining cultural heritage and national identity of ethnic groups in the temporary occupied Crimea. The militarization of youth in the Crimea is another crucial part of a purposeful policy of colonization of the peninsula, changing the national identity of Ukrainian children and promoting the cult of war by the Russian Federation. Today, Crimea has 25 regional headquarters of the Yunarmy (a military movement for youngsters in the Russian Federation). 5 thousand 628 children aged 8 to 18 years have already taken the oath of office in the ranks of the Yunarmy in Crimea. There are at least 109 cadet classes and 88 school military-oriented

museums in Crimea. In total, approximately 8,500 thousand children are involved in the Yunarmy movement in Crimea today.

For deoccupation of Crimea, the abovementioned Crimean Platform as an international consulting and coordination format of communication and cooperation of government, parliamentary representatives and experts was established. Within the expert dimension, the Expert Network of the Crimean Platform was created, which is a coalition of individual Ukrainian and foreign experts, Ukrainian, foreign and international non-governmental organizations, individual initiatives, associations, think tanks and scientific institutions. The next step in the work of the Network is to develop cooperation with experts from different countries on certain issues where international experts are more than welcome.

Eight years ago, a pearl Crimea has been brutally stolen from us. We in Ukraine always say that it is occupied only temporary and this means that in the upcoming Crimea will return home and that it finally will be free. ■



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The geopolitical implications of Russia's aggression against Ukraine

Expert article • 3218

Russian armed aggression has radically changed the military-political situation both around Ukraine and on the European continent. The occupation of Crimea has become the dominant component of Russia's influence on Ukraine in terms of the level of military threat due to a powerful Russian military build-up. Russia has set a precedent for violating international stability, where a new agreement on the redistribution of disputed territories became possible between powerful geopolitical players, as was the case with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact before the outbreak of World War II. International security structures have revealed their unpreparedness for the current developments in Ukraine.

Most geopolitical concepts have defined a specific role for Ukraine as an important player, ensuring a balance between the main geopolitical actors being a security buffer for the entire European continent. The geopolitical pivot represented by Ukraine can serve as a protective shield for the entire Baltic-Black Sea region. The existence of a Ukrainian geopolitical pivot had important political and cultural implications for a more active neighbouring geostrategic player, as Russia never could be a Eurasian empire without Ukraine as the heartland, and the gateway region of Eurasia.

The Russian Federation uses the principle of political realism in its foreign policy; therefore, it could initiate implementation of Dugin and Primakov concepts. The Russian geopolitical doctrine is based on the "Russkiy Mir" idea, which is an ideological ground for the new geostrategic formation of the "New USSR". Such a common civilizational space is based on three pillars - Orthodoxy, Russian language, and common historical memory. The most important component of this project was supposed to be the absorption of Ukraine, or its southeastern regions and Crimea.

The inadequate perception of Ukrainian realities by the Russian leadership and the unwillingness to accept Ukraine's aspirations to be a modern democratic European state, instead of the Kremlin's alternative of becoming an appendage of a dictatorial regime following the example of Belarus, destroyed rationality in Putin's actions. Discussions about the invented oppression of ethnic Russians and the Russian language, ambiguous and distorted interpretations of common history are proof of this.

The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, after the eight-year war in the Donbas, is Putin's last hopeless chance to create an "Orthodox Russian Empire." The mass repressions of the Crimean Tatars in the territory of the occupied Crimea, the destruction of the civilian population of Ukraine since 2014, confirm the extremist component of Putin's policy. To achieve its goals, Russia threatens the world with nuclear war, even if this outcome will sacrifice the Russian population.

Dictators are constantly covering up their aggressive plans with peaceful rhetoric. Hitler's speeches used to start with the words "We want peace." It is known that Germany fought for so-called peace and used military force only to protect itself from all sorts of external

threats. Putin's rhetoric has nothing to do with Russia's real foreign policy, because during his presidency he committed war crimes on the territory of many countries, justifying those with noble intentions enshrined in the military and foreign policy doctrines of the Russian Federation. The international community's passive reaction to all the Russian state's illegal actions for many years fuelled the regime and created the conditions for a sense of permissiveness.

Today, Russia's act of invasion, which started from the Crimean occupation destabilized the entire geopolitical order. The world has returned to a kind of block-battle period, only the frontiers of the Western bloc have moved eastwards juxtaposed to the Cold War era. Trust in Russia, which constantly infringes international agreements and postulates of the world order, has been destroyed. It will take decades to restore it.

Although the rumblings of the war are noted all over the world, they resonate most strongly in Europe. The invasion turned the idea of a whole, free, and peaceful continent upside down. It seems that in some parts of Europe, the post-1990 order is in shambles - mostly for countries in between, countries that are not yet part of NATO or the European Union. This will likely mean that European borders with Russia's sphere of influence will become militarized. These trends are already observed in Scandinavian and Baltic countries.

The new wave of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, has made the world less secure. Countries are now in a situation where military power is increasingly dominating political relations. The civilized world is at risk that Russia's provocation of international order could have a volatile impact on other regions, where problematic areas are bound by fragile agreements and guarantees from other great powers. ■



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Meanings of Crimean geopolitics in regional-global politics

Expert article • 3219

With Russia's military intervention against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the status quo in Crimea, which it annexed in violation of international law in 2014, has once again come to the agenda of international public opinion. As much as the geopolitical-strategic importance of Crimea in international-regional power struggles, its symbolic meaning that emerged in the new world order-building processes has begun to be refreshed in historical memories.

First of all, Crimea, with its geopolitical-strategic location, is far beyond connecting the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea, extending over the "Five Seas", which we can describe as "Caspian-Caucasus-Black Sea-Eastern Europe-Balkans-Anatolia-Mediterranean" and one of the key points of the "Great Basin" that forms the intersection areas of Europe and Asia. Crimea, which has the potential to significantly change the geopolitical balances and has an important place in the transition from regional to international power, therefore has a meaning and importance far beyond being a peninsula and a gateway.

Crimea, which is in a remarkable position due to its advanced science and technology industry, its proximity to rich agricultural regions and its rich natural resources in its territorial waters, has historically been Russia's descent to the Black Sea and from there to the south; In other words, it has been a part of the strategy of opening to warm seas and thus to the Mediterranean. In this process, Crimea, the Ottoman-Western geopolitical balance against Russian expansionism; In other words, it was also considered as the key to European security. In this context, the Crimean War (1853-1856) is a turning point.

As a matter of fact, the Crimean War began to have a symbolic meaning for Russia and Europe in terms of the European world's aim to keep Russia out of Europe and the Mediterranean. After the war in question, Russia could not return to European affairs for a long time, and it was seen as an "undesirable" country in Europe. Therefore, in the context of Europe, Crimea has become an address where the "other/enemy" perception towards Russia has become stronger. Moreover, Russia's "other/hostile" situation has started to show itself not only in the European context, but also in the Slavic World.

Therefore, Crimea is not only a part of or the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine War in its current dimension. Crimea has played a vital role in international political relations throughout history. It is necessary to read this role correctly in military and political terms. Therefore, any interpretation that does not consider the role of Crimea by considering the security of the wider Black Sea geopolitics and even the Eurasian geopolitics will be incomplete and make the issue incapable to understand.

Because Crimea, as it was partly stated above, it is a strong center of gravity stretching from Eastern Europe to the Balkans and from the Caucasus to the Caspian and including a part of Russia. For this reason, it can be stated that Crimea is in a very critical position in terms of security and cooperation processes in the geography stretching

from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. In other words, while a stable and secure Crimea opens the door to regional cooperation processes; instability can push the entire region into chaos. For this reason, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 turned from being an issue between Ukraine and Russia to an international issue in which the West is at the center.

This geopolitical role of Crimea in a strategic sense has drawn attention throughout history. As a matter of fact, Crimea has been at the center of historical trade routes, especially the "Silk Road" and "Spice Road". Today, the security of Crimea draws attention as an important issue that also has transportation and energy security dimensions. The issue in question also causes Crimea to become one of the playgrounds of the global power struggle. In this sense, Crimea is the new address of the power struggle that will determine the actors, ideological structure and content of the international system, especially the name, in the process of building the New World Order. In this sense, Crimea is the new address of the power struggle that will determine the actors, ideological structure and content of the international system, especially the name, in the process of building the New World Order.

In other words, Crimea is one of the main zones of the "New Great Game". Therefore, the developments in Crimea are not only a war or a power struggle between Russia and Ukraine; It is necessary to evaluate it as a matter of the construction process of the New World Order. In this direction, according to the Kremlin, the road to "Greater Russia" passes through the achievement of the goals in the "Near Abroad Doctrine", known as the Primakov Doctrine, which envisions Russia to be the dominant power by maintaining its influence in the former Soviet geography. In this aim, it can be said that Crimea has a strategic meaning. Because historically, Russia has reached the position of great power after taking Crimea.

Crimea was the place where Moscow, trying to reassert itself as a great power after the Cold War, drew its red lines to the West and the Western states. The Crimean War of 1853-1856 has great significance because of this. This meaning points to the framework of Turkey-Russia-Western relations and, accordingly, the security of Turkey-West relations. Therefore, the choices made by the parties at the point of Crimea are very decisive for the future of the New World Order in general and the countries of the region in particular. In other words, the situation in Crimea may direct the future of the Black Sea and then the Eurasian geography.

In this context, it is essential for the Black Sea countries to create a vision of the future that takes into account the realities of the 21st century. The vision in question is not only for the welfare, stability and security of the Black Sea region, at the same time, it is of great importance in terms of global peace and security. Because the Crimea-centered Russia-Ukraine Crisis brought the nuclear balance of terror and the 3rd World War scenarios to the agenda for the first time after the Cuban Missile Crisis. In short, the developments over

Crimea and the choices made have reached a level that threatens the global security environment. Therefore, the Russian-Ukrainian-centered developments in Crimea come to the fore with the dimension of triggering geopolitical faults in the process leading to the New World Order.

As a result, Crimea, which was accepted as one of the starting addresses of the Cold War, where the bipolar world was shaped at the Yalta Conference/Crimean Conference (4-11 February 1945), appears as the symbolic address of the “New Cold War” or “Cold Peace” in terms of the discourses/targets of the “unipolar-bipolar-multipolar world”. Crimea has once again become the symbol of the iron curtain being drawn between Russia and the Western world. Therefore, Crimea is a tool for Russia to impose the “Yalta Order” once again. In other words, it stands out as a place where Russia’s efforts to transform into an international power center are observed, while the international community reminds it of its limits and limitations, just like in the 19th century. ■

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OLEKSANDR SUKHODOLIA

The Ukrainian Crimea and the clash of liberal democracy and autocracy

Expert article • 3220

Now Ukraine is on the front pages of world news, but Russia's aggression is not breaking news at all. The hybrid Russian war against Ukraine has been going on for much longer, than February 27, 2014, the day when Russia captured the Ukrainian Crimea.¹ This aggression has also revealed a range of issues that go far beyond the conflict between the two neighboring countries. Russia violated fundamental norms and principles of international law, bilateral and multilateral agreements, actually challenging the liberal international order.

Firstly, military aggression was just one element of the Russian hybrid warfare. Illegal occupation of Crimea was executed through a combination of the dynamic action of regular Russian army forces together with illegal armed groups and criminal elements whose activities were coordinated by the only plan and supported with vigorous employment of propaganda based on lies and falsifications, sabotage, and terror.

Secondly, the targets of Russian actions became not only military bases of the Ukrainian army or governmental buildings but also critical infrastructure, especially transport and energy. For example, in an energy sector, Russian paratroopers captured critical gas infrastructure: gas production platforms on the Black Sea shelf (Odesa field); and gas compressor station (pumping gas from Strikovo field in the Sea of Azov) in the administrative territory of the Kherson region of Ukraine.

In result of aggression, Ukraine lost not only people, territory, critical infrastructure. Ukraine lost the prospect of increasing oil and gas production on the shelf of the Black and Azov Seas, estimated at 300 billion USA dollars at the time.

In addition, the insidious Russian occupation of Crimea revealed the West's unpreparedness to challenge the open attack on international order. The liberal democratic world demonstrated a weak response to Russian blatant violation of international law and its commitments to guarantee Ukraine's security and territorial integrity (Budapest Memorandum, not mentioning the range of bilateral agreements). Proponents of the autocratic style of governance become excited to proceed in efforts to revenge and defeat liberal democracy. Putin's ratings of support have risen significantly, and not just among Russians. Autocratic feelings in different countries, even within the camp of liberal democracies, became stronger. Autocrats became confident that advertised by liberal democracy move to the "end of history" is not only stopped but could be reversed.

¹ *The day of effective control over the territory of Crimea according to the European Court of Human Rights. Grand Chamber Admissibility Decision in the case of Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea) (app nos 20958/14 and 38334/18), ECLI:CE:ECHR:2020:1216DEC002095814, Council of Europe: European Court of Human Rights, 14 January 2021, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cases,ECHR,60016bb84.html> [accessed 9 February 2022]*

The further developments around Crimea have demonstrated the signs of even bigger problems. The weakness of liberal democracies' policy towards Russian hybrid aggression can destroy their foundations. The West's policy has not prevented Russia, from using occupied Crimea, to increase its influence in the Black Sea region and projecting its power wider.

In response to the occupation of Crimea, the world community imposed sanctions. However, the weakness of the sanctions and the lack of control over them did not stop Russia. The construction of the bridge across the Kerch Strait became an act of Russian occupation of the Sea of Azov, creating the tool to block free navigation and blockade of maritime trade routes and ports of Ukraine. Importantly, and unfortunately, some Western companies took part in the project development and implementation.

The ban on the transfer of technology and investment in Russia's energy projects in Crimea also did not work out. Rapid implementation of the project to build gas power plants in Crimea would not have happened without the participation of western companies. Russia, not having the required technology to build power plants, utilized Germany's friendly position towards Russia. Ignoring warnings on Russia's intentions to build power plants in Crimea, Siemens' technology has been delivered and installed. The publicity and accusations that Siemens violated EU sanctions resulted in the dismissal of the local director in the Russian Siemens office. Soon, newspapers reported that the company signed new contracts with the Russian government on the supply of gas turbines and achieved agreements to increase the level of localization of the technology in Russia.

The captured oil and gas fields of the Black Sea became not only a source of rent exploitation of Ukrainian deposits by Russia but also a military outpost in the western part of the Black Sea. The captured gas drilling rigs near the mainland of Ukraine became in fact military bases with a permanent presence of Special Forces units and under patrolling of the Russian Black Sea Navy. The rigs are equipped with military reconnaissance equipment for underwater, surface, and air surveillance. Russia is constantly conducting training activities in the region, blocking maritime trade routes and effectively occupying part of the Black Sea.

For Ukraine, this situation creates risks of blocking the sea's energy supply routes (coal and oil supplies), especially in the event of further Russian aggression. However, such Russian behavior creates challenges for other Black Sea countries as it threaten the security of trade routes. However, there is still no agreed Western position on Russia's actions in the Black Sea basin. There is no answer on the response to further aggressive actions of Russia, threatening Ukraine or other countries of South-Eastern Europe.

Let us emphasize once again that this is not just about Ukraine. Since 2014, Russia has been pursuing a policy of ousting the West from the Black Sea basin, using Crimea as an outpost and base for wider expansion into the Middle East, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

Expert article • 3220

The occupation of Crimea is only part of Russia's policy of revenge, but very successful from the Kremlin's point of view. It demonstrates that, instead of a decisive policy and an adequate response to Russia's actions, the West is retreating. This only inspires autocrats to continue and expand aggressive action against democracy in other parts of the world. The question is much broader, even existential: when liberal democracy finds its readiness to deter revival of autocracy, will it remember the basic principles of existence enshrined in its values? And if not, won't the losses be too high?

The continuation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, to defeat a society that has been fighting for the values of democracy for 8 years and resisting the expansions of autocracy, is not only a threat to one country. The lack of support for Ukrainian society and the policy of aggressor appeasement may be the historical turning point, after which the era of liberal democracy will end as inefficient. ■

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Socio-economic development of the Republic of Crimea in 2018-2020

Expert article • 3221

Currently, the process of integration of the Crimean Peninsula into the Russian economic system cannot be called fully completed. Now the level of socio-economic development in the Republic of Crimea is still not high. This is evidenced by many statistical indicators. For example, in terms of Gross regional domestic product (GRDP), the Republic of Crimea ranks only fifth in the Southern Federal District, ahead of only such subjects as the Republic of Adygea and the Republic of Kalmykia. For comparison, the GRDP of the Krasnodar region exceeds the GRDP of the Republic of Crimea by five times (*Department of the Federal State Statistics Service for the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol*. URL: <https://crimea.gks.ru/folder/27544>). If we talk about such an indicator as GRDP per capita, then the Republic of Crimea occupies the last position among all the subjects of the Southern Federal District. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to other important statistical indicators, which also indicate the rather difficult situation of the economy of the Crimean peninsula at the present time.

The Republic of Crimea continues to be the leader among all subjects of the Southern Federal District in terms of food prices. The difference in prices between other subjects of the Southern Federal District averages around 36-40%, depending on the category of goods, but for a number of goods the difference reaches up to 60-80%. The reason for higher prices in Crimea is primarily due to the fact that large federal retail chains do not want to consider Crimea as a platform for their development. The main problem is the cost of renting retail space in the Republic of Crimea, which is several times higher than, for example, in the Krasnodar region.

An important problem for the Republic of Crimea is also the prices of utility tariffs. The growth rates of electricity tariff prices are particularly high. In general, the rates of tariff growth in the Republic of Crimea are the highest of all the subjects of the Southern Federal District. For example, in 2018, compared to 2016, the increase in electricity tariffs was 55%¹, and in the period from 2018 to 2020 – by 22.78%.

As a positive point, it can be noted that over the past four years, wages in municipalities of the republic have increased by an average of 5-7 thousand rubles. At the same time, over the past few years, especially over the past 2020, there have been certain trends in some areas to reduce other socio-economic indicators.

Currently, there is a certain stratification between the northern and southern parts of the republic in terms of socio-economic development.

Most municipalities with the most favorable socio-economic situation are located in the southern part of the republic. Similar municipalities include the urban districts of Alushta, Yevpatoria, Kerch, Simferopol, Feodosia, Yalta, and Bakhchisarai district. These municipalities occupy the first places in terms of the average salary of the population, as well as leading positions in terms of the lowest unemployment rate and a lower coefficient of tension in the labor market.

The least economically developed municipalities are located mainly in the northern part of the peninsula, in particular, they include Dzhankoy, Krasnoperekopsky, Pervomaisky and Razdolnensky districts. In addition, municipalities with increased social tension include several districts of the central and southern part of the Crimean Peninsula, namely, Nizhnegorsky, Kirovsky, Krasnogvardeysky and Saki districts (*Department of the Federal State Statistics Service for the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol*. Official website. *The labor market and employment of the population*. URL: <https://crimea.gks.ru/folder/27542>).

In 2020, due to the pandemic of the new coronavirus infection COVID-19, which caused numerous socio-economic problems around the world, in the Republic of Crimea, as in other regions of Russia, there was a significant increase in the unemployment rate, which at the end of the year was 9.2 times, which is the highest indicator among all subjects of the Southern Federal District. In general, the indicators of unemployment growth in Russia look somewhat less large-scale: by the end of 2020, the unemployment rate in the country increased by 24.7% and, according to official data, amounted to 5.9% (URL: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/10572707>).

So, turning to conclusions, it should be noted that currently there are a number of unresolved problems that have a negative impact on the socio-economic development of the Republic of Crimea. Such problems include a low GRDP per capita, high prices for food products, too fast growth rates of utility prices, significant differentiation of municipalities of the republic (between the most lagging northern regions and the most developed southern ones) in terms of average wages of the population and the unemployment rate. In addition, a serious problem is the growth rate of the unemployment rate over the past two years in a number of municipalities of the Crimea, caused by a massive decline in economic indicators due to the coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020. ■



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¹ Reference table of electricity tariffs for the population of the Republic of Crimea for 2016. URL: <https://energo-24.ru/tariffs/electro/2016/11010.html>; Reference table of electricity tariffs for the population of the Republic of Crimea for 2018. URL: <https://energo-24.ru/tariffs/electro/2018-elektro/12881.html>

YEVHENIIA HORIUNOVA

Social changes in Crimea occupied by Russia

Expert article • 3222

The Russian occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) and Sevastopol has led to significant changes on the peninsula due to population replacement and aggravation of the social and economic situation.

Population replacement

During the occupation period, serious demographic transformations took place in Crimea: the number of residents was rapidly declining, while Russians were coming on the peninsula en masse.

In 2014-2021, **347.9 thousand people**, which is 15% of the peninsula's population before the occupation, died in Crimea. According to Russian sources, **about 200 thousand people** left Crimea during the same period. If we add those who left Crimea but did not cancel their Crimean registration (the occupational administration continues to count them as peninsula's residents) to these migrants, from 250,000 to 300,000 people (10-12% of the peninsula's population before the occupation) left the peninsula. Accordingly, due to natural causes and forced migration, the local population has decreased by 25-28% during the occupation period.

However, according to Russian sources, the total population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea has hardly changed and is about 1.9 million people. At the same time, according to official figures, the number of residents in Sevastopol increased by 27% (up to 529.9 thousand). Experts estimated that the population has almost doubled – up to 700,000 people.

As the birth rate has fallen by an average of 24% after the annexation of Crimea, external migration became the main source of human resources. According to Russian sources, in 2014-2021, **353.2 thousand people** (15% of the peninsula's population before the occupation) moved to Crimea. The vast majority of migrants were from the Russian regions (60-70%). The Russian authority encouraged the relocation of Russians to Crimea by various means: reduced-rate real estate mortgages, cheap loans, material support, etc.

In addition to official migrants, there are a large number of the Russian military and representatives of other law enforcement agencies on the peninsula. The migration services do not take into account these categories. Accordingly, Ukrainian experts estimated that from 600 thousand to 1 million people moved to Crimea. Thus, the Russian government has already replaced from 25 to 40% of the population.

Socio-economic development

Before the annexation, Russia has promised Crimeans an increase in wages and pensions. In 2015, the average wage in Crimea increased by 68 euros (up to 330 euros) compared to previous Ukrainian wages. Over the next period, the average earnings of Crimeans increased to 452 euros, but they have declined to 423 euros since 2020. The

modal wage (received by the vast majority of the working population) is about 300 euros. Almost 18% of Crimeans receive a wage of less than 172 euros.

The situation with pensions is similar: the average pension was slowly growing during the occupation period and reached 166 euros in 2021. However, this figure does not correspond to the real situation due to the significant number of retired military who have actively settled on the peninsula after the annexation and have a significantly higher pension. So, the real pension coverage for most Crimean pensioners is not more than 130 euros.

Along with the transition to Russian wages and pensions, Crimea applies Russian prices for goods and services that are significantly higher than the Ukrainian ones. Accordingly, prices increased by 43% (for products – by 53%) in 2014, and by another 28% (by 23% for products) in 2015. In the following years, inflation rates slowed to 5-7% per year, but in 2021, food inflation was 11% in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and 14% in Sevastopol.

Russia has invested significant funds in Crimea (more than 17 billion euros during the occupation period), but most of this money was spent on large-scale infrastructure projects ("Crimean Bridge", Taurida highway between Kerch and Sevastopol) and the military industry.

At the same time, other companies have faced economic difficulties due to the breakdown of established economic ties, lack of adequate credit policy (large Russian banks didn't operate on the peninsula because of sanctions), and decline in exports by 25 times (from over a billion dollars to 40 million). As a consequence, more than 40% of companies are unprofitable in Crimea.

As a result of the occupation, serious challenges were faced by small and medium-sized businesses that have reduced their activities due to the Russian bureaucratic system of permits and reports, credit financing problems, and rent increases. Only 6% of Crimeans received income from business activities in 2019.

The official unemployment rate ranges between 5-6%, although in fact, there are much more people who can't find jobs. This is primarily because high-paying positions are given to migrants from Russia (officials, law enforcement agency staff, bank employees, etc.). As a consequence, most young people leave Crimea for work opportunities. As a result, in Sevastopol, only 40% of the total population works, the rest are children and retirees.

Due to this socio-economic situation, the occupied peninsula is among the outsiders of Russian socio-economic rankings. For example, Crimea is one of the ten most disadvantaged regions in terms of the financial status of the population; it ranks 78th out of 85 regions in terms of consumer demand, and Crimeans need to save money from 10.5 (Autonomous Republic of Crimea) to 15.5 (Sevastopol) years to buy own homes. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol also rank last in the mortgage availability ranking.

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In 2020, the Audit Chamber of Russia acknowledged that the federal targeted development program for Crimea and Sevastopol, under which the bulk of investments was allocated, would not allow bringing the living standards of the population to the Russian average. In such a way, the social situation in Crimea will continue to deteriorate. ■

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ESKENDER BARIIEV

Violation of the collective rights of the Crimean Tatar people is a crime against humanity

Expert article • 3223

The Crimean Tatar people historically formed in Crimea and in the Northern Black Sea region along with small related peoples such as Karaites and Krymchaks. Crimean Tatars, Karaites and Krymchaks belong to the indigenous population of the Crimean peninsula. They are officially recognized as indigenous peoples in Ukraine.

The Crimean Tatar people became a numerical minority in their homeland, as a result of deliberate policy of genocide after the liquidation of statehood and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 1783, the apogee of which was the total forcible deportation of the Crimean Tatar people.

So in 1944, 238 thousand people were deported, about 110 thousand died in the first years of deportation, which is 46%.

The regime of a special settlement lasted until 1956, when people were deprived of the right to free movement, for more than 50 years a policy of denying the existence of the Crimean Tatar people, assimilation of the language and culture, falsification of historiography was carried out. Secondary deportations in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century, when people seeking to return to Crimea were forcibly taken out of Crimea by their whole families and thrown into the field. It is impossible not to recall the act of self-immolation of Musa Mamut, committed by him in 1978, only after that his family was allowed to live in Crimea.

The policy of racial discrimination and assimilation of the Crimean Tatars has been going on since 2014, the occupiers are replacing the population of Crimea. The indigenous Crimean Tatar people are systematically intimidated and purposefully squeezed out of Crimea as part of the population disloyal to the aggressor. More than six hundred thousand Russians have already been brought from Russia to Crimea, while tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars were forced to leave it.

And everyone who refuses to accept the yoke of fake "Russian citizenship" is deprived of the right to private property by the occupiers, discriminated against in labor and social rights, or even deported from Crimea.

Impunity breeds new crimes. Therefore, an important factor in deterring crimes against humanity, minimizing all forms of discrimination and violence on the temporarily occupied peninsula should be the recognition by all civilized countries of the world of the deportation of 1944 as a genocide of the Crimean Tatar people.

Today, it is important for the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights to make fair decisions condemning the current racial discrimination against Crimean Tatars by the occupiers.

According to the Crimean Tatar Resource Center during the occupation period of Crimea, 238 political prisoners and those prosecuted in criminal cases, 169 of whom are representatives of

the indigenous people. 82 were convicted and are serving terms in colonies on the territory of Russia, 57 of whom are Crimean Tatars, and 42 are in a pre-trial detention centers, 36 of whom are Crimean Tatars; 58 are dead, 27 of whom are representatives of the Crimean Tatar people; 21 victims of violent abductions, 15 of whom are the representatives of the Crimean Tatar people.

Despite the fact that the Russian authorities of Crimea "officially" recognized the Crimean Tatar language as one of the state languages, the scope of its use is very narrow, there have been cases of threats to dismiss workers for speaking their native language, which is a violation of articles 2, 8 and 17 of the UN Declaration on rights of indigenous peoples.

Before the occupation, there were 15 schools and 384 classes in Crimea with the Crimean Tatar language of instruction. According to the data of the de facto authorities, for 2021 there are 7 schools with the Crimean Tatar language of instruction, 3 with Russian and Crimean Tatar and 119 classes, which is a violation of Articles 8, 13 and 14 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Items of cultural heritage of the Crimean Tatars were taken out of Crimea after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 1783.

Since 2014, the Russian government has been falsifying the historiography of Crimea, including in school history textbooks, conducts excavations without the consent of the representative body of the indigenous people, and exports artifacts to Russia. This violates Article 15 of the UNDRIP.

Under the guise of "restoration" authentic materials of the Bakhchisaray historical and cultural reserve "Khan's Palace" are destroyed, articles 8, 11, 15, 31 of the UNDRIP.

Violating articles 8, 25, 26, 27 of the Declaration, the Russian authorities illegally use the natural resources of Crimea. Biological resources and minerals are being extracted, the Black Sea shelf is being developed. Quarrying has led to the destruction of the Crimean landscape and has a negative impact on the traditional economy of the Crimean Tatars. The rivers dried up, juniper forests were destroyed. Due to explosions, houses of local residents are destroyed. As a result of the construction of the Tavrida highway in Crimea, more than 237,000 trees and shrubs have been destroyed.

In Crimea, the Russian authorities are building military bases and importing military equipment. Military exercises are held regularly. These actions violate articles 29, 30 of the UNDRIP.

The FSB is persecuting human rights activists of the indigenous peoples of Crimea. In 2016, the Supreme Court of Russia banned the representative body of the Crimean Tatars - the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, accusing it of extremism, thus violating the right of the indigenous people to manage their representative institutions. Russia did not comply with the Interim Decision of the UN ICJ dated April 19, 2017 on lifting the ban on the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people.

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The occupying authorities forbid holding meetings of the representative body of the Crimean Tatars to make important decisions for the people.

Armed people carry out systematic mass detentions of Crimean Tatars, collect personal data from people, take saliva for DNA analysis, fingerprints. This is a direct violation of Article 12 of the UNDRIP.

Despite the coronavirus pandemic and in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, a mass conscription into the ranks of the Russian Armed Forces is being carried out, and if people refuse, then criminal proceedings are opened against them.

The actions of the Russian Federation are criminal, politically motivated, grossly violating international law.

The families and more than 200 children of political prisoners and the missing persons need support, and any reaction from the civilized world inspires and gives hope for the release and return of their parents.

We are confident that only with active joint opposition to the gross violation of human rights in Crimea and the unprecedented aggression of Russia, we will be able to protect not only the indigenous people of Crimea - the Crimean Tatars and Ukraine, but also Europe and the whole world. ■

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Crimea, Crimean Tatars and the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Expert article • 3224

Putin's "annexation" of Crimea was both a precursor and a model of the current wholesale invasion of Ukraine. The Crimean Tatars, the indigenous people of Crimea, fervently opposed the "annexation" of Crimea because they were aware that the "annexation" would be tantamount to the destruction of their nation. The Russians undertook policies of Russification in Crimea and later Donbas, and there is no doubt that Putin will implement the same policy if Russia occupied Ukraine for a longer time.

We should also notice the pattern of Russian history from Ivan the Terrible to Stalin and Putin: messianic imperialism, which aims to destroy all smaller nations and impose its own cultural vision and identity over others. Unlike other nations such as Germany and Japan, Russia never accepted its crimes and repented, therefore it is bound to repeat its mistakes.

The invasion, "annexation", and consequent occupation of Crimea was a precursor and small-scale model of a contemporary full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russia uses the same tactics over and over again and the West manages to be surprised each time. First of all, Putin laid the groundwork for invasion. He supported pro-Russian politicians in the regional government of Crimea, the local Russian mafia, the local Russian radical and fascist organizations and paramilitary forces, a pro-Russian chauvinistic media which published and showed anti-Crimean Tatar and anti-Ukrainian content daily, all of which proved extremely useful during the invasion. The Black Sea Fleet was maintained as a Trojan Horse. During the EuroMaidan Revolution Ukraine fell into chaos and had neither a government nor much military force. Putin pressed the button for the second stage of the 'hybrid' invasion of Crimea. FSB staged a coup in the Crimean government while the 40,000 soldiers without insignia occupied all strategic points of Crimea. Thirdly, Russia organized a hasty and illegal referendum, which was undertaken completely unlawfully with practices such as armed soldiers carrying boxes from home to home and no option for staying with Ukraine being given in the questions of the referendum. Despite coercion, the turnout was very low, and the approval rate was even lower. The fourth aspect of occupation was terrorizing the society for obedience. The dissidents, particularly Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, were silenced by imprisonment, disappearances, killings, house searches, and all democratic and ethnic institutions were abolished or banned. The lack of appropriate reaction to the Crimean occupation is one of the causes of Ukraine's full-scale invasion. For, Putin was encouraged due to the lack of consequences for the occupation of Crimea. The Western economic sanctions were quite limited, European countries continued to buy oil and natural gas from Russia, Russian corrupt money easily found ways to Western and off-shore financial institutions, economy, and politics, and manipulative Russian media continued to broadcast to western societies.

Russia also intervened in Donbas two months later, organizing a separatist movement. The western powers, mainly France and Germany made another mistake of excluding the Crimean question from the Minsk process that aimed to solve the Donbas conflict. However, appeasement did not work once again, and today Russia launched a full-fledged invasion of Ukraine, using the same 'hybrid' tactics. It is imperative to stop Putin and take him and all of his accomplices to justice.

The Crimean Tatars established an Islamic civilization and a strong state for 300 years in Crimea before there were any Russians in the peninsula. The Russian colonization of the peninsula began after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 1783, victimizing its native population, thereby forcing them to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire in large numbers. Despite the exodus of a large part of their population, the Crimean Tatars were able to declare their independent state, only to be crashed by Bolsheviks and leaders of their nation to be killed or exiled. However, the most significant crime against the Crimean Tatars was the deportation of the whole nation from their homeland. On 18 May 1944, Stalin ordered the deportation of the Crimean Tatars to Central Asia and Siberia en masse on the pretext of collaboration with Nazis. This was the most unjust accusation as all the young males were serving in the Soviet army, and many Crimean Tatars joined or helped Soviet partisans. The women, elderly, and children were given fifteen minutes to prepare belongings, loaded in cattle cars, and after three weeks of travel, were unloaded to Central Asian deserts, Ural Mountains, or Siberian taiga to try to survive in poverty and misery. On the way to places of deportation and shortly afterward, the Crimean Tatars lost at least 40% of their population.

The Crimean Tatars were sufficiently resilient and returned collectively after 50 years, yet they were once again devastated by the occupation of Crimea in 2014. Since the annexation of Crimea, Russia unleashed its policy of re-colonization and Russification of Crimea. While forcing Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians to leave, at least 850 000 Russians were settled in the peninsula. What the Russian government has done in Crimea and Donbas is beyond human rights violations. Russia committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, for it is responsible to implement Geneva Convention in its occupied territories. The case of Crimea also demonstrates clearly what will happen if Ukraine is occupied by Russia for a longer period.

Crimea does not belong to Russia in the first place despite Putin's historical narrative. Russia's only historical relation to Crimea is one of the colonizers' to colonized. Russia lost any right to Crimea through acts of terror perpetrated against its indigenous population several times in its history. Crimea belongs to Ukraine, a democratic and pluralist country that recognizes and respects the indigenous rights of the Crimean Tatars. Most of all, Crimea belongs to its indigenous people, Crimean Tatars. The international community must not regard

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Crimea as a bargaining chip in the post-war settlement with Russia but instead insist on the restoration of the whole territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Putin, while claiming the legacy of Russian politics, culture, and achievements in the past, rejects the historical crimes Russian Empire or the Soviet Union perpetrated, among which are Crimean Tatar deportation and Holodomor. After the war, a transitional justice process must be initiated for Russia to redress its historical injustices instead of adding new ones, as the war in Ukraine shows forgetting almost guarantees the repetition of crimes. ■

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Crimean Tatars and occupation of Crimea

Expert article • 3225

Although there is abundant literature on Crimean Tatars (CTs), especially about their tragic fate related to the genocidal deportation of May 1944, some aspects of the CTs case, less known and poorly understood by the international community, need to be clarified.

One of the points is their 'indigeneness'. CTs identify themselves as an indigenous people – not just one of the numerous national minorities of Ukraine – from the very beginning of the repatriation to their Homeland in late 80-s of the 20th century. Indeed, they fully comply with all 'indigenous peoples' definitions enshrined in the international law. For CTs, the Crimean Peninsula is not simply a geographical area where their ethnogenesis took place or the land they traditionally cultivate; they have strong spiritual ties with the Crimea and its nature. This territory is inextricably linked to the unique Crimean Tatar identity which they have never lost, despite all attempts by the Russian and Soviet Empires to deny it through either assimilation or not separating from a larger Tatar ethnos.

CTs demanded such a status to be officially recognised, but this did not happen until occupation of Crimea by the RF in 2014. Only on March 20, 2014 Verkhovna Rada issued Decree N 1140-18I followed on 1 July 2021 by the long-awaited law on CTs as an indigenous people of Ukraine, and the Mejlis as their main representative-executive body.

During occupation of the peninsula CTs proved to be the main politically and socially organised force that persistently but peacefully resisted it. For this and generally pro-Ukrainian position they were 'punished' by persecutions and repressions including illegal searches, detainments, abductions, 'disappearances' never properly investigated, and arrests under false charges of 'terrorism' and 'extremism' – without any proven evidence of crimes committed or even wrongdoings breaching the RF-imposed Russian legislation. In all cases, international HR law and vast majority of articles of the 4th Geneva convention (1949) – the basis of the international humanitarian law – have been brutally violated.

Although persecutions on political and religious grounds are widespread on the occupied peninsula, there are CTs who suffer the most and constitute the lion share among all victims of the oppressive regime. At the end of 2021, 162 out of 230 persons repressed by the occupants, were CTs (while they make up only 13 – 15% of the Crimean population). In 2016 Mejlis was banned as an 'extremist organisation', two Deputy Heads arrested (Akhtem Chiyozy in January 2015, Ilmi Umerov – in May 2016; on 25 October 2017, both were saved by the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who swapped them for two Russian spies). Nariman Dzheilyal, the only CT leader remaining in Crimea, was arrested on 4 September 2021 on absurd charges of 'sabotage' – in fact, due to his participation in the inauguration summit of Crimean Platform in Kyiv on 23 August. Criminal cases were also initiated against the Head of the Mejlis Refat Chubarov and charismatic people's leader Mustafa Djemilev; both men were

prohibited from entering the peninsula. Now the Mejlis office functions in Kyiv, whereas many active members of the community moved to mainland Ukraine in 2014 – 2015 and some of them joined the ranks of Ukrainian Army as volunteers or under contract.

Attempts to intimidate CTs and force them to stop their peaceful struggle against the occupiers have failed. All cases of political persecution continue to be covered, and support for the repressed and their families provided. An outstanding role in the information flow from the occupied Crimea to mainland Ukraine, used also by international organisations, belongs to the public movement 'Crimean Solidarity' (CS). Although many coordinators and civic journalists from the CS have been arrested and sentenced, its activities and growing popularity are not suppressed, and the number of the CS members and supporters is on the rise. First appeared in 2018 as a reaction to the persecutions of Crimean Tatar Muslims, it gradually transformed into the genuinely 'all-Crimean' initiative uniting and consolidating people of different ethnicities and religious denominations. Its effectiveness is also determined by a 'horizontal' networking structure not depending on a single leader. This amazing example of a non-violent counteraction to the occupying power shouldn't come unheeded by the international community. It is especially topical after peaceful protests in Russia and Belarus were crushed and almost ceased to exist, thus undermining the validity of the concept of non-violent resistance described and promoted by Gene Sharp in his famous pamphlet 'From Dictatorship to Democracy'. After the large-scale military invasion of the RF into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, many CTs, who settled in the southern regions bordering Crimea, experienced the second wave of occupation. Some of them fled to safer places or become refugees. Men with military training re-joined Ukrainian troops, hoping that victory in this crucial phase of the eight-year war would help de-occupy Crimea and enable them to return to their Homeland. ■

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Crimean Estonians

Expert article • 3226

Crimea is well known for its culturally diverse and rich history. The most dominant civilisations in the history have been Graeco-Roman and Turkic-Islamic (Tatar) cultures whilst Russian dominance forms only about 6 percent of the whole history. However, the era of Russian Empire brought also new smaller minorities in the peninsula, e.g. Estonians, who have been remarkably living there already 160 years ago despite all the hardships, repressions and wars.

In the beginning Russian colonization actually meant even further diversifying of the population in the peninsula. The Russian Empress Catherine II preferred colonisation of Crimea by European settlers, especially Germans, being of that background herself. After the Crimean war (1855-1856) the Russian policy turned towards Russification and deportations. During this period the Russian population quadrupled from 7 to 29 percent, while the Tatars were deported to Turkey. The share of the native main population, the Tatars started to diminish first to the half after the Crimean war and by the end of the 19th century they had lost their place as a majority. This trend of Russification and de-Tatarisation continued through the Imperial and Soviet times culminating with the total deportation of all Crimean Tatars to Central Asia in 1944.

The imperial government in St. Petersburg had a need to resettle the emptied Tatar lands. Also bringing other non-Russian population from other parts of the vast empire in to the Russian-speaking environment would contribute further to their Russification.

With this context in the background, began the settling of Estonians in Crimea. Estonians lived in two gubernias (governorates), Estonia and Livonia, which were under the Baltic German semi-autonomous minority rule recognised by the Imperial government. The population surplus of Estonian governorates, the railway connections, the example of others, the aim to get better life somewhere else and religious movements were among the reasons why Estonians for their part saw the possibility to leave for Crimea. In the case of Crimea, the latter reason was especially important. Juhan Leinberg, so called Prophet Maltvets, was a layman leader of Lutheran sect called Maltvetsian. During the autumn of 1860, Leinberg got an idea to move to Crimea with his successors, as he had heard that the Emperor needed settlers for the empty settlements left from the deported Tatars. For his successors, Crimea would be the Biblical Promised Land and Prophet Maltvets would be the new Moses. In January 1861 the Emperor granted an Imperial permission for Maltvetsians to move for Crimea.

The First Estonian settlers, five families, arrived at Crimea at the beginning of autumn 1861. During the next spring, 700 Maltvetsians arrived at Crimea. However, the Maltvetsian movement did not thrive and the Prophet himself returned back to Estonia with his family in 1865, but the foundation for the Estonian settlement in Crimea had been laid. Despite the hardships of the early phase, hardworking and co-operative Estonians survived and re-established the old Crimean Tatar settlements of Zamruq (Beregovoye) (1861), Kara-Kiyat (Grushevoe) (1862), (Pervomaiskoe) (1863), Dzurchi (Pervomaiskoe) (1863), Konchi-Shavva (Krasnodarka) (1863), Syrt-Karakchora (1864), Kiyat-Orka (Upornoe) (1864) and Uchkuyu Tarkhan (Kolodeznoe) (1879). Yapunca (Vypasnoe) was mentioned in 1864 census as Estonian-Tatar mixed village and mixed population had also Dzhaga-Kushchu (Okhotnikov). The last Novaya Estoniya (Novoestonia) was mentioned for the first time in 1926.

The preceding and subsequent years of the First World War were the heydays of Crimean Estonians. When the Estonian writer

Eduard Vilde visited local Estonians in 1904, he could only praise the settlements. The Estonians had the highest literacy rate, as they had immediately at the very beginning established schools and churches, their houses were built of stone and they were wealthier than other inhabitants.

When the Crimean ASSR was established in 1921, there were 2367 Estonians with the share of 0.4% of the population; this made them as the seventh largest ethnic group of the peninsula. There were 31 Estonian villages or settlements. A total of 1,570 Estonians (with 97% proficient in the Estonian language) lived in the rural settlements, while 524 Estonians lived in the cities (276 in Simferopol, 218 in other cities). The Leninist oppression started to diminish Estonian population from the beginning of the Soviet rule. As the Estonian population was classified as too wealthy, they lost their election rights. Even though there were no real elections in Soviet Russia/Union, meant losing the voting rights also other socio-economic problems. The worst was to become when the Stalinist purge and repressions started in the latter half of the 1930's.

In 1939 there were 1,900 Estonians, 1,291 in 1970, 1,048 in 1979 and 985 in 1989. During the Soviet times, some new Estonians moved to Crimea, especially to Simferopol, but the main tendency of the Soviet era was Russification of Crimean Estonians and the dominance of the Russian language. Nowadays there are 500-600 Estonians and about one third of them can speak Estonian. Additional 2000-5000 Crimeans have Estonian roots too.

The only Estonian village left today is Krasnodarka, which is also the place for Estonian Cabin and museum. Before Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014, there were three Estonian cultural societies in Crimea. At least two of them are still working, one in Sevastopol. In Aleksandrovka (Oleksandrivka in Ukrainian) there was an Estonian school (2002-2014) that was also popular among other nationalities. Estonian Foreign Ministry sent there an Estonian teacher on the basis of an agreement with Ukraine, but after the occupation and annexation by Russian Federation, all official relations between Estonian state and Crimean Estonians ceased.

Currently there is a small conflict of interests between Crimean Estonians and Republic of Estonia. The former have an interest to survive also in the current situation; at least officially they have recognised the new Russian rule. However, the latter needs to hold on the principles of international justice and maintain the policy of state integrity of Ukraine. There has been discussion how Estonians and Estonia could support Crimean Estonians without endangering the rights of Ukraine. Recently through a fundraising in Estonia, Estonian Cabin (Eesti Tare) was renovated in Krasnodarka, which was kind of example how the support could be organised through civil society. However, it needs to be remembered that civil society does not freely exist in Russia, and Kremlin usually tries to lead it to support its own politics. Also it needs to be ensured that the cultural activity is real and not just showing national costumes as the official minority policy of Russian Federation tends to be. ■



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Putin misuses the history of Crimea in the war against Ukraine

Expert article • 3227

The invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops on February 24, 2022, is a continuation of the dramatic Russian-Ukrainian confrontation that began on February 20, 2014, with the occupation of Crimea. The reasons why this small peninsula is of such great importance to Vladimir Putin are well known. Firstly, it is a "natural aircraft carrier" that allows one to keep the Black Sea basin under control, and secondly, Crimea is an important "memory space" in Russian culture. That is why, to justify the attempted annexation of Crimea, the Kremlin used alleged "historical" arguments as understandable to the majority of Russians.

Let's take them in turn.

1. According to the supposed "canonical" version of the myth, Crimea was allegedly inhabited by Slavs for a long time, and only with the arrival of nomads, they were forced out of the peninsula. A cursory glance at the modern ethnographic map of the peninsula, 60% of whose population are ethnic Russians, adds weight to this statement.

There is, in fact, no archaeological evidence of the presence of a permanent Slavic population on the peninsula until the 11th-13th centuries. Even later in some cities, there were only separate quarters for Rus' merchants. There is also no evidence of a permanent Russian population in the era of the Crimean Khanate. During the eviction (de facto deportation) of Christians from the peninsula by order of Catherine the Great in 1778, Russians (and Ukrainians) were not recorded among 33,000 of Christian exiles. By the time of the Russian Empire's first annexation of Crimea in 1783, there were barely 2000 immigrants from Russia.

The transformation of Russians from a minority into an absolute majority of Crimean residents was the result of Russia's purposeful policy – both imperial and Soviet. On the one hand, the Center created unfavorable conditions for the Crimean Tatar population, mainly due to land fraud, forcing Crimean Tatars to emigrate en masse to the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, this policy stimulated the resettlement of Russians from the central regions of the country to Crimea in every possible way.

Even under these conditions, only at the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of Russians exceeded the number of Crimean Tatars, and only after the deportation of the indigenous people of Crimea of 1944, Russians turned into the absolute majority of the population of the peninsula.

2. Another argument that Russia justifies the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula with is Crimea's supposedly eternal belonging to Russia. From this point of view, the events of 2014 do not look like the seizure of someone else's territory, but instead the so-called "restoration of historical justice" and "return to their native harbor."

In particular, there are claims that part of the Kerch Peninsula belonged to the old Russian Tmutarakan principality and that the ancient Chersonese, taken by Prince Vladimir, fell into the sphere of influence of Russia. Thus, Moscow's claims to the alleged "Old Russian heritage" are legitimized.

In fact, many years of excavations have proved that modern Kerch and its surroundings have never been part of Russia. Professional historians of both Ukraine and Russia agree on this. Similarly, Chersonesos, after being captured by Vladimir, was returned to Byzantium and did not remain subject to Kyiv. Nevertheless, school textbooks and atlases simply replicate false information about Crimea's history fabricated by Moscow's propaganda machine.

Thus, there can be no question of any ancient possession of Crimea by Russian princes. Under these conditions, the real "Russian period" in the history of the peninsula began in 1783 with the first annexation of Crimea and ended in 1954 after its transfer to Ukraine.

Against the background of the 3,000-year written history of the peninsula, the time of Russian power over it lasted formally 171 years or 5.5%. For comparison, the Crimean Khanate existed on the peninsula for exactly twice as long.

3. On March 18, 2014, Putin said that when the USSR collapsed in 1991, the residents of Crimea were not asked if they wanted to live in an independent Ukraine, but were granted to the new state "like a sack of potatoes." Allegedly only Putin himself asked the opinion of the Crimeans at the "referendum".

In fact, on December 1, 1991, an absolutely legitimate national referendum on the attitude to the declaration of independence of the country was held throughout the territory of Ukraine. On it, 54% of residents of Crimea and 57% of residents of Sevastopol supported the independence of Ukraine. Thus, Putin simply lied.

The so-called "Crimean referendum" on March 16, 2014, was completely illegitimate, so its results were not recognized by anyone in the world, except Russia itself.

So, Putin, Russian officials, and even, unfortunately, some professional historians have lied or manipulated the facts when it comes to Crimea and continue to do so. Unable to justify the occupation with legal arguments, Moscow resorts to historical – or rather, quasi-historical ones.

You can read more in my book "#CrimealsOurs. History of the Russian Myth" (Kyiv, 2017), which is legally available on the Internet.

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Russia's historic relations with Crimea

Expert article • 3228

The Crimea plays a very important role in Russian history and identity. Victory over Ottoman Empire in two wars (1768-74, 1788-1792) secured the territory north of the Black Sea as far west as the Dniester river, including the vital agricultural and mineral resources of southern Ukraine, an area that became known as New Russia. In the process, Russia annexed the Crimea in 1783. As long as the Crimea remained independent, Russia could have no navy in the Black Sea – the Sea of Azov freezes over from November to April and its exit was too shallow for large warships. Thus, Russia's future as a naval power in the Black Sea depended on a settlement of the 'Crimean question'.¹

The Black Sea ports of Crimea provide quick access to the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and Middle East. The nearby Dnieper River is a major waterway and transportation route that crosses the European continent from north to south and ultimately links the Black Sea with the Baltic Sea.

Russia's domination in the region ended by humiliating defeat in the Crimean War of 1853-56. This war was about the control of the two decisive points, the Turkish Straits and the Khyber Pass. The British government decided to claim control over the mouths of the Danube, the Dniepr, and the Don. In January 1853, it drew a line along the right bank of the Danube beyond which a Russian advance would be met with declaration of war, and it pledged to defend any Turkish port in the Black Sea against a Russian attack. Russia has fought alone against Turkey, France, and Great Britain.

The war turned into a series of far-flung naval operations unlikely to settle anything. Only in the Crimea did a large allied forces launch a major operation but the siege of Sevastopol lasted until September 1855. In December 1854, when the siege was tightening, the foreign secretary Lord Clarendon set forth another Britain's goal – the demolition of Sevastopol and other Russian fortresses on the eastern coast of the Black Sea to shake Russia's hold on the Caucasus, the elimination of Russia's naval installations in that sea, the reduction of its navy to four ships, and a revision of the Straits Convention to allow Britain and France to maintain the same number of warships in the Black Sea. The Treaty of Paris, signed on March 30, 1856, moderated these radical demands by reasserting the old rule that British and French warships would not be allowed into the Black Sea in peacetime but it forced Russia to accept the neutralization of the Black Sea and retrocede to Turkey the mouth of Danube and part of Bessarabia, won from the Turks almost half a century earlier. Also, the friendship treaty between Turks and the two maritime powers guaranteed that in the event of the war the sultan would allow their warships to cross into the Black Sea to attack a defenseless Russia.

The Crimean defeat signified the end of Russia's status as the supreme land power in Europe and made fundamental reforms unavoidable. The Paris settlement was a great humiliating geopolitical loss for Russia which created preconditions for taking revenge.

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Crimea became an autonomous republic within the Russian SFSR in the Soviet Union. During the Second World War the peninsula was invaded by Nazi Germany and Romanian troops in summer 1941. Following the capture of Sevastopol after severe battles on 4 July 1942, Crimea was occupied until German and Romanian forces were expelled in an offensive by Soviet forces ending in May 1944. The Nazis murdered around 40,000 Crimean Jews.

During the Second World War, Crimea was downgraded to the Crimean Oblast and the entirety of one of its indigenous populations, the Crimean Tatars, were deported to Central Asia. In 1954, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, transferred Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR from the Russian SFSR. The year 1954 happened to mark the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav, which was signed in 1654 by representatives of the Ukrainian Cossack Hetmanate and Tsar Alexis of Russia.

By 1991, the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, headquartered in Sevastopol, had 100,000 personnel and 835 ships. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was reestablished as an independent state, and most of the peninsula was reorganized as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the city of Sevastopol retained its special status within Ukraine. In 1992-95, Russia supported Yuri Meshkov, the head of the Crimean provincial government, who was a proponent of holding a referendum on succession of the peninsula from the rest of the country. In 1995, amidst the first war between Russia and Chechnya, the Ukrainian national parliament dismissed Meshkov and annulled the autonomous status of Crimea.

As Russian identity is concerned, as a result of disintegration of the Soviet Union, numerous sacred symbols of old imperial Russia (e.g., Kiev and Narva) and twentieth-century Soviet Russia (e.g. the Baikonur Cosmodrome and the Brest fortress) were displaced beyond the borders of the Russian Federation almost overnight. Sevastopol was a symbol of glory of both imperial and Soviet Russia.² Alongside Kiev and Odesa, Sevastopol was awarded the status of 'hero-city' to commemorate the heroism of their defenders during the Second World war.

A Treaty of 'Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership' sealed by Boris Yeltsin and the Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma in May 1997 set aside the territorial issue over Crimea. Separate agreements partitioned the Black Sea fleet, with Moscow buying out much of the Ukrainian's share in exchange for debt relief, and provided a 20-year lease on the naval base in Sevastopol and the right to billet 25,000 sailors, aviators and marines there. Ukraine extended Russia's lease of the naval facilities under the 2010 Kharkiv Pact in exchange for further discounted natural gas.

In late February 2014, following the regime change in Ukraine that ousted the Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovich, the Republic of Crimea declared its independence from Ukraine following a disputed referendum on 16 March, deemed illegal by Ukraine and most countries, which was held on the issue of reunification with Russia; its official results showed over 90% support for reunification, but the vote was boycotted by many loyal to Ukraine. Russia formally annexed Crimea on 18 March, incorporating the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol as the 84th and 85th federal subjects of Russia. ■



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¹ LeDonne, John P. (1997). *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700-1917. The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment*. New York, Oxford. Oxford U. Press, p. 106.

² Serhii Plokhyy, 'The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Jul., 2000), pp. 370-371

SERGEI V. MOSHKIN

Why did Khrushchev transfer Crimea to Ukraine?

Expert article • 3229

Why did Khrushchev transfer Crimea to Ukraine in 1954? Historians do not have any uniform opinion about that. This fact is mostly attributed to the well-known extravagance of the First Secretary of the CC of the CPSU (Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) or to his desire to atone for his guilt towards the Ukrainians because of the mass repressions in which Khrushchev was involved in the past. Meantime, we believe that the reply is to be found elsewhere – in the history of construction of the North Crimean Canal.

The fact is that water resources in Crimea are among the poorest in Europe. According to the statistical data, in 1864, fresh water was not suitable for drinking in half the settlements of the peninsula. Naturally, crop farming would be next to impossible there without additional irrigation.

First projects to bring the water from the Dnieper River appeared as early as in the middle of the 19th century; then there were some projects at the beginning of the 20th century. None of them were supported due to lack of funds. It was after the Second World War only that the real chance to build a canal appeared. On September 21, 1951, the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued the decree 'On construction of the Kakhovka HPP on the Dnieper River, the South Ukrainian Canal and the North Crimean Canal and on irrigation of land in the South regions of Ukraine and the North regions of the Crimea'. The State Planning Committee (Gosplan) of the USSR calculated the cost of work, and surveys began. The scope included construction of the Kakhovka Reservoir on the Dnieper River (and moving out of dozens of settlements), the Kakhovka HPP, dozens of pumping stations, hundreds of kilometers of power lines and highways, and excavation of millions of tons of soil. The design length of the North Crimean Canal alone was over 402 kilometers, while the total length of its water networks exceeded 5,000 kilometers. Needless to say, the construction would require thousands of workers, a great number of building and road machinery. The construction of the Kakhovka Reservoir including the HPP and the system of canals became the largest infrastructural project in the post-war USSR.

It was at that moment that the question was raised: who exactly would manage the giant construction project? The fact is that ministries in the USSR were subdivided into the Union ministries and the Republican ones. The first types were in charge of issues of the whole country, while the second – those on the level of the Republics. However, actual execution of the Union-level projects was the responsibility of ministries of those Republics, in which such projects were implemented.

As far as the Kakhovka HPP and the South Ukrainian Canal were concerned, everything was clear. They were built in the territory of Ukraine, and their construction was, accordingly, under direct control of the Council of Ministers of the UkSSR (the Ukrainian SSR). For that

purpose, the Republic established a company called 'Ukrvodostroi'; besides, there was 'Dneprostroi' Company, which had built the Dneproges (Dnieper Hydroelectric Station) during 1927-1932.

The construction of the North Crimean Canal was a more complicated matter. It would start in the territory of the UkSSR, from the Kakhovka Reservoir, and would end in a branched irrigation system in Crimea, in the territory of the RSFSR (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic). But managing of any projects within the territory of the RSFSR by the Council of Ministers of the UkSSR (just as vice versa) had been unheard of in the Soviet history. And it would be stupid to build the canal up to the boundary of Crimea, and then hand it over to be operated by the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR.

It was clear even from plain reckoning that management of the vast construction project spread over the territory of the two Republics would be easier from a single center, and, better still – from Ukraine: it was adjacent to Crimea, and besides, majority of the work scope was carried out within its territory.

And then Khrushchev had an idea how to fix the whole package of these administrative and economic problems: Crimean Region along with the responsibility for construction of the Crimean portion of the canal should be transferred to the Republic that was closer, and that was already involved in the construction of the irrigation system, i.e., the Ukrainian SSR. The First Secretary of the CC of the CPSU thought: at the end of the day, it did not really matter who Crimea would formally belong to, because the Soviet Union was unbreakable, and would exist forever. And in order to decorate somehow the fact of the transfer, a matching date was selected – the forthcoming 300th anniversary of Pereyaslav Council (1654) as the symbol of the Russian and Ukrainian unity.

On February 19, 1954, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued the Decree 'On transfer of Crimean Region from the RSFSR to the UkSSR'. Note the statement of reason in this resolution: 'Considering the common economies, the adjacent territories and the close economic and cultural links between Crimean Region and the Ukrainian SSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet the RSFSR hereby resolves that...'. It was the economic reasoning that prompted Khrushchev's decision. On April 26 of the same year, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR approved the decree of its Presidium and made the respective amendments to the Constitution of the USSR. From now on, the Council of Ministers of the UkSSR was fully responsible for the construction of the North Crimean Canal named after the Komsomol of Ukraine (that was the name given to the Canal), as well as for any other improvements in Crimea including the previously unprecedented construction of the multi-kilometer mountain trolleybus line Simferopol-Alushta-Yalta. The first phase of the Canal was commissioned on October 17, 1963; the ceremony was attended by N.S.Khrushchev himself. The construction was completed after his death, in 1975.

Expert article • 3229

Hence, it appears that Khrushchev's decision to transfer Crimea to Ukraine has not been dictated by the international feeling of friendship between peoples (although one cannot deny that, either), nor by his guilt complex towards the Ukrainian people, and certainly not by the romantic desire to make a luxury gift to his Ukrainian wife, as it was then rumored. The destiny of Crimea in 1954 was determined by a pragmatic and seemingly simple economic decision to build a canal between the two Union republics that were at that time friends. ■

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OLENA SNIGYR

Crimean narratives of Russian historical memory

Expert article • 3230

The ongoing Russian war against Ukraine began due to doctrinal narratives imposed on Russian society by Russian propaganda. Crimea possesses a special place in the Russian historical memory - it has absorbed most of the unifying historical narratives. Also for a modern Russian identity, Crimea acts as a cultural frontier. Thus, the Russians perceive Crimea not only as a symbol of a naval power for protecting the empire's borders but also as an outpost of Soviet (cultural) heritage.

Virtually the entire legitimizing discourse on the occupation and annexation of Crimea is built through references to the past and presents this event as a correction of historical injustice and previously committed illegal acts.

The historical continuity of the relationship between Crimea and Russia is marked by the significant state-building and military narratives:

- the baptism of Prince Volodymyr in Chersonesus is presented as a symbol of Russia's succession to Byzantium and as a symbol of the state act that laid the foundations for future Russian statehood;
- the goal of the military contests for Crimea in the 18th century was to strengthen Russia's presence in the Black Sea and gain the right to enter the Mediterranean, and the peninsula itself is seen as a "fair trophy;"
- the Russians associate Crimea in the 20th century primarily with hostilities and casualties during World War II, and therefore the peninsula is closely linked to the historical narrative of the Great Patriotic War and victory.

The leitmotif of the Crimean theme in Russian historical memory is the concepts of "justice" and "truth". "Truth" is understood in Russian culture as a synthesis of law and justice, law and morality. In this sense, "truth" is the highest expression of justice that is inherent in Russian civilization" and is opposed to "law as a limited expression of justice that is inherent in Western civilization".

In referencing historical events, the "justice" of Russia's ownership of Crimea is being justified by the duration of its ownership of the peninsula, its sacred significance for the Russian state and spirituality, and the blood shed for this territory. The historical narrative of the continuity of Russian statehood since the baptism of Volodymyr the Great in Crimea turns further contests for Crimea into Russia's "fair" desire to keep "what rightly belongs to it," which naturally reinforces the military dimension of historical memory. Therefore, it is logical that Russian scientific discourse is given to the historical military background: military glory gained during the wars for Crimea in the 18th century, stories of heroism and sacrifice of the Great Patriotic War, and so on.

In this context, certain rhetorical and comparative techniques used in the Russian public space deserve attention. In addition to the above-mentioned terms "truth" and "justice," the symbol of the mother is widely used, which strengthens the ethical arguments by showing the inseparable link between Russia and Crimea and emphasizing

Russia's duty to protect the peninsula. The use of the mother image is considered a traditional method of military propaganda, designed to convince of the purity of a state's intentions and the just nature of the war on its part.

The Kremlin and representatives of pro-government scientific discourse regard the inhabitants of the occupied peninsula, in particular the Crimean Tatars, with distrust, which is expressed in certain interpretations and emphasis on the specifics of inter-ethnic relations when describing the Soviet and post-Soviet periods of Crimean history. The Russian focus is on the destructive role of the Crimean Tatars as collaborators during World War II and the Crimean Tatars as the possible source of modern international terrorism.

The other focal points of Russian propaganda are "the rights" of the Russian Federation to make "peacekeeping interventions" in Crimea, the "illegitimacy" of Ukrainian claims to Crimea, and the legitimacy and legality of the Russian Federation's actions. These narratives are constructed mainly by manipulative interpretations of legal documents, processes and events. For example, Russia fails to recognize the relevance of these internationally binding agreements and obligations concerning Crimea (e.g. the CSCE Helsinki Final Act of 1975 is called by Russian side irrelevant because it consolidated the political and territorial results of World War II as of 1945 when Crimea was part of the RSFSR) and the legality of Russian intervention in Crimea and policy towards Ukraine.

It can be said that the topic of Crimea in the policy of the Russian Federation is a special instrument, by which the Russian government uses/crafts historical memory to strengthen its domestic and foreign policy actions (so far, in the eyes of its own population). Russian citizens unequivocally support the illegal annexation of Crimea as an act committed for the sake of "truth," "justice," and "memory of the heroic past" – categories that, in the opinion of most Russians, outweigh all other considerations. Such support, in turn, gives these categories a special power – the power to legitimize other illegal actions in the eyes of their society if they are interpreted and explained accordingly. The desire of Russian politicians and scholars to make these conceptual approaches acceptable in the field of international relations is part of the general destabilizing influence of Russia on the international legal order, considering the vast (false) narratives/ ideas and myths that can stem from Russian historical memory. ■

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Fresh water of the Crimean Peninsula

Expert article • 3231

The water resources of Crimea are one of the leading factors for the stable development of the region. After the reunification of the Republic of Crimea with Russia in March 2014, the relations with Ukraine becoming more complicated. This affected all spheres of interaction, including water management.

Until 2014 Crimea provided itself with about 20% of its own fresh water resources. So, on average in 1990-2000 the total water resources of the Crimea were: water from the Dnieper River through the North Crimean Canal - 78.3%; natural river flow (ponds and reservoirs) – 11.8%; groundwater - 7.8%; marine waters – 2.1%. That is, Crimea received about 80% of fresh resources from the Dnieper water supplied through the North Crimean Canal.

The North Crimean Canal is a unique hydrotechnical complex (its main channel is 402.6 km long). The canal provided Crimea with water for more than 50 years. The cut off the water supply through the North Crimean Canal immediately affected the general balance of water resources, as a result of which the Water Management Complex of the Republic of Crimea faced the problem of finding additional sources of water. Since 2014 it has been necessary to focus on the internal capabilities of the peninsula (natural river and underground flows).

Climate is the principal factor in the formation of Crimean fresh waters. Atmospheric precipitation is the main source of accumulation and renewal of fresh water, evaporation plays the role of a regulator in the redistribution of water reserves.

Crimean rivers, despite their small size and the fact that most of them dry up in summer, still contribute much to the water balance. Fresh drinking water is distributed extremely unevenly across the territory of the Crimean peninsula.

The total own river runoff resources of the Crimea average are 1 km³/year, of which 85% are in the Mountain Crimea and 15%, in the Lowland Crimea and Kerch Peninsula. The contribution of river water, with natural-runoff reservoirs taken into account, is about 10%.

Natural runoff is not constant, depending on the hydrometeorological conditions of the area. The distribution of runoff, obeying the landscape-climatic zonality, corresponds to the distribution of precipitation. The altitudinal zonality of the Crimean Mountains ensures an increase in the average annual precipitation and a decrease in surface air temperatures with height. Characterized by natural fluctuations in water availability with a period of 4-7 years, when dry and watery periods alternate.

Thus, before 2014 the Crimean Peninsula had provided itself with its own fresh resources by about 20%, however, after the North Crimean Canal was blocked, the water collapse did not occur, because in 2015 precipitation was 20% above the climatic norm.

After 2015, a five-year period began, leading to serious water problems in 2020, when precipitation fell only 70% of the climatic norm. At the same time, during the previous 5 years, there was a trend towards an increase in the average annual values of surface air temperature and a decrease in the average annual precipitation (by 2°C and 11 mm per year, respectively).

In 2021, a favorable period began - atmospheric precipitation fell 130% of the climatic norm, which made it possible to fill the reservoirs of natural flow.

After 2014, the problem of water supply was solved by transferring water from reservoirs of natural flow to the eastern part of the peninsula, as well as by equipping new artesian water intakes - Prostornensky, Nezhinsky and Novogrigorevsky (Dzhankovsky and Nizhnegorsky regions of Crimea).

The artesian waters of the peninsula are an important strategic reserve in case of emergencies, and artesian wells should be operated with caution (since the reserves of these waters are not unlimited).

Excessive abstraction can lead to a decrease in the level of groundwater, the formation of depression funnels and the deterioration of water quality. Thus, in the North Sivash artesian basin, mineralization has increased by 1-4 g/dm³ from the moment of operation to the present.

It is impossible to solve once and for all the problem of Crimea's water supply at the expense of its own resources. The population of the Crimean peninsula is steadily growing and, accordingly, the number of consumers of water resources is increasing. At the same time, there are global climate changes that negatively affect the formation of natural runoff.

Dry years, such as 2020, in some regions of Crimea can lead to a humanitarian catastrophe. Without the Dnieper water, Eastern Crimea turned into a desert. The North Crimean Canal was built by the people of the entire Soviet Union, and then they could not imagine how much the population of Crimea, the peoples of Russia and Ukraine would have to endure.

At the end of February 2022, as a result of the use of force by the Russian Federation the dam was destroyed. In March Dnieper waters again began to flow into Crimea through the North Crimean Canal. ■

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Crisis situation of the tourism industry in Crimea

Expert article • 3232

Due to its unique natural features, historical monuments and rich cultural heritage, Crimea could be a real pearl among other tourist destinations of the Black Sea. However, the events of 2014 led to the complete international political, economic and transport isolation of the peninsula. As a result, the tourism industry, which previously formed the basis of the Crimean economy, found itself in a deep and protracted crisis. Since the quality of life of a significant part of the population of the peninsula was also affected, the Crimean tourism industry has become an important element of the socio-economic policy of Russia. At the same time, Russia was faced with the need to solve the vital problems of transport, energy and water supply to Crimea, which required huge financial costs. All this greatly impeded the restoration of the peninsula's tourism industry and the implementation of the plans announced by the Russian government to bring it out of the crisis.

In these conditions, the Russian government has chosen an information strategy of denying the existence of a crisis in the tourism industry in Crimea. For this purpose, the possibilities of all mass media were used to the maximum. The total expenditures of the state budget of Russia for the implementation of this information policy in the period from 2015 to 2020 amounted to more than 142 bln rubles (1.8 mln USD). This amount of funding allowed the Ministry of Resorts and Tourism of Crimea only in 2018-2019 to provide direct provision of 7,510 news for various online publications, 859 publications in print media, 962 news stories on TV, 66 interviews, 51 thematic programs on TV and radio, and also 12 press conferences. The total number of news reports in the Russian media, caused by these informational occasions, was up to 100 thousand per year. However, numerous distorted reports about allegedly record tourist flows to Crimea, hid the real problems of the tourism industry. Real tourist flows to the peninsula were significantly overestimated. At the same time, striving to keep the tourist flow, state organizations and enterprises of Russia began to provide their employees with vouchers to Crimea in 2014 (Rosneft, RusHydro, Russian Post). Also, free vouchers to the Crimean sanatoriums began to be included in the compulsory medical insurance programs for the population of Russia.

Over the past years, Russia has solved the complex transport and energy problems of the peninsula. However, more than two-thirds of the Crimean budget still comes from the federal budget.

The main problems of the tourism industry in Crimea have been and remain: high seasonality (100-120 days a year); low competitiveness in relation to other Russian and foreign resorts (high prices, low level of services); low investment and international isolation. Also new serious challenges are the catastrophic shortage of drinking water in the summer and the growing militarization of the peninsula.

The coronavirus pandemic and the associated with it travel restrictions have contributed to the development of domestic tourism not only in Russia. The non-recognition of Russian vaccines by the

World Health Organization, as well as the temporary suspension by Russia of direct air links with Turkey, Tanzania, and Egyptian resorts led to an unprecedented load of Crimea and other Russian resorts in 2021. At the same time, in the speech at the tourism session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (06/05/2021), the representative of the Russian hotel holding Safmar Plaza, Tatyana Weller, noted that "all the key parameters for creating a product that are determined by the state, – land use conditions, fiscal burden, the cost, terms and conditions of the loan are significantly higher than foreign ones. Therefore, any attempts to do something comparable in price and quality with foreign proposals make projects unprofitable already at the stage of developing a financial model".

However, the true indicator of the real state of the tourism industry in Russia as a whole was the restoration of direct flights with Turkey on June 22 and the resorts of Egypt on August 1, 2021. The volume of sales of travel packages to Turkey in June exceeded indicators of 2019 by 29%. At the same time, the share of Russian resorts fell to 15%. The same opening of Egyptian resorts in August led to an increase in demand for tourist tours to Egypt by 10 times, which is 5 times higher than in 2019. Moreover, the price of a tourist package in Crimea for tourists from Russia is even 50% higher than in Turkey.

All this confirms the impossibility of a successful exit of the tourist destination and the industry as a whole from the crisis under conditions of strict government regulation, in which the real advantages of the tourist destination and a competitive price-quality ratio are replaced by an information strategy of denying the existence of the crisis. ■

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Cultural heritage under threat in Ukraine

Expert article • 3233

In Ukraine, millions of people have been forced to flee their homes, while the Russian Armed Forces continue to bombard cities and civilian infrastructure. However, Russia's military operations in Ukraine also pose a threat to the country's historical, cultural, and natural heritage. The very first days of the invasion saw the destruction of the Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum, near Kyiv, which housed dozens of works by Maria Prymachenko. Born at the beginning of the 20th century, Prymachenko was a Ukrainian folk artist who worked in the naïve art style. Her drawings were displayed at the 1937 International Fair in Paris. Prymachenko's dreamlike paintings, full of nonexistent creatures and plans, were admired by such artists as Pablo Picasso.

Ukraine is home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The ones currently under the greatest threat are those located in Kyiv: the Pechersk Lavra and the Saint-Sophia Cathedral. The latter dates back to the early 11th century, and contains examples of stunning frescoes and mosaics that have survived from the 11th and 12th centuries. Kyiv is one of the main targets attacked by the Russian Armed Forces, and the city is being shelled on a regular basis.

In addition to the sites located in Kyiv, the UNESCO list includes the Old Town in Lviv, the Wooden *Tserkvas* of the Carpathian Region, and the Residence of Bukovinian and Dalmatian Metropolitans in Chernivtsi, among others. These sites are some distance away from current hostilities, but it is difficult to predict how the war in Ukraine will progress.

Furthermore, the official tentative UNESCO list (sites that may be nominated for inclusion in the main list) contains additional locations in Ukraine. Among them are sites that are now directly in the zone of active hostilities, such as the historic center of Chernihiv, the Kamyana Mohyla archaeological site, the constructivist Derzhprom building in Kharkiv, completed in 1928, and the Askania-Nova biosphere reserve in the Kherson Oblast.

These sites are under serious threat. On February 28, Russian bombardment of Chernihiv destroyed buildings in the direct vicinity of the Transfiguration Cathedral. The cathedral survived the Mongol invasion, but will it survive Russian aggression? Another city currently under bombardment is Kharkiv, where the regional administration building, located near Derzhprom, was destroyed. Similarly, sites in Mykolaiv, Odesa, and other cities are under grave threat.

A range of efforts are being undertaken in Ukraine to protect the country's material culture. Where possible, objects such as free-standing monuments are shielded with protective and fire-retardant materials, while historical fittings and museum collections are removed and stored in bomb shelters. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance has announced the creation of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Rescue Team, whose main objectives include the protection of museum collections.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy (MCIP) has assured that it remains in contact with cultural institutions and

that the exhibits and collections are being moved to secure locations. Additionally, the MCIP has asked the public not to disseminate the methods used to secure museums or the locations where collections are stored, due to security concerns. Since the start of the invasion, UNESCO has called for the protection of Ukraine's cultural heritage. The organization is working with Ukrainian authorities to mark the country's most important sites with a Blue Shield, the international symbol used to protect cultural property during armed conflict. The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy has also launched a dedicated website for the purpose of documenting damage. Individuals who have witnessed the destruction of cultural heritage sites can upload photographic evidence, which will then be verified and submitted to the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

The protection of cultural heritage is regulated by the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two protocols. The document ensures the inviolability of cultural property that has been granted special protection. But will Russian forces, who do not hesitate to attack regular people, hesitate to attack a church or a museum? ■

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Colonization through destruction and distortion: the case of the Bakhchisaray Khan's Palace

Expert article • 3234

The most glaring example of a violation of international humanitarian law in the field of cultural heritage protection is the situation in the Bakhchisaray Khan's Palace (Palace of Crimean Khans), the main residence of the Crimean Khanate's rulers (from the first third of the XVI up to the end of the XVIII century), unique monument of Crimean Tatars' palace architecture, the only palace complex of the Chingizid dynasty in the world preserved up to date.

Over the past 8 years since the occupation of the Crimea by Russia the human rights defenders have been consistently recording gross violations of human rights in this territory. Even today Russia, as a legal successor to the USSR and the Russian Empire, conducts a discriminatory policy towards the Crimean Tatars, who are indigenous people of Ukraine, aimed at suppressing the will, the dignity of the nation, at their forced relocation and further assimilation.

According to the provisions of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) (hereinafter referred to as the "Convention"), the State which carried out the occupation is obliged to ensure the proper protection of and respect for cultural property. Article 4 hereof prohibits the use of such valuables, facilities for their protection and directly adjacent areas for purposes, which can lead to these values' destruction or damage, and includes a provision to prevent any acts of vandalism against cultural property.

The monuments of the complex certainly required restoration. But it should have been carried out with the aim of preserving its historical authenticity and the authenticity of its components and elements, with the most complete preservation of its artistic, historical, scientific value, as well as its interconnectedness with the surrounding architectural and landscape environment. The transformation of a monument or the substitution of its original parts with new parts shall be allowed only provided it is the only possibility of preserving the monument or if the transformation does not diminish the cultural historical, artistic, scientific value of the monument.

The following two factors play a decisive role here:

1. The application of basic principles of the restoration works' scientific nature, of the reasonableness of the determining of the restoration method, of the principle of reversibility of the performed work.
2. The use of the authentic building materials and technologies, which allows perseverance of the authenticity of the object as much as possible.

These factors are ultimately important, because authenticity is fundamental in many ways. An ancient building, replaced by a new copy, loses its value as a historical witness of the past, retaining only the value of a visual illustration. It no longer exists as a monument of material culture.

What has been happening at the Khan's palace in Bakhchisaray (Crimea, Ukraine)?

Since 2016 the work has been being carried out, that have nothing in common with restoration works and the aforementioned principles of restoration. The scale of destruction is truly appalling:

- all the works have been being conducted without any thorough and comprehensive scientific research that must be done prior the restoration works and be a rationale for any restorative interferences.
- the Great Khan's Mosque ("Buyuk Khan Jami"), the oldest monument of the complex (1533), was the one on which the occupation authorities began the works that not only caused the outrage of Crimean activists, but also became the subject of relevant reports of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The XVIII-XIX centuries roof complex of the Mosque was destructed in autumn - winter 2016-2017. The authentic oak beams of the roofing were dismantled and sawn; they were then replaced with modern building materials, namely composite beams made using OSB technology with a reinforced concrete belt. According to the so-called project, 100% of the artisan old roof tiles (historically called "Tatarka") were replaced with Spanish factory-made antique-stylized tiles. At the same time, the ancient technology of putting the tiles on clay was completely destroyed and modern mounts were used instead.
- the works are carried out using heavy construction equipment with the use of jackhammers, which led to vibrations and loss of part of the decoration and paintings of the walls.
- as a rule, roof dismantling work at the objects of complex are conducted at autumn - winter season, when the level of precipitations is raising. Due to the lack of a system that would protect from precipitation, the moisture penetrates the monuments.
- all of the aforementioned violations and the additional load on the walls and the base of the buildings have already led to deformations. As a result, in 2018 the stained-glass windows shattered and numerous gaps and cracks appeared on the northern facade of the Mosque, the facade of the Retinue Building. There is also a crack on the tilted East Minaret.
- in 2018 a steel canopy was installed over the Khan Palace main building without any necessary research including geological survey. Experts have already spoken about the threat of a possible tilt of this steel canopy.
- at the beginning of February 2022, the reasons that were written above and the dismantling of hard surface and soil that has been being carried out in immediate proximity to the ancient buildings led to the subsidence and horizontal movement of soils. As a

result, the north-eastern corner of the Retinue building was torn off from the complex wall, which was accompanied by spiral deformation and appearance of wide and deep cracks.

- to date, the so-called "restoration work" has been targeted at almost all objects of the complex.
- today Khan Palace is a complex of architectural and historical monuments and archeological objects. As a monument of the archeology, Khan Palace can cover a larger area than the area of the museum, which was founded on the basis of architectural and historical monuments. But the existence of the archaeological heritage of the complex is not recognized by the occupation authorities. It leads to carrying out of the building works without archeological excavation and the losses of cultural treasures that are hidden in the soil that are thrown away without any control.

Experts at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in Ukraine concluded that the works carried out by the Russian Federation in the complex are not of a restorative nature; they are typical of a new construction and have led to disfigurement, as well as irreparable loss of authentic elements of the ancient architecture that is part of the unique complex "Khan's Palace", which is included in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List.

The careful concealment by the Russian occupation authorities of all the circumstances connected with the works on the territory of the Khan Palace further strengthens the suspicions of the experts that a real threat of destruction is hanging over the unique historical and architectural monument of The Crimean Tatar people.

Despite the efforts and active actions of the concerned Crimean activists, of Ukrainian diplomats, who put this issue on the agenda of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in March 2018 and included it to a report on the worsening situation with the protection of cultural heritage in Russia-occupied Crimea, the work on the territory of the Bakhchisaray Palace has not stopped.

Monuments at all times were destroyed and demolished for ideological reasons, in order to destroy the symbolism of the hated past.

After the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944, their culture was completely destroyed: "toponymic repressions" were carried out on the peninsula, the Soviets destroyed Crimean Tatar monuments and cemeteries, burned manuscripts and books, turned mosques into movie theaters and shops. Large-scale falsification of the history of the peninsula, which led to the emergence and existence to this day of many myths, continues even now, aiming to justify the criminal decisions of the Soviet regime.

After such an almost total elimination, the miraculously preserved Bakhchisaray Khan's palace became for the Crimean Tatar people, especially during and after their return to their homeland, not only a confirmation of their origin and development of their statehood on this territory, but also a sacred symbol of revival on their native land.

The Russian Federation, as the successor of the former USSR and the Russian Empire, again resorted to manipulation and direct lies, trying to justify the occupation with allegedly "historical arguments", most of which are misinformation and propaganda. Modern-Russia's humanitarian policy in the occupied territory aims to destroy the historical and cultural ties between the peninsula and mainland Ukraine, and to include Crimea in the Russian ideological paradigm.

Among those desperately needing protection are the objects of Crimean Tatar history and culture that "do not fit" into the Russian ideology; the true, unfalsified history of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar people, the historical memory of the indigenous people of the peninsula about their statehood. ■

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Enemies and traitors: The role of Ukraine in the Soviet Union dissolution

Expert article • 3235

Communication analysis of the information disseminated in the context of the USSR dissolution 30th anniversary revealed major tools and narratives adopted for information campaigns by pro-Kremlin media. Implementing its long-time tradition to manipulate information Russian regime used the anniversary of the Soviet Union collapse to once again inject historical narratives demonizing the role of the former Soviet republic Ukraine in the final dissolution of the Union. Opensource monitoring tool developed by DebunkEU.org enabled a massive analysis of the Russian language media textual and audio-visual content automatically collected in the digital landscape during the period of August 2021 and January 2022. The retrieved information content was automatically attributed to quantitative DebunkReach® parameters (a combined number of the size of the readership of the domain, social interactions and backlinks) and was then reviewed manually by analysts Agnė Eidimaitė and Magdalena Wilczyńska in order to identify qualitative parameters of the information such as sentiment, narratives and messages. The results of information analysis demonstrated that Russian media particular techniques applied more often than others while undermining historical facts related with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Pro-Kremlin media used hyperbolization in presenting harmful content in exaggerated manner or providing two deliberately exacerbated opposite sides. The two other prevailing techniques adopted in Russian media selection (presenting selected, specific information out of context, intentionally omitting important aspects of the situation) and association (entailing using quotes/confirmations/endorsements of well-known figures, among other methods). These disinformation techniques applied by Kremlin media helped to program the narratives avoiding overwriting of history. In example, articles undermining referendum in the Baltic states blamed national governments holding illegal polls based on the Soviet law. However, media on purpose omit information regarding existing national constitutions and judgements of national supreme courts in the Baltic states.

The analysis shows that Russian media presented the collapse of the USSR as the result of foreign powers and elites' actions, ignoring the objective facts regarding de facto economic, political and social situation in the country. In analysed potentially harmful pro-Kremlin media content several false claims on responsibility of many countries and governments were detected. Media presented the United States, Ukraine and the Baltic States as the major traitors and enemies of the dissolving Soviet Union. Almost all post-Soviet states in the context of the USSR dissolution are presented as traitors of idea of Union in pro-Kremlin media. Although Ukraine attracted more focus in the media coverage of 1991 events in the USSR than others.

The first widespread narrative disseminated in Russian media focuses to accusations of the Soviet elites of Ukrainian background for the collapse of the Soviet Union (e.g. "Soviet authorities started the deconstruction process before USSR collapse" keeping in mind Khrushchev's generous gift of Crimea to Ukraine). The second narrative focuses on the consequences of the collapse of the USSR, putting the blame on the post-Soviet states and the wide range of social and economic tragedy their exit from the USSR caused. Only in the case of Ukraine the pro-Kremlin media applied and circulated a specific historical narrative focusing on independence movement in the post II WW years. Under this message Ukraine's independence movement entitled as fascists movement that followed (and still follows) Bandera's "Nazi" ideology. Historical narratives in pro-Kremlin media aimed to present Ukraine as a failing state that was not able to survive without Russia and was wrongly convinced that it could exist as independent state. Another common narrative detected in Russian media undermined Ukraine as a sovereign state. Media messages attempted any problems appearing in modern Ukraine - political, energy or economical – to portray in the context of Soviet Union dissolution. Ukraine is presented as a weak state lead by irrational and incompetent politicians.

Worth to mention that similarly to the case of Ukraine, the Baltic States in pro-Kremlin media messages were also blamed for the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the most prevailing narratives and sub-narratives focused on the situation in the Baltic countries after the dissolution of the USSR. Major part of articles focused on presenting the Baltic States as socially and economically failing countries (i.e., deteriorating energy safety after the collapse, social inequalities, rising fascism movements also mentioned). Several articles claimed the collapse of the USSR led to the great tragedy, discrimination of Russian minority in Baltic states, people became much more unhappy, diminished global peace and stability.

The analysis of pro-Kremlin media message in the context of the anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union demonstrates how inaccurate versions of history can be used by regime to justify current geopolitical stances in a highly damaging way. ■



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A paranoid war with absurd justifications

Expert article • 3236

On March 5, Russia passed a law imposing a jail term of up to 15 years for spreading intentionally “fake” news about the military, stepping up the information war over the military campaign in Ukraine ([a link](#)). Simultaneously, when the Kremlin aims at restricting the free distribution of information in Russia, the Kremlin itself is guilty of deliberately spreading absurd justifications for the escalation of the Ukraine war. I will mention five of these justifications below.

1. On February 22, President Vladimir Putin ordered his defense ministry to dispatch Russian forces to “perform peacekeeping functions” in eastern Ukraine’s two breakaway regions ([a link](#)). More than 10,000 soldiers and civilians have already died during the first four weeks of Putin’s two-day operation. If this campaign represents Russia’s peacekeeping operation, who even needs the word “war”?

2. On February 24, President Putin declared Russia could not feel safe, develop and exist because of what he claimed was a constant threat from modern Ukraine ([a link](#)). This argument is absurd as well. Ukraine did not threaten Russia militarily and Ukraine did not attack Russia – the situation was vice versa. Even Ukraine’s objective of NATO membership was more of a long-term desire rather than a concrete goal since Russia’s leadership must have been aware of the fact that the NATO does not accept any new members which are involved in a war and the war in eastern Ukraine has been going on since 2014 because of Russia. The most significant threat from Ukraine was that Ukraine’s integration towards the West would have signaled the Kremlin’s shrinking sphere of influence, and the Kremlin’s total value defeat. In other words, if one of Russia’s brotherly nations chooses to integrate towards the West rather than towards the Kremlin, it signals that there is something fundamentally wrong with the values of the Putin regime.

3. On February 24, President Putin argued that Ukraine is run by “a gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis” ([a link](#)). Putin’s reference to neo-Nazis is absurd since Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyi is a Russian-speaking Jew ([a link](#)). In the eyes of the global community, Russia’s President Putin meets the definition of a Nazi – that is, “a harshly domineering, dictatorial or intolerant person” – not Ukraine’s President Zelenskyi ([a link](#)). A Jewish neo-Nazi is simply an absurd accusation. I am confident that Ukraine’s President Zelenskyi would be civilized enough not to call his Russian counterpart as a neo-Bolshevik. Bolsheviks invaded Ukraine a century ago.

4. On March 4, Defense Ministry Spokesman Igor Konashenkov said that “the Kiev nationalist regime attempted to implement a monstrous provocation on the territory adjacent to the [Zaporozhskaya nuclear] power plant” ([a link](#)). It is impossible to believe that any Ukrainian

group would be ready to cause a nuclear disaster in its own country ([a link](#)). Moreover, one should not forget that Ukraine has 15 nuclear reactors and the six nuclear power reactors in Zaporizhzhia produce a great part of Ukraine’s electricity. The Ukrainian nationalists would not shoot themselves in the foot by destroying the single main source of electricity in their country ([a link](#)).

5. On March 10, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that Russia did not attack Ukraine ([a link](#)). Understandably, it is difficult to find a diplomatic solution in a situation where the parties’ views on events are fundamentally different, or to put it differently, it is hard to believe that there is any possibility of finding a diplomatic solution if Russia denies the facts. The most frightening thing is if the Russian leadership truly believes in its own distorted reality.

More than a century ago, US Senator Hiram Warren Johnson stated that “the first casualty when war comes is truth” ([a link](#)). In fact, Russia sacrificed the truth even before the war in Ukraine began in 2014. The sacrifice of the truth in Russia began when some media oligarchs, such as Boris Berezovski and Vladimir Gusinski, were put aside when Putin was lifted to power. Despite the liquidation of the media oligarchs of that time, Putin must have understood the significance of free media as he stated the following in the nation of state speech more than two decades ago ([a link](#)): “But without a truly free media, Russian democracy cannot survive and a civil society cannot be created”. Everyone can form his or her own opinion on the state of the free media in Russia and thus predict the future development of Russia.

If truth is the first victim of war, in this war, the ordinary Russians are victims of the war as well. I do not think that the Russians in a democratic Russia would have allowed their president to start a military campaign against Ukraine. As a consequence of the escalation of the Ukraine war, a new iron curtain is falling over Russia and its allies. Moreover, Russia will take another step towards a dictatorship by increasing control in the country. Russia’s economy and its citizens’ well-being will ultimately suffer. It remains to be seen whether the Ukraine war will stop in Ukraine or whether the war will escalate in Europe or even beyond.

All in all, the people of Ukraine are the greatest victims of this irrational, brutal and unprovoked war. The majority of the Ukrainian and Western analysts did not expect that Putin’s Russia would be ready to start a full-scale war against Ukraine in the twenty-first century. At this stage, it is impossible to predict what will be the future development of Ukraine. What is certain, however, is that this war will leave a permanent wound in Ukraine–Russia relations and in Russia’s relations with the West and the European security system. The healing process may only start when Putin is no longer the president of Russia.

Expert article • 3236

I end this article with the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. ([a link](#)): *“If you fail to act now, history will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”* Now, it is time for the good people to step forward – particularly in Russia. Ignorance or fear are not acceptable excuses for inaction. If you fear now, you will have to carry the shame for the rest of your lives. ■

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Co-funded by
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