Racism, Crimea and Crimean Tatars

https://www.e-ir.info/2020/12/06/racism-crimea-and-crimean-tatars/

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A large number of western historians of 'Russia' and some political scientists working on Russia supported the incorporation of Crimea into Russia based on the argument that the peninsula 'had always been Russian' (see Zhuk 2014). Many agreed with Putin that an injustice had been resolved through Crimea's 'repatriation' to Russia (Sakwa 2016, 24). This view of Crimea has its origins in western historiography of 'Russia,' which was analysed in chapter 1. Western scholarly arguments supporting a Russian Crimea are the same as those of the Russian leadership and rest on the peninsula being part of 'Kievan Russia' (Kyiv Rus) and a long period of Russian rule over Crimea since the late eighteenth century, which deny that Kyivan Rus was part of Ukrainian history and ignore the far longer Tatar history in Crimea. This chapter disagrees with these claims. Based on a civic understanding of what constitutes the history of a nation-state, Kyiv Rus should be understood as part of Ukrainian history. This chapter argues that the Tatars are the indigenous people of Crimea.

Although Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea has been covered in a multitude of scholarly publications, the after-effects of life under Russian occupation have not. There are very few scholarly studies of how Russia's occupation has impacted Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians (see Coynash and Charron 2019; Skrypnyk 2019). Racism towards Crimean Tatars had always existed within the Soviet Communist Party and continues within Russian nationalists. If there is very little scholarly work on the plight of Crimean Tatars, the Ukrainian minority in Crimea is totally ignored (as it is in the Donbas). Russification and Sovietisation have followed Russia's annexation of Crimea and parts of the Donbas (Violations of human rights and international crimes during the war in the Donbass 2018; Coynash and Charron 2019; Skrypnyk 2019). 50.5% of Ukrainians believe that the rights of Ukrainian speakers are infringed in Russian-occupied Crimea and the Donbas, with 18.6% disagreeing (Ukrayinska mova: shlyakh u nezalezhniy Ukrayini 2020).

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first two provide a theoretical introduction to boundaries and homelands, and a broad definition of racism based on the context of Crimea with an analysis of Russian and Ukrainian racism towards Crimean Tatars. The third section analyses genocide of Crimean Tatars and provides arguments for why they should be viewed as the indigenous people of Crimea. The fourth section surveys Russian territorial claims towards Crimea since 1991. The final section investigates Crimea under Russian occupation and how this has impacted Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians.

Boundaries and Homelands

Boundaries are important to the formation of historical, natural, cultural, political, economic and symbolic national identities. Borders are a 'manifestation of socio-spatial consciousness' (Paasi 1995, 43). Nation-building binds the inhabitants of a region to a territory and inculcates a primary loyalty to the nation-state over other forms of identity. States promote a 'We' through memory politics that can encompass landscapes, heritage, cultural products, texts, maps, and memorials. 'Boundaries make a difference. Social life is full of boundaries which give direction to existence, and which locate that existence' (Passi 1995, 48–49). In some regions of Ukraine, such as the Donbas and Crimea, nostalgia for the former USSR and pro-Russian sentiments provided support for the Russian World and

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Russian-backed separatism in 2014. Nevertheless, a majority of Ukrainians expressed an allegiance to (civic or civic-ethnic) Ukraine over loyalties to the Russian World and 'New Russia.'

The 'We' formed by nation-building is differentiated from the foreign 'Other.' Borders dramatise differences between those inside and outside the nation-state (Barth 1969). Identity is rooted in difference from neighbours (Howard, 1995, 288). Who constitutes the 'We' is made more difficult in border regions, such as the Donbas, where contestation often rests on who settled the region first and who the indigenous peoples are. Asserting who is indigenous in the Donbas is problematic because the region's history began in the late nineteenth century. Andrew Wilson (2016, 636) believes there are few indigenous locals because 'almost everyone is new – there is no real local myth of the "land of our fathers." Soviet identity put down deep roots in the Donbas because nothing much came before it.' The Donbas is therefore similar to Belarus where weak ethnic identities and pre-Soviet historical memory provided space for Alyaksandr Lukashenka to monopolise Soviet Belarusian nationalism until the 2020 revolution (Leshchenko 1998).

Russian and Ukrainian historians have put forward conflicting descriptions of who settled the Donbas first, and Russian and Ukrainian histories of the Donbas 'are mutually contradictory at almost every point' (Wilson 1995, 282). Russian historians and nationalists (imperialists) claim the Donbas was always 'Russian' and multi-national. Cossacks from the Don region of Russia are prominent in the leadership of the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR), one of two Russian proxy enclaves it controls in the Donbas. Ukrainian historians claim that the first settlers were Ukrainian Cossack territories who migrated from Zaporizhzhya and Dnipropetrovsk *oblasts*. The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory has published research showing that the Donbas region was settled by Ukrainians before the launch of nineteenth-century industrialisation (Vyatrovych et al 2018).

In 1917–1918, the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) did not control the Donbas because it was strongly under the influence of the Bolsheviks (Velychenko 2014). The Donbas was included in the Ukrainian SSR by Soviet leader Lenin against the wishes of the local Bolsheviks who had established a quasi-independent Donetsk-Krivyy Rih Soviet Republic; the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) (the second Donbas enclave controlled by Russia) claims to be its successor. The Donbas experienced major population changes in the 1930s and 1940s, when the *Holodomor* and Nazi occupation murdered millions of its inhabitants. After World War II, the Donbas was settled by large numbers of people from other regions of the USSR, who were sent to work in its coal miners and industrial plants. The effect of this population change was that the 'region's pre-Soviet Cossack agricultural history died with the *Holodomor*' (Wilson 2016, 636).

Following the independence of former colonies, contestation often continues with the former imperial power over a range of issues, as can be seen with Russia and Ukraine. Michael Mann (1993, 123) writes, 'When a state no longer has arbitrary power over its own borders its sovereignty has indeed eroded.' Russia has controlled its border with Ukraine since 2014 to provide it with direct access to the region of the Donbas (DNR, LNR) it occupies. President Putin refuses to return control of the border to Ukraine until the DNR and LNR are given 'special (constitutional) status' within a federalised Ukraine.

Anthony D. Smith (1981) believes that war is one of the chief forces that has shaped ethnicity. Prolonged war strengthens national consciousness and weakens the cohesion of multi-national empires. Wars have traditionally moulded high levels of ethnic consciousness and served to harden the national space (Williams and Smith 1983). Since 2014, the Russian-Ukrainian War has produced dramatic changes in Ukrainian identity (see Kulyk 2016, 2018, 2019; Konsolidatsiya Ukrayinskoho Suspilstva: Vyklyky, Mozhlyvosti, Shlyakhy 2016; Osnovni Zasady ta Shlyakhy Formuvannya Spilnoyi Identychnosti Hromadyan Ukrayiny 2017).

Elie Kedourie (1979, 125) describe borders as 'established by power and maintained by the constant and known readiness to defend them by arms.' Wars and conflicts have often gone hand in hand with the creation of nation-states. Indeed, as Will Kymlicka (1997, 19) points out, 'The origins of virtually every state and virtually every political boundary, are tainted by conquest or other injustices.'

Nationalist struggles to control lands believed to constitute the homeland are a form of construction and interpretation

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of the nation-state's social space. The most bitter struggles between ethnic groups are often in border areas. Some of the most brutal fighting took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina following the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In the Tsarist Russian Empire, the extreme Russian nationalist (imperialist) 'Black Hundreds' had bases in Ukraine, and its enemies were Ukrainian and Polish nationalists and Jews (Shkandrij 2001, 166). Conflict in Northern Ireland lasted three decades from the late 1960s to late 1990s.

Williams and Smith (1983) describe eight dimensions of national territory, of which boundaries are one. Borders are not always 'natural frontiers' because they can be 'artificial' and incorporate populations of the former imperial nation who baulk at being re-defined as 'national minorities.' A good example of this would be the Russian minority in Ukraine (see Fournier 2010). Nationalism is 'always a struggle for control of land' and 'a mode of constructing and interpreting social space' (Williams and Smith 1983, 502).

Wars of independence are usually followed by 'a war for borders' (Judah 2014). A vicious Polish-Ukrainian border war took place between 1918, when the Austrian-Hungarian empire disintegrated (Magocsi 2010, 548–552) and 1947, when the Ukrainian minority in Poland was ethnically cleansed in Operation Vistula (*Akcja 'Wisła'*). Magocsi (2010, 681–682) estimates that 50,000 Poles and 20,000 Ukrainians died in the Polish-Ukrainian War. In 1991, Ukraine and Russia left the USSR in a peaceful manner without any violent conflict; nevertheless, Russia challenged Ukrainian sovereignty over the Crimea and the port of Sevastopol throughout the post-Soviet era (see the fourth section of this chapter). Ukraine and Russia signed a border treaty in 1997, but it 'brought little in the way of friendship, opposed as it was by many Russian elites,' and the treaty had 'little impact on Ukrainian-Russian relations' (D'Anieri 2019, 258). In 2014, Russia launched a war over Ukraine's southeastern borders. Western Ukrainians fought a western border war with Poland, and eastern Ukrainians are primarily fighting an eastern border war with Russia.

Williams and Smith (1983) include homeland in their different dimensions of national territory as an area of contestation. A 'historic homeland' is distinctive and unique to each national identity with nations belonging to certain territories. Nationalists seek to bring congruence to the nation and territory. Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars accepted that their homeland was the territory of the former Ukrainian SSR, including Crimea.

Russians, on the other hand, have never been reconciled with the borders of the Russian Federation because Soviet and Russian identity were one and the same in the USSR (see Kuzio 2007). Russian civic identity, confined to the Russian Federation, proved to be weak in the 1990s (Tolz 1998a, 1998b). Russian nationalists (imperialists) imagine their homeland as Solzhenitsyn's Russian Union, Putin's Russian World, the former USSR, Eurasia, CIS Customs Union (since 2015, the Eurasian Economic Union), or a mix of these. A majority of Russians (and not just their leaders) believe that Ukraine is part of the 'Russian' homeland and the Russian World.

Comparative Racism and Crimea

Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (1998, 823) write, 'Racism is an ideology defined of specific social and political relationships of dominance, subordination, and privilege.' Racism is therefore an integral part of colonialism and orientalism. As discussed in this chapter and chapter 3, the tendency to infantilise colonised people was commonplace in European colonies and continues to be found in Russia's chauvinistic belief in its cultural and racial superiority over its neighbours, particularly towards Ukraine and Belarus (Wu 2018, 15; Kuzio 2020a).

Anti-Semitism and racism have always co-existed in colonialism in what Neil MacMaster (2000) describes as the 'Africanisation' of Jews. This could be seen in Tsarist Russian nationalistic (imperialistic) groups such as the Russian Black Hundreds and in nationalist (imperialistic) groups in the contemporary era (Shekhovtsov 2017; Glazyev 2019). During the height of the race to build empires in 1875–1914, racist policies in European colonies returned to the metropolis through racist and anti-Semitic prejudices and attitudes that had built up overseas. Black people and Jews were both depicted in a negative manner. While Black people were depicted as inferior, lazy, dirty, of low intelligence, and needing a firm hand, Jews were dangerous and a threat because they constituted a powerful and scheming group. Anti-Zionism, a camouflaged form of anti-Semitism, was a staple of Soviet propaganda and nationality policies during the last three decades of the USSR and continues to flourish in the DNR and LNR (on anti-

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Zionism, see Kuzio 2017c, 118–140).

Stigmatisation of the Irish in Britain replicates the manner in which Ukrainians were subjected to chauvinism in Tsarist Russia, the USSR, the Russian Federation, and Russian-occupied Crimea and Donbas (see Kuzio 2020a). Racist slurs against the Irish were similar to those made against Ukrainians. Imperialists and colonialists have traditionally disparaged the capabilities of their former colonies to lead independent states because 'natives' are supposedly in need of an 'elder brother' to guide them in the modern world.

Racial superiority of the Russian language and culture as representative of modernity were promoted by the Tsarist Empire and Soviet Union. Irish Catholics were viewed as backward because of their rural and peasant backgrounds (Laughlin 2001). The Ukrainian and Gaelic languages were backward and rural objects of derision with no place in the modern world. Russification and Anglicisation were progressive steps that gave Ukrainians and Irish access to the modern world and 'higher' Russian/Soviet and British civilisations. Post-colonial states have the means to access the modern world directly without an imperial intermediary.

The Russians and British disparaged the very concept of Ukrainians and Irish being capable of running independent states. When Ukraine and Ireland became independent states, long struggles for independence were given central place in their memory politics, education, symbolism and monuments. Heroes were uncritically praised, and foreign imperialists condemned.

Following the 2004 Orange Revolution, President Yushchenko prioritised memory politics in the *Holodomor* and nationalist groups and partisans from the 1940s, but these continued alongside Soviet historical myths, such as the Great Patriotic War. Violent repression of the 2013–2014 Euromaidan Revolution and Russian military aggression radicalised Ukrainian memory politics and the introduction of de-communisation modelled on what had taken place earlier in central-eastern Europe and the three Baltic states (Ukrainian Parliament 2015b, Ukrainian Parliament 2015c, Ukrainian Parliament 2015d, Ukrainian Parliament 2015e). De-communisation (1) rehabilitated myriad Ukrainian political groups that had fought for Ukrainian independence in the twentieth century, (2) replaced Soviet and contemporary Russian bombastic celebrations of victory in the Great Patriotic War with commemoration of the tragedy and human suffering of World War II and the crime of the Holocaust, (3) opened Soviet secret services archives, and (4) banned and removed Soviet and Nazi symbols and monuments.

Kymlicka (1996, 96–99) discusses how the first settlers in conquered territories are the colonial vanguard. Immigrants arrived later in societies created by settler colonialism. When those who have been conquered fight back and demand their rights, settler colonialists dig in and increase their repression of colonised indigenous peoples. Serhy Yekelchyk's (2019) exploration of what he defines as 'reactive settler nationalism' in Crimea is a useful tool with which to integrate Russian-Crimean relations into post-colonial studies. Russian settlers in Crimea increased during the post-war era after Crimean Tatars were ethnically cleansed in 1944. Putin's 'unique imperial restoration is based on implicit approval of this particular Stalinist crime and empowerment of Russophone Crimean's as the avant-garde of Russia's resistance to the West' (Yekelchyk 2019, 323).

From the late 1980s, when Crimean Tatars began returning to Crimea in large numbers, reactive settler nationalism mobilised against the mythical threats of 'Ukrainian nationalism' and 'Tatarisation.' As in earlier European colonies, settler nationalists feared being displaced by the indigenous people – Crimean Tatars – and they mobilised 'by embracing a regional political identity linked to the imperial (post war) Soviet past' (Yekelchyk 2019, 313). Colonial settlers supported Soviet allegations and Russian nationalist (imperialist) stereotypes of Crimean Tatars, did not welcome the return of Tatars to Crimea, and never fully reconciled themselves to living in independent Ukraine. Settler colonialists took on board Soviet accusations of 'traitors,' 'bandits,' and 'uncivilised' Crimean Tatars.

Settler colonialists in Crimea mobilised against the threat to the Soviet imperial hierarchy, where the Russian language and culture were hegemonic and where Tatar and Ukrainian were provincial and slated to disappear (Fournier 2010). Settler colonialists re-invented themselves as 'disadvantaged aboriginals' (Yekelchyk 2019). The Party of Regions and its Crimean nationalist-separatist allies positioned themselves as the defenders of Russian speakers against mythical threats of 'Tatarisation' and 'Ukrainianisation.'

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In the decade prior to 2014, Ukraine's regional tensions were inflamed by US and Russian political consultants. In 2005, US Republican Party strategist Paul Manafort was hired by the Party of Regions and worked in Ukraine for the next decade. In 2015, he was head of Trump's election campaign. In March 2019, Manafort was sentenced to 47 months in jail and again to another 43 months, or a total of 90 months on a variety of criminal charges.

Manafort imported to Ukraine the Republican Party's 'Southern Strategy.' Until the early 1960s, whites in the US south had largely voted for the Democratic Party because they associated President Abraham Lincoln's Republican Party with the emancipation of slaves during the US Civil War. The Republican Party's 'Southern Strategy' targeted white voters in the US south who were opposed to racial equality and voting rights for African Americans. Manafort re-formulated the Republican Party's 'Southern Strategy' from a defence of white racist privilege over African Americans into a defence of Russian settler colonialist hegemony over Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars (Motyl 2015).

Manafort's 'Southern Strategy' inflamed regional tensions by mobilising Russians and Russian speakers against enemy 'Others' – western Ukrainians, 'Ukrainian nationalists,' 'fascists,' NATO, and the Euromaidan. Pro-Russian forces in Ukraine used Soviet-era anti-fascist rhetoric as a means to portray themselves as the defenders of Russian speakers who were preventing 'civil war' and bloodshed if 'Ukrainian nationalists' took power (Osipan 2015). These pro-Russian forces included:

1. Party of Regions;
2. Communist Party of Ukraine;
3. Progressive Socialist Party;
4. Extremist Russian nationalist Donbas-based groups, such as Donbas Against Neo-Fascism and Donetsk Republic (see Na terrritorii Donetskoy oblasty deystvovaly voyennye lagerya DNR s polnym vooruzheniyem s 2009 goda 2014);
5. Odesa-based extremist Russian nationalist party *Rodina*;
6. Crimean nationalist-separatist parties Russian Unity, Russia Bloc, Soyuz, and Russian Community of the Crimea.

The Party of Regions and its Russian nationalist allies in Ukraine 'aimed at artificially escalating conflict and increasing hostility towards the rest of the country on the part of the population of the south-east regions of Ukraine' (Osipan 2015, 133). The US Embassy in Ukraine reported that Russian support for Crimean nationalist-separatists 'increased communal tensions in Crimea,' fanning xenophobia and racism towards Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars by manipulating fears over the threats posed by the Ukrainian language and NATO to focus 'on shaping public perceptions and controlling the information space' (Ukraine: The Russia Factor in Crimea – Ukraine's "Soft Underbelly?").

One aspect of Manafort's Ukrainian 'Southern Strategy' was to increase Ukrainian nationalist *Svoboda* (Freedom) Party's popularity and, by doing so, provide the Party of Regions with 'fascist' opponents against whom it could mobilise Russian speakers. The plan was to engineer President Viktor Yanukovych to face *Svoboda* leader Oleh Tyahnybok in the second round of the 2015 presidential elections, where Russian speaking voters would be mobilised *against* the 'fascist' candidate (the 2015 election did not take place because Yanukovych fled from Kyiv, and pre-term presidential elections were held in May 2014). This tactic was a re-run of the 1999 elections, which Kuchma won against the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Petro Symonenko. The Party of Regions was the main source of financing for the *Svoboda* Party as a means to take votes from other opposition parties and also to mobilise Russian speakers against a 'fascist' opponent (Jatras, 2011). The Party of Regions provided free airtime for *Svoboda* on Ukraine's popular television channel *Inter*.

While deriding 'monists,' Sakwa (2015) praises the Party of Regions for its 'comprehensive vision' of Ukraine. Matveeva (2018) also mythically frames the conflict as between nationalistic 'monism' and eastern Ukrainian 'pluralism.' Kharkiv-born Borys Lozhkin (2016, 78), President Petro Poroshenko's former chief of staff, wrote that 'the facts disprove Professor Sakwa's concept.' The Party of Regions never had any interest in the equality of Ukrainian and Russian languages, a balanced and inclusive approach to Ukrainian history or respect for religious diversity. In 2012, at the height of Yanukovych's presidency, 60% of newspapers, 83% of journals, 87% of books and 72% of

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television programmes were in Russian. This reinforced Soviet-era hegemony of the Russian language, not equality between Ukrainian and Russian.

In Russian-occupied Donbas, intolerance towards the Ukrainian language, culture, and religion makes it incomprehensible how it can be described as a sanctuary of 'multiculturalism' (Cordier 2017), which is based upon two misnomers. First, it is based on a lack of understanding of multiculturalism, which is built on tolerance of pluralism and practised in countries such as Canada (see Kymlicka 1996, 1997). Second, it is based on a biased analysis of the DNR and LNR that ignores evidence of intolerance towards and repression of Ukrainians and Jews. Describing the Donbas as a region of Russian 'Orthodox culture' reflects this pro-Russian bias and is factually wrong because the majority of Orthodox parishes in Ukraine are found in central and western Ukraine. Prior to 2014, Protestant parishes were nearly as numerous as Russian Orthodox parishes in the Donbas. Russia is also far less religious than Ukraine. Ukraine with a population (42 million), 3.4 times less than that of Russia (144 million), has 40% of the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Canadian province of Ontario would never, for example, be described as a region of 'Presbyterian culture' because a monopoly of one religious confession would not be synonymous with an understanding of tolerance of pluralism found in countries that practise multiculturalism.

The religious tolerance that exists in Ukraine stands in stark contrast to religious intolerance and monism in the Russian Federation, Crimea, and Russian-occupied Donbas, where the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarch a (UOC-KP), Ukrainian Greek-Catholics, and Ukrainian protestants are banned or suffer discrimination and repression (Coynash 2017). After Russian occupation forces fled from the western Donetsk city of Slavyansk, the bodies of the Church of the Transfiguration pastor's two sons, Ruvim and Albert Pavenko, and two deacons, Victor Brodarsky and Vladimir Velichko, were found tortured and murdered (Peterson 2014).

The Jewish minority has fled from Russian-occupied Donbas (DNR, LNR) to Ukrainian-controlled territory after Russian proxies demanded they pay $50 to register and provide proof of properties and businesses they owned. It is rather odd that Jews had no compulsion in fleeing the allegedly 'multicultural' Russian-controlled Donbas to the 'nationalistic' and 'fascist' Ukraine, while Jews living abroad have no hesitation in travelling to Ukraine in large numbers.

Ukraine holds the largest annual gathering of Jews outside Israel with 30,000 Hasidic Jews gathering in Uman each year to celebrate the Rosh Hashanah New Year festival at the grave site of the founder of the Hasidic movement, Rebbe Nachman. In summer 2019, Ukraine was the only country outside Israel with a Jewish president (Zelenskyy) and Jewish Prime Minister (Volodymyr Hroysman). A Pew Research Centre survey found that Ukraine had the lowest (5%) proportion of people who would *not* accept Jews as citizens in their country. This is compared to nearly three-times higher numbers in Belarus (13%) and Russia (14%), and similarly high numbers in EU members Latvia (9%), Estonia (10%), Hungary (14%), Czech Republic (19%), Poland (18%), and Romania (22%) (In some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, roughly one-in-five adults or more say they would not accept Jews as fellow citizens 2018).

Racism is a common thread running through Tsarist, Soviet and Putin's attitudes and policies towards Crimean Tatars. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, nearly all Russian political parties, the Party of Regions, and the Communist Party of Ukraine have been racist towards Crimean Tatars. This has been undertaken in seven ways:

1. Support for Stalin's 18 May 1944 ethnic cleansing of 288,000 Crimean Tatars, 40,000 Armenians, Bulgarians, and Greeks to Uzbekistan, and the Udmurt and Mari autonomous republics in the RSFSR. Crimean Tatars were accused of having 'collaborated' with the Nazis;
2. No remorse for the suffering this ethnic cleansing inflicted upon Crimean Tatars;
3. Opposition to the return of Crimean Tatars to Crimea and the restitution of their confiscated property and other assets;
4. Claims that Crimea was always 'Russian' (Sakwa 2016, 24) and denial that Tatars are the Crimea's indigenous people;
5. Continuation to hold a racially constructed colonial settler superiority towards 'backward' and 'Muslim interlopers' (Yekelchyk 2019);

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6. Systematic socio-economic discrimination towards Crimean Tatars who have returned to Crimea in the workplace;
7. Denial of Crimean Tatar political representation through the use of fixed quotas in the Crimean parliament.

Crimea was Always 'Russian,' So What's the Problem?

Academic orientalist and *Putinversteher* attitudes towards Crimea are common. A large body of western academics support Russia's 'natural' ownership of Crimea and see Russians, not Crimean Tatars, as the indigenous people of the region (Sakwa 2015, 2017a; Ploeg 2017, 117). Sakwa's (2015, 108) claim that the 1954 transfer of the Crimea from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR had always been contested was undertaken using 'highly manipulative, sophisticated and fallacious argumentation put forward by Russian nationalist Sergei Baburin' (Gretsky 2020, 5).

Sergei I. Zhuk (2014) found, to his surprise, that his North American colleagues in Slavic and east European studies, and historians of Russia and the USSR refuted Ukraine's right to defend its territorial integrity. At the same time, they defended 'Russia's historical territorial rights in both Crimea and Donbas' (Zhuk 2014, 200). Zhuk (2014, 200), who is a Russian speaker from Ukraine with Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Greek ethnic backgrounds, was criticised for his 'pro-Ukrainian nationalistic position' when he condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea.

In a letter to *The Times* a year after Russian annexation of Crimea, Calum Paton, professor of public policy at Keele University, was adamant that Crimea was 'Russian' and, using the language of *Putinversteher* scholars, claimed that Putin was responding to NATO and EU enlargement to Soviet borders (why Soviet?) and western support for the overthrow of Yanukovych. Paton (2015) wrote:

Crimea is part of historic Russia and was only given to Ukraine (by the same Khrushchev demonised by Boyes) as a post-Stalin — intra-USSR — symbol of change. Khrushchev was not ceding Crimea to a state independent of, let alone hostile to, the USSR. And just as the USSR's missiles in Cuba can be equated with the US's in Turkey, Putin's perspective on Ukraine is coloured by the US and EU supporting the removal of a democratically elected Ukrainian leader (however distasteful) and also supporting the expansion of Nato right up to Soviet borders, breaking a recent agreement.

Chris Kaspar de Ploeg (2017, 117) writes, 'Indeed, Crimea has been a part of Russia for 170 years, much longer than its history as a Ukrainian province.' Neil Kent (2016, 150) describes Crimea as the 'Cinderella of the Ukrainian state.' Sakwa (2015, 12) and Putin (2014a) agree that Crimea was 'the heartland of Russian nationhood.' Ukrainians do not compete with Russia over who are the indigenous people of Crimea as they believe Crimean Tatars are.

Condescending Views of Ukraine and Ukrainians

The influence of Russian nationalist (imperialist) thinking about Ukraine and Ukrainians is found among the same liberal and left-wing scholars who write about Crimea as 'always having been Russian.' Contributing editor to the left-wing *Nation* magazine, Stephen F. Cohen (2019, 17) writes that 'when the current crisis began in late 2013, Ukraine was one state, but it was not a single people or united nation. There is not one Ukraine or one "Ukrainian people" but at least two, generally situated in its Western and Eastern regions' (Cohen 2019, 22). It is a small step to transition from this mythical stereotype of Ukraine to depicting the conflict as a 'civil war' brought about by 'Ukraine's diverse history, political, social realities, and culture' (Cohen 2019, 74).

Ukraine's 'artificiality' is centre-stage in Hahn (2018) and Pijl (2018). Devoting an entire chapter to the 'Stateness Problem,' Hahn (2018, 297) writes that the 'rump Ukraine' (Hahn 2018, 288) 'borders on becoming a failed state' (Hahn 2018, 297). In writing that 'contemporary Ukraine's territory was cobbled together by vicissitudes of history' and 'Ukraine's shifting and often non-existent state and borders,' Hahn (2018, 119) repeats catchphrases found in Russian nationalist discourse and Kremlin disinformation.

Pijl's (2018, 40) descent into Russian chauvinism is evident when the Ukrainian language is discussed, as he is

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convinced that 'all educated Ukrainians speak Russian.' If Pijl (2018) were to have written that all 'educated Indonesians' speak Dutch, he would have been condemned as a racist. Pijl (2018, 45) writes that Russian is 'the language of education and media, including internet.' Meanwhile, the Ukrainian language is 'hardly developed as a modern language' (Pijl 2018, 45).

Indigenous People of Crimea and Genocide Against Crimean Tatars

Crimea continues to be imagined by western historians of 'Russia' through the prism of Russian nationalistic (imperialistic) historiography. Western historians of 'Russia' are continuing the traditions of settler colonialism in European empires, who 'imagine 'the nature of colonised peoples and territories through the filter of an imperial lens' (Dwyer and Nettlebeck 2018, 4). The approach used and sources drawn upon contribute to academic orientalism and provide the desired history of 'Russia,' Crimea, and the 2014 crisis.

Contemporary debates on colonialism, racism, and settler colonialism are absent from western histories of 'Russia' and Crimea. This is compounded by the ignoring of Ukrainian and Crimean Tartar scholarship and their views of Crimea. It would be impermissible to write a history of any country in North or South America, Australia, or New Zealand in the same manner as histories of 'Russia' continue to be written, where European Russian settlers are depicted as the 'indigenous' people and the indigenous Crimean Tatars are excluded, minimised, or subjected to racist stereotypes. In 2017, Australian Labour opposition leader Bill Shorten reminded his fellow Australians, 'Our history didn't start when Captain Cook sailed into sight of Australia in 1770.' Similarly, the history of Crimea did not begin when Tsarina Catherine's troops occupied the peninsula in 1783.

Debates about whether monuments constitute praise for racists, imperialists, and those who have committed crimes against humanity against native peoples have had limited impact upon western historians and political scientists writing 'Russian' and Crimean histories. Since before 2020, monuments to the first European to set foot in the US, Christopher Columbus, have been removed in the US. His nemesis in Crimea is Tsarina Catherine, whose imperialist army occupied Crimea in 1783. Russian leaders would never consent to the removal of monuments to Russian leaders and military officers who expanded the boundaries of the Tsarist empire and USSR.

If the approach of western scholars on 'Russian history' were used in the Americas, it would mean the histories of these countries began when European colonists arrived in the 15th and 16th centuries. The indigenous peoples could no longer be called 'First Nations' or 'Native Peoples.' Scholars and journalists no longer write that European settlers who settled Virginia in 1607 and Quebec in 1608 were the first people, while ignoring 'native peoples.'

'Russians' are described by western historians as the 'native people' of Crimea in two ways. The first manner, as discussed in Chapter 1, is by treating 'Kievan Russia' (Kyiv Rus) as the beginning of 'Russian' history with Crimea thereby always having belonged to 'Russia.' This dovetails with Putin's (2014a) views. The second manner is by stressing the importance of the 1783 annexation of Crimea.

Magocsi (2014b) believes that the only people who can claim to be indigenous to Crimea are Tatars; that is, they are the 'First Nation' because they lived there for six hundred years before the peninsula's conquest by Tsarist Russia (Magocsi 2014a). Ukrainian dissidents in the USSR, the most notable being former Soviet General Petro Grigorenko, condemned the 1944 ethnic cleansing of Crimean Tatars. Ukrainian Presidents Poroshenko and Zelenskyy support Crimean Tatars as the indigenous people in Crimea. Ukrainian legislation and nationality policies include Crimean Tatars within the Ukrainian civic nation, and plans are under discussion to add Crimean Tatar anniversaries, including the 1944 genocide, to Ukrainian official holidays (Rik diyalnosti Prezydenta Volodymyra Zelenskoho: zdobutky i prorakhunky 2020, 66). In 2016, Crimean Tatar singer Susana Jamaladinova, known as Jamala, represented Ukraine in the Eurovision song contest with the song '1944' about the genocide of her people, winning first place in the annual contest.

Crimean Tatar activist Kuku agrees with Magocsi (2014a) about who the indigenous people of Crimea are. From a Russian court room, Kuku stated, 'We Crimean Tatars have always remembered and will never forget that Crimea is our land. We did not give it to Russia, nor did we sell it' Coynash 2020). 'Therefore, we – the people, did not

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recognise and will not recognise as legal the occupation and annexation of Crimea by Russia, neither in 1783, nor in 2014 and now' (Coynash 2020).

Russia, Europe, and Ukraine are on different sides of history on the Crimean Tatar question; the former pursues nationalistic (imperialistic) and racist policies towards Crimea and Crimean Tatars, while the latter two abide by international law and support minority rights. The Ukrainian Parliament (2015a) issued a resolution entitled 'On recognising genocide of the Crimean Tatar people.' The European and Ukrainian parliaments adopted resolutions on the 1944 ethnic cleansing of Crimean Tatars (European Parliament 2016; Ukrainian Parliament 2016b).

Magocsi (2014b) has pointed out that if length of time within a state is the criterion for deciding to whom Crimea should belong, then it should be returned to Tatars who ruled the peninsula from the thirteenth to the late-eighteenth centuries. For 330 years, the Crimean Khanate was a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. The 'Russians' only arrived after the 1783 conquest and primarily settled there in the nineteenth century. Magocsi (1996, 2010) does not accept Russian and western imperial historiography, which claims that Crimea was populated by 'Russians' or that it was part of 'Kievan Russia' (Kyiv Rus). 'This means Slavs (including Russians) cannot be considered the indigenous inhabitants of the Ukrainian steppe and certainly not of Crimea' (Magocsi 2014b). Magocsi (2014b) continues: 'Therefore, pride of place as the population which has lived longest in Crimea goes to the Tatars.' Crimea is the historic homeland of Tatars – not Russians.

Wilson (2014, 100) calculates that Crimea, although annexed by Russia in 1783, 'was only ever truly Russian from the Crimean War of 1853-56 until 1917' and again from 1945-54; that is, it was under Russian rule for seventy-three years. The Crimea was a Soviet republic from 1921 to 1945. The Crimea was part of Soviet and independent Ukraine for a slightly shorter period of sixty years from 1954–2014; that is, only thirteen years less than it was included within 'Russia' (Wilson 2014, 100).

Russian Territorial Claims Towards Crimea Began in the Early 1990s

As Chapter 1 and this chapter have shown, beginning 'Russian' and Crimean history in 'Kievan Russia' (Kyiv Rus) or in 1783 is chauvinistic towards Ukrainians in the former case and racist towards Crimean Tatars in the latter case. Putin's nationalistic (imperialistic) views of Ukraine, Ukrainians, and Crimea long pre-dated 2014, but have been largely ignored in the bulk of western writings about the crisis. Claiming Crimea as always part of 'Russian' history gained prominence after the launch of the Russian World in 2007, and the 1,020th and 1,025th anniversaries of the adoption of Christianity by Kyiv Rus in 2008 and 2013, respectively. In 2013, Putin and Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill travelled to Ukraine to participate in celebrations organised by Medvedchuk, President Yanukovych, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Ukrainian branch of the Russian Orthodox Church) (see chapter 5). Although Kyiv Rus had developed ties to Constantinople, it accepted Christianity at a time when the centre of Christianity was Rome and prior to the 1054 split.

Between 1991–2013, Russia *de facto* did not recognise Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea and Sevastopol. Russia *de jure* recognised Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea and Sevastopol in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum signed by Russia, the US, and the UK in exchange for Ukraine giving up nuclear weapons, the 1997 Ukraine-Russia treaty recognising their border, the 1997 twenty-year 'temporary' Black Sea Fleet basing agreement, the 1998 Crimean constitution, and the 2004 Treaty Between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. These five documents were flouted by Russia in 2014 when it invaded and annexed Crimea and in 2018 when, in an act of state piracy, the Russian Black Sea Fleet rammed Ukrainian naval ships in the Sea of Azov and imprisoned Ukrainian seamen. In May 2019, the Hamburg-based UN International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ruled in favour of Ukraine and demanded that Russia release the illegally imprisoned ships and seamen.

In the 1990s, Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov was a prominent agitator for the non-recognition of Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea and the port of Sevastopol, as were Russian political parties and political technologists (political consultants who work on negative aspects of election campaigns) at the Russian presidency. On many occasions, both houses of the Russian parliament have voted in support of territorial claims towards Crimea and the

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port of Sevastopol. Russian intelligence services in the Black Sea Fleet based in Crimea under the twenty-year 'temporary' agreement signed in 1997 undertook covert activity in support of Russian separatist groups. Crimean media fanned exaggerated claims of the threat of 'Ukrainianisation' to Russian speakers and racism towards Crimean Tatars.

Russia's rhetoric and covert action towards Crimea have changed in two ways under President Putin. The first change concerns Putin's cooperation with his Russian nationalist parliament, which the president controlled through the United Russia party and an array of satellites political parties, such as the national-Bolshevik *Rodina* (Motherland). Under Yeltsin, the president did not officially support parliament's territorial claims towards Crimea and Sevastopol. A second change concerns marginal nationalist ideologues who had been defeated in the 1993 failed Russian parliamentary *coup d'état*, but whose strident views on Ukraine became influential and received support at the presidential level.

In 2014, Putin's alliance with 'brown' (fascist), 'white' (monarchist and Orthodox fundamentalist), and 'red' (Communist) political forces was evident in his 'New Russia' project for southeastern Ukraine (Laruelle 2016a). The Russian nationalist (imperialist) *Zavtra* and Sovietophile *Sovetskaya Rossiya* newspapers converged on 'New Russia' in what Plokhy (2017, 342) describes as a joint project of Russian intelligence and 'Russian nationalists.' Putin and 'brown-white-red' extremist political forces supported 'conservative,' eastern Slavic, and 'Orthodox' civilisation values, using the same arguments and colourful and threatening language portraying Russia at the centre of a messianic Russian World civilisation at war with the West (O'Loughlin, Toal and Kolosov 2016, 753). These political forces not only supported the dismemberment of Ukraine (through, for example, the 'New Russia' project), but also enthusiastically embraced the annexation of Crimea.

The Russian-Crimean-Ukrainian triangle of conflict has gone through four stages since 1991. In the first half of the 1990s, Crimean separatism threatened Ukraine's independence, but was subdued using peaceful means. From the second half of the 1990s until the 2004 Orange Revolution, a period of stabilisation took hold after Russian nationalist-separatists were marginalised and pro-Ukrainian forces took control of Crimea. Following the 2006 Ukrainian and Crimean parliamentary elections, the Party of Regions and Crimean Russian nationalist-separatists took power in Crimea. The final stage, beginning with Russian occupation in 2014, witnesses Crimea undergoing Russification, Sovietisation, and repression of Crimean Tatar history, language, culture, and religion.

Separatism and State Building: 1990–1995

In the early 1990s, Ukraine began its 'quadruple transition' of state and nation-building, democratisation and marketisation (Kuzio 2001a). A weak Ukrainian state and strong pro-Russian separatist movement made Ukrainian control over Crimea tenuous. In 1991, to take the wind out of Crimean separatist sails, Parliamentary Chairman Kravchuk backed the holding of a Crimean referendum over whether Crimea's status should be changed from an *oblast* to an autonomous republic inside the Ukrainian SSR. Kent (2016, 145) ignores Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea at that time and confusingly describes the referendum as leading to the 're-establishment of the Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic.' Following the Crimean referendum, the number of Soviet republics did not increase from fifteen to sixteen.

Defining the contours of Crimean autonomy plagued Kyiv-Crimean relations until the adoption of a Crimean constitution in 1998. Although Ukraine remained a unitary state, Crimean autonomy was an exception because it was the only region of the country with an ethnic Russian majority. There were two key dates during this period. In May 1992, the Crimean parliament voted to secede from Ukraine, but then backtracked after being promised greater autonomy. In 1994, Crimea held parliamentary and presidential elections and elected separatist leader Yuri Meshkov, defeating Kyiv's favourite candidate, former first secretary of the Crimean branch of the Communist Party during the Soviet Union. Mykola Bahrov. Meshkov's presidency proved to be short-lived as President Kuchma annulled the Crimean presidency a year later. Eastern Ukrainian Kuchma adopted a more hard-line stance towards Crimean nationalist-separatists than had his 'western Ukrainian nationalist' predecessor Kravchuk.

Marginalisation of Separatists: 1995–2004

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From 1995 until the 2004 Orange Revolution, Russian nationalist-separatist groups in Crimea were marginalised, which provided the political space for Kyiv and Crimea to complete their negotiations and establish a new constitutional relationship. A crucial event was the adoption of a Crimean constitution in October 1998, which recognised Crimea as part of Ukraine. The Ukrainian parliament ratified the constitution three months later, opening the way for the upper house of the Russian parliament to ratify the 1997 Ukrainian-Russian treaty. With the adoption of these domestic and international legislative acts, the Russia-Crimea-Ukraine triangular relationship was stabilised.

Crimea was ruled by the Communist Party of Ukraine and pro-presidential NDP (People's Democratic Party) until the end of Kuchma's presidency in 2004. At that time, Russian nationalist-separatists received little active support from Russia. President Yeltsin was incapacitated in the second half of the 1990s, while from 2000 Putin consolidated his power domestically and flirted with the West's anti-terrorist campaign. Importantly, Russian nationalism (imperialism) had not yet become the driving force of Putin's regime.

Another important factor was that Kuchma, an eastern Ukrainian military-industrial plant director, had good relations with Yeltsin and Putin. The exception was the autumn 2003 crisis, when Russian security forces attempted to occupy the Ukrainian island of Tuzla off the eastern Crimean coast. Good Russian-Ukrainian relations remained in place despite Ukraine outlining its goal of NATO membership in July 2002, twice seeking MAPs (Membership Action Plans) from NATO in 2002 and 2004 and Prime Minister Yanukovych's government sending the third largest military contingent to US-led coalition forces in Iraq.

With Russian Assistance, Crimean Nationalist-Separatists Return from the Margins

Following the Orange Revolution and Yushchenko's election as president, three factors changed in the Russian-Crimean-Ukrainian triangle of conflict. The first was the rise of the Party of Regions, a leftist, populist, and Sovietophile political party led by oligarchs and supported by former Communist Party of Ukraine voters. After Kuchma left office, the Party of Regions was able to establish a monopoly of power over southeastern Ukraine by absorbing, co-opting, or destroying other centrist parties. The process of the co-option of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which shared the stronghold of Donetsk with the Party of Regions, had begun when Yanukovych was Donetsk Governor, and they remained allies through to the Euromaidan Revolution (Kuzio 2015a).

From 2005-2006, the marginalisation of the NDP and co-option of the Communist Party of Ukraine opened a political vacuum in Crimea, which the Party of Regions exploited. The Party of Regions, Crimean Russian nationalist-separatists, and Russian leaders were united in their conviction that 'colour revolutions' were 'used by the West in contestation with Russia' as western-backed conspiracies to install anti-Russian nationalists into power in Eurasia (Delcour and Wolczuk, 467). Putin had twice visited Ukraine during the first and second rounds of the 2004 elections to support Yanukovych; US President George W. Bush did not visit Ukraine until 2008.

In 2005, the Party of Regions and the United Russia party signed a cooperation agreement. During the 2006 Crimean parliamentary elections, Russian political technologist Konstantin Zatulin, director of the (pro-Putin) Institute for CIS Countries, brokered the creation of the 'For Yanukovych bloc' between the Party of Regions, the Russian nationalist-separatist bloc, and the Russian Community of the Crimea. The 'For Yanukovych' bloc elected 44 deputies, enabling them to install Russian Community of the Crimea leader Sergei Tsekov as the Crimean Parliament's First Deputy Chairperson. The 44 'For Yanukovych' deputies aligned with nine Communist, seven People's Opposition Bloc of Natalia Vitrenko (leader of the extreme left Progressive Socialist Party), and four Medvedchuk-controlled Opposition Bloc *Ne Tak* (Not Like This) deputies, giving pro-Russian forces 64 out of 100 deputies in the Crimean parliament, practically a constitutional majority. Pro-Ukrainian forces were limited to 26 deputies from the Serhiy Kunitsyn bloc (representing the Kuchma-era NDP), Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT), and Crimean Tatars. The remaining ten deputies were independents.

The US Embassy in Ukraine believed the Party of Regions had given the Russia bloc excessive political prominence by forming a single electoral list that had given them seats they would not have won on their own (Ukraine: The Russia Factor in Crimea – Ukraine's "Soft Underbelly?" 2006; Ukraine: Crimea Update – Less Tense Than in 2006: Interethnic, Russia, Land Factors Remain Central 2007). The Party of Regions was willing to bring Crimean

nationalist-separatists out of marginalisation because this was the only manner in which they could spread their influence into Crimea, which was a new territory for the Donetsk oligarchic clan. Crimean Russian nationalist-separatists acted as Russian proxies in 2014 during the invasion and annexation of Crimea, and most Party of Regions deputies defected to United Russia.

Between 2006-2014, the Party of Regions and Russian intelligence squeezed Ukrainian political forces out of the Crimean parliament. This and many other examples of the Party of Regions' authoritarianism makes it very odd that western *Putinversteher* scholars portray the Party of Regions as a pluralistic force (Sakwa 2015, 2017a). Party of Regions and Russian strategies dovetailed during this period. The former wished to stay in power indefinitely by undermining their Ukrainian opponents, while Russia viewed pro-western Ukrainian political forces as Russophobes and 'Ukrainian nationalists.'

In the 2010 Crimean elections, widespread abuse of state-administrative resources ensured that the Party of Regions doubled its deputies to 80. Another 13 pro-Russian deputies were elected from the Communist Party of Ukraine, *Soyuz* (Union) and Russian Unity, a Crimean neo-fascist Party of Russian Unity led by Sergei Aksyonov. Pro-Ukrainian forces were reduced to only five deputies elected by the Crimean Tatar-*Rukh* bloc. Two deputies were elected by Serhiy Tihipko's *Silna Ukrayina* (Strong Ukraine) party, which merged with the Party of Regions in 2011.

Putin's and Russia's hostility to Ukrainian sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Yushchenko's pro-western foreign policy grew exponentially in Crimea after 2005. Russia expanded its covert operations in Crimea, Donbas, and Odesa, infiltrated the Party of Regions and other pro-Russian forces, and provided paramilitary training for Donbas extremist groups who played an active role in 2014 (see chapter 5), while Russian television and media propaganda became more bellicose. After two Russian diplomats were expelled from Ukraine for espionage in summer 2009, President Dmitri Medvedev (2009) sent an undiplomatic and strongly critical open letter to Yushchenko demanding a raft of changes to Ukrainian domestic and foreign policies (D'Anieri 2019, 147).

Putin's evolution into a nationalist (imperialist) towards southeastern Ukraine rested on long-standing Russian nationalistic views. Russian nationalist dissidents (Russian Patriots 1971; Joo 2008), well-known dissident and nationalist writer Solzhenitsyn (1990), and Russian nationalists (imperialists) have long contested Ukraine's sovereignty over southeastern Ukraine on historic and linguistic-cultural grounds (Kuzio 2017c, 33–84). A large proportion of Russian opposition groups and parties support Solzhenitsyn's call for a Russian Union of the three eastern Slavs and northern Kazakhstan (see Verkhovskyj 2014). The Russian Union which Solzhenitsyn called for in 1990 to replace the USSR is strikingly similar to the Russian World Putin created in 2007. Solzhenitsyn and Putin came to a consensus on nationalist (imperialist) questions (Horvath 2011; Coalson 2014).

Western studies of 'Russian nationalism' have ignored the evolution away from the Soviet formulation of close, but different Russians and Ukrainians to Tsarist Russian and White *émigré* views of Russians and Ukrainians as 'one people' (see Kolsto and Blakkisrud 2016), with a few exceptions (see Bacon 2015, 34; Kuzio 2017d). Trudolybov (2016) points out, 'Even those Russians who are not supporters of Mr. Putin often deny their Ukrainian neighbours a separate identity and do not recognise Ukrainian "otherness."' Trudolybov (2016) adds, 'The "one people" phrase has long been an irritant for many Ukrainians, in large part because Mr. Putin has used it so often.'

Between 2007–2011, nationalist (imperialist) views of Ukraine and Ukrainians gained ground among Russian leaders and the Russian opposition. During this period, Putin began to think of himself as the 'gatherer of Russian lands.' Putin (2008) told the NATO-Russia Council in Bucharest that Ukraine was an 'artificial state' and questioned Ukraine's right to its southeastern regions.

Since then, Putin has repeatedly made nationalist (imperialist) claims to 'Russian' southeastern Ukraine, called the region 'New Russia' and *Prichernomorie* (Black Sea Coast Lands), and without any foundation claimed that it is populated by 'Russians' (Socor 2020a). It is not difficult to find examples of Putin's nationalism (imperialism) towards Ukraine; that is, if one treats Ukraine as a separate country from Russia and if one wants to accept his discourse as nationalistic (imperialistic) (Putin 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2017, 2019, 20230a, 2020b). Unfortunately, many political scientists working on Russia do not want to do so, or they downplay what this author sees as evidence (see

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chapter 4).

A month after the annexation of Crimea, Putin (2014b) said, talking about southeastern Ukraine, 'These territories were given to Ukraine in the 1920s by the Soviet government. Why? Who knows? They were won by Potyomkin and Catherine the Great in a series of well-known wars. The centre of that territory was Novorossiysk, so the region is called New Russia. Russia lost these territories for various reasons, but the people remained.' In his annual press conference in December 2019, Putin said that *Prichernomorie* 'never had anything to do with Ukraine' (Socor 2020a). 'When the Soviet Union was created, ancestral Russian territories (such as) all of the *Prichernomorie* and Russia's western lands, that never had anything to do with Ukraine, were turned over to Ukraine' (Socor 2020a). Putin's (2020a) views are becoming increasingly bellicose, as when he said: 'When creating the USSR, the right to leave was prescribed but without a procedure for this. If a republic which became part of the USSR received a huge amount of Russian lands, then it would leave the USSR with what it had received.'

Putin's discourse in the six years prior to 2014, and especially during the 'Russian spring,' sent signals to Russian nationalists (imperialists) and pro-Russian groups in Crimea and the Donbas that Russian leaders no longer upheld Ukraine's territorial status quo, while large areas of Ukraine are 'Russian' and were wrongly included in Ukraine by Soviet leaders. In spring 2014, these views 'were now widely disseminated in the government-controlled press and by Russian leaders' (D'Anieri 2019, 235). Although Russians had always argued that Crimea and Sevastopol were wrongly included in Ukraine, the addition of 'New Russia' as another mistake made by Soviet leaders was an outgrowth of the growing influence of Tsarist and White *émigré* nationalistic (imperialistic) views of Ukraine and Ukrainians (see Wolkonsky 1920; Bregy and Obolensky 1940).

In August 2008, Russia invaded Georgia, and its armed forces nearly reached Tbilisi, only forty kilometres from the southeastern border of the frozen conflict zone of South Ossetia. Russia's invasion of Georgia was a trial run for its invasion of Crimea six years later (Plokhy 2017, 337). The launch of the EU's Eastern Partnership a year after the invasion of Georgia gave the possibility of integration (but not membership) of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova into the EU. Putin was hostile to the EU initiative and henceforth viewed 'EU enlargement' in the same negative manner as Russia had traditionally viewed NATO enlargement. The first reason is because Russia is opposed to the enlargement of western influence into what the Kremlin considers its exclusive sphere of influence in Eurasia (Gretskiy 2020). The second reason is the belief Ukraine signing an Association Agreement with the EU would constitute a permanent break of that country with the Russian World (D'Anieri 2019, 210). It made no difference the EU was offering Ukraine integration without membership because Russia was not focused upon trade or economics but on identity and culture.

Russia's Annexation of Crimea

Yanukovych's election in 2010 re-configured the Russian-Ukrainian relationship of imperial power and dependency to that which the Kremlin believes constitutes 'normality;' that is, how the Kremlin has developed the Russian-Belarusian relationship. In the first year of his presidency, President Yanukovych implemented all of Medvedev's (2009) demands. These included Ukraine adopting the Russian view of the 1933 famine as an all-Soviet tragedy rather than a genocide directed against Ukraine. Minister of Education Dmytro Tabachnyk expanded Soviet and Russian historical myths in Ukrainian education, and new state anniversaries were created that imported Putin's cult of the Great Patriotic War. The Black Sea Fleet basing agreement in Sevastopol was extended to 2042–2047. Ukraine adopted an ephemeral 'non-bloc' foreign policy which dropped the goal of NATO membership. Despite these numerous concessions, Russia refused to change the 2009 gas contract, and Ukraine continued to pay the highest gas price in Europe. Paul D'Anieri (2019) writes how these tough Russian policies towards Ukraine have been commonplace since 1991 and reflect the Kremlin's disdain towards Ukrainian independence.

Why did Belarus under Lukashenka receive Russian gas subsidies, but Yanukovych did not? Lukashenka has always been fully servile to Russia, and Belarus is a Russian dependency and a member of every Russian-led integration project in Eurasia. Yanukovych continued to balance between Europe and Eurasia, still supporting an Association Agreement with the EU, which became increasingly untenable and collapsed into disarray in the Euromaidan Revolution (Kuzio 2017a). Ukraine would have received Russian gas subsidies if Putin's plan to re-elect

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Yanukovych in 2015 had gone ahead and if Ukraine had joined the Eurasian Economic Union. The Euromaidan put down Putin's plans, and he took revenge for his second humiliation (the first being in 2004) by invading and annexing Crimea (see Hosaka 2018). A bloodless annexation was assisted by Yanukovych who during his presidency *de facto* turned Crimea over to Russia. Russia's FSB (Federal Security Service) returned to the Black Sea Fleet (see Table 5.1). Russian influence increased in Ukraine's military, while the SBU (Security Service of Ukraine) and the government as Russian citizens were appointed to important positions (Kuzio, 2012).

During and after the Euromaidan, Russia used the post-revolutionary chaos in Kyiv to invade and annex Crimea. Ukraine's leadership responded passively, neither giving the order to its security forces to strategically retreat or defend their bases. The West was shocked by Russia's actions but advised Ukraine not to resist in order to not provoke an all-out Russian-Ukrainian war.

The results of the Crimean parliamentary election held during Russia's occupation in 2014 reflected those commonly found in Putin's authoritarian system. Ukrainian and Crimean political parties and civic organisations were banned. In the 2014 Crimean elections, 70 deputies were elected by United Russia and another 5 by Vladimir Zhirinovsky's LDPRF (Liberal Democratic Party of the Russian Federation), a fake nationalist party that has always been controlled by the Kremlin. The artificiality of the election results was obvious, as neither of these two parties had existed in Crimea prior to 2014. Many former Party of Regions deputies from the Crimean parliament were re-elected as United Russian deputies. In late 2014, Crimean Prime Minister Aksyonov's neo-fascist Russian Unity party was absorbed by Putin's United Russia.

In March 2014, Russia held a sham referendum that voted for 'union' with Russia. The annexation of Crimea, illegal under Ukrainian and international law, made a mockery of Russia as a 'guarantor' of Ukrainian sovereignty in the Budapest Memorandum and destroyed any trust in Russian promises. The claim of 97% support in the referendum was 'reminiscent of Soviet-era elections' (Plokhy 2017, 337) and was not recognised by any international organisation.

Actual support for a union with Russia was much lower. A leak from the (surely misnamed) Russian 'Human Rights Council' showed that the official turnout of 83% was bogus, and the real turnout had been 30% and, of those, only 15% backed a union with Russia. The leaked report said: 'In Crimea, according to various indicators, 50–60% voted for unification with Russia with a voter turnout of 30–50%.' This gave a range of between 15% and 30% voting for Crimea's union with Russia. The turnout in Sevastopol, according to the 'Human Rights Council' was higher at 50–80% (Gregory 2014).

Some western scholars of Russia took the referendum results at face value because of their subjective belief that Crimea has 'always been Russian.' Kent (2016, 157) claims that the referendum 'was joyfully received by most Crimeans.' Kent (2016, 160), believing that popular sentiment in Crimea is 'Russian' writes, 'There is no doubt that the majority of the population of Crimea supported joining the Russian Federation.' Sakwa (2015, 112) claims, without providing any evidence, that Crimean Tatars 'welcomed the reunification with Russia' because 'Crimean Tatars are ready to be loyal citizens of Russia.' Both of these claims have no basis in empirical data and, rather, reflect the authors' subjective biases.

Russia's July 2020 referendum endorsing changes to its constitution to extend Putin in office until 2036 also made changing Crimea's status in the future impossible. An additional paragraph was installed between paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 67 which states, 'The Russian Federation ensures protection of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Actions (excluding delimitation, demarcation and re-demarcation of the state border of the Russian Federation with bordering states) aimed at removing a part of the Russian Federation's territory, as well as calls to such actions, are not permitted.' Russian Senator Andriy Klishas admitted 'this was written so that nobody could seriously insert an amendment into legislation according to which Crimea would be handed to Ukraine.' 'It was done so that not one state body, including the President or parliament, or the government, could seriously hold negotiations, for example, on the return of Crimea to Ukraine' (Coynash 2020b).

The July 2020 constitutional change means that relations between the West and Russia will continue to remain cold

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for a long time to come because some of the US, Canadian, and EU sanctions against Russia are linked to its illegal annexation of Crimea. In 2014, only 17% of Russians accepted Ukraine's borders, while the remainder believed that Ukraine should be a smaller country (Alexseev and Hale 2016, 196). There is no domestic opposition to Crimea's annexation, with 85% of Russians supporting Crimea's annexation and only 10% opposing it (Crimea: Five Years 2019). Additionally, 56% of Russians support the separation of the Donbas from Ukraine into an independent state or the region joining Russia (Crimea: Five Years 2019). 70% of Russians support their government's policy of issuing Russian passports to residents of Russian-occupied Donbas, which would make them Russian citizens and provide Russia with a legal fig leaf to intervene on their behalf (Crimea: Five Years 2019).

Minority Rights in Russian-Occupied Crimea

Exaggerated complaints of 'Ukrainianisation' and 'Islamicisation' in Crimea were never reflected in the very low number of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar schools and media outlets that existed when the peninsula was part of Ukraine. Following Russia's occupation, Ukrainian educational facilities and media publications have all been closed, while Crimean Tatar education and media outlets have been drastically reduced in number.

The Russian Federation, Party of Regions, and its Crimean nationalist-separatist allies mobilised, agitated, and used inflammatory rhetoric and a massive information warfare campaign alleging discrimination against Russian speakers. That this was a myth could be seen by Ukrainians always ascribing low levels of importance to language issues and low levels of grievances over alleged discrimination against Russian speakers. In Donetsk and Luhansk, 9.4 and 12.7% of Ukrainians, respectively, were anxious at the imposition of one language. 59% in Donetsk and 80% in southeastern Ukraine did not believe that there was discrimination against Russian speakers (Kulyk 2018, 20; Giuliano 2018). Only 5% of Ukrainians younger than 29 had witnessed discrimination of languages (Zarembo 2017, 19). A 2020 poll found only 10.1% of Ukrainians who had witnessed infringements of the Russian language and 52.2% who had not (Ukrayinska mova: shlyakh u nezalezhniy Ukrayini 2020). Nevertheless, in 2014, a high 89% of Russian citizens were convinced that the rights of Russian speakers were being infringed in neighbouring states (Pain 2016, 71).

In spring 2014, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and the Council of Europe reported no attacks on Russian speakers anywhere in Ukraine, despite Putin using this bogus myth as justification for Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea. Only 5% of Ukrainians believe that Russia intervened in Crimea and Donbas because of the violation of the rights of Russian speakers. Eight to ten times as many Ukrainians believe that Russia's intervention was to prevent Ukraine from leaving Russia's sphere of influence (46.2%), Russia's inability to accept Ukraine as an independent state (42.5%), and Russian opposition to Ukraine's European integration (42.3%) (Perspektyvy Ukrayinsko-Rosiyskykh Vidnosyn 2015).

In spring 2014, the Council of Europe did not find credible claims of Russian speakers being threatened in Crimea (Ukraine: ad hoc visit of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 2014). The Council of Europe was, however, concerned 'about the safety and enjoyment of cultural, education and language rights of all national minorities in Crimea, including in particular the numerically smaller ones such as the Karaim and Krimchak as well as persons belonging to the Ukrainian community who are in a minority situation in Crimea' (Ad hoc Report on the situation of national minorities in Ukraine adopted on 1 April 2014). Also, in spring 2014, inter-ethnic relations did not deteriorate in Crimea (In Crimea serious human rights violations and attacks on minorities and journalists require urgent action 2014). Since then, only Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars have been subjected to political repression, and ethnic and religious discrimination.

Exaggerated claims about 'Ukrainian nationalism' and the threat it posed to Russian speakers were a central theme in Russia's information warfare during and after the Euromaidan, which inflamed rhetoric. Ukrainian nationalism has always had low levels of support among Ukrainians, and it played a minor role in the Euromaidan (Onuch and Sasse 2018). Opinion polls have consistently shown that Ukrainians hold negative attitudes towards Russian leaders and largely positive attitudes towards Russian citizens; this is even the case in western Ukraine (Despite Concerns About Governance, Ukrainians Want to Remain One Country 2014). These polls provide evidence of Ukrainian patriotism, not ethnic nationalism.

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Written by Taras Kuzio

Some western scholars paint a fairy-tale picture of life for Tatars in Crimea that could have been prepared by political technologists working for the Kremlin. Pijl (2018, 40) describes Russian policies towards Crimean Tatars in glowing terms based on the 'spirit of Soviet nationality policy' and 'internationalism and autonomy,' which continue to be used in the Russian Federation. Pijl (2018, 40) is obviously unaware of the plight of Ukrainians in the Russian Federation, who have no rights whatsoever because he contrasts Russia's supposedly positive nationality policies with anti-Russian and 'ethnic' policies in Ukraine. The Russian Federation comes out worse than Ukraine in any comparison of minority rights. Russian speakers and ethnic Russians in Ukraine have a wide array of cultural, linguistic, and religious rights, while the second largest minority in Russia – Ukrainians – have none. Ukrainians in the Donbas and Ukrainians and Tatars in Crimea suffered from a wide range of discriminatory policies prior to 2014, and their plight has massively deteriorated during Russia's occupation ((Motyl 2015; Lukanov 2018; Coynash and Charron 2019; Skrypnyk 2019).

Sakwa (2015, 21, 38, 59, 206, 249, 279) has taken the mythologising of Ukrainian regionalism and nationalism to a new level in his dichotomy between Ukrainian 'monism' and 'pluralism,' a framework he never applies to Russia or Russian-controlled territories. Sakwa's (2015) mythical framework is unable to explain why the bulk of the fighting against Russian military aggression is being undertaken by Russian-speaking eastern Ukrainians (Hunter 2018, 94; Kaihko 2018; Aliyev 2019, 2020). Why would Russian speakers fight and die for Ukraine if they were living under a tyranny ruled by 'western Ukrainian nationalists' and neo-Nazis? Four leading volunteer battalions were composed of eastern Ukrainians (Donbas, Dnipro-1, Dnipro-2, Aydar, Azov) and the highest rates of casualties of security forces are found in Dnipropetrovsk *oblast* (see the map at 6.2).

Ukrainians and Tatars accounted for 36% of Crimea's population in Ukraine's 2001 census, and many of them were opposed to Russia's annexation. Some Ukrainians and Russians holding a Ukrainian civic identity in Crimea opposed Russia's annexation (Nedozhogina 2019, 1086). One of these was the Russian film director Oleg Sentsov, who was sentenced in 2015 to twenty years imprisonment on trumped up charges of plotting terrorist acts. He was released four years later in a prisoner exchange with Russia and has remained a virulent critic of Russia's occupation of Crimea.

Political repression of Crimean Tatars and repression of their culture and language is on-going in occupied Crimea (Coynash and Charron 2019; Skrypnyk 2019). The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has reported on systematic violations by Russia of cultural, educational, media freedom, and human rights of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians as well as endangering Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian cultural heritage sites (Follow-up of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea Ukraine 2019). Russia has imprisoned Crimean Tatar activists, closed down Crimean Tatar institutions (such as the unofficial parliament *Majlis*), persecuted Crimean Tatar culture, and imprisoned and deported Tatar leaders (Coynash and Charron 2019; Skrypnyk 2019). Official 'self-defence' forces (in reality, death squads) have abducted and most likely murdered up to 18 Crimean Tatar activists (Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine) 2014). Twenty thousand Crimean Tatars have fled from Russian-occupied Crimea to Ukraine (see Magocsi 2014a, 2014b; Williams 2015). Crimean Tatar activist Emir-Usein Kuku told a Russian court that sentenced him to twelve years on false charges of 'terrorism': 'Does it not strike you as strange that in the 23 years Crimea was under Ukrainian rule, there were no 'extremists' nor 'terrorists,' and no 'acts of terrorism,' but as soon as Russia arrived with its FSB, there was suddenly all of that?' (Coynash 2020a).

Widespread evidence of systematic human rights abuses and ethnic discrimination in Russian-occupied Crimea and Donbas is of course ignored by *Putinversteher* scholars (see Violations of human rights and international crimes during the war in the Donbass 2018; Coynash and Charron 2019; Skrypnyk 2019). In June 2018, Ukraine presented a large volume of evidence ('Memorial') to the UN's International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands documenting Russia's violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Ukraine versus Russia 2018, 2019). A second part of the 'Memorial' dealt with Russia's violation of the International Convention of the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. The 447-page 'Memorial' stated, 'The Russian Federation is responsible for a brazen and comprehensive assault on human rights and international law in the territory of Ukraine' (Ukraine versus Russia 2018). In particular:

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In Crimea, the Russian Federation acts overtly and directly. There, in Ukrainian territory that Russia unlawfully occupies, Russia maintains its domination through a policy of racial discrimination and cultural erasure directed against those ethnic communities that dared to oppose its purported annexation of the peninsula. It has methodically trampled the political and civil rights of these communities: disappearing, torturing, and murdering Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian activists; subjecting others to arbitrary searches and detention; and banning the *Mejlis*, the representative institution that has been a bulwark for the rights of the Crimean Tatar people since they returned from Stalin's ruthless exile. Russia is also choking off the cultural expression that these communities need if they are to preserve and perpetuate their distinct identities: banning or disrupting cultural gatherings; suppressing the media outlets serving Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian audiences; and restricting opportunities for children from those communities to be educated in their native languages. These well-documented and widely condemned actions violate international law (Ukraine versus Russia 2018).

Conclusion

Russian nationalists (imperialists) view Crimea as always having been 'Russian' in two ways. The first is through the myth of Crimea being part of 'Kievan Russia' (Kyiv Rus) and the birthplace of the 'All-Russian People,' while the second is through justifying its 1783 annexation by the Tsarist Russian empire. The former denies Kyiv Rus as part of Ukrainian history and includes Ukrainians as one of three branches of the 'All-Russian People.' The latter denies Crimean Tatars as the indigenous people of Crimea. Past genocide and ethnic and religious persecution of Crimean Tatars in the Tsarist empire, USSR, and especially since 2014 in occupied Crimea are often ignored.

In their belief that Crimea has always been 'Russian' (whether since Kyiv Rus or after 1783), western historians of 'Russia' and some political scientists writing about Russia viewed the March 2014 sham referendum as genuine, even though it has never been internationally recognised. Yet, no opinion poll conducted prior to 2014 gave majority support for separatism in Crimea, making it highly likely the March 2014 referendum was a sham.

Academic orientalism, as found in western writing about Crimea, has already been critically discussed in this book. It is beyond doubt that most western historians of 'Russia' see Crimea as 'always having been Russian' and therefore have not criticised Russia's 2014 invasion and annexation. Academic orientalism is, however, a far bigger problem in Russian studies than in Crimea and in the next chapter, this will be shown through my critical review of western writing on the 2014 crisis and Russian-Ukrainian War. This will show how Moscow's viewpoint is often found in western writing of the 2014 crisis and Russian-Ukrainian War because of the selective use of sources made by historians and political scientists.

About the author:

Taras Kuzio is professor of political science at the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy and co-author of the forthcoming The Four Roots of the Russian-Ukrainian War. He is the author and editor of 23 books, including Fascism and Genocide: Russia's War Against Ukrainians (2023); Russian Nationalism and the Russian-Ukrainian War: Autocracy-Orthodoxy-Nationality (2022); Crisis in Russian Studies: Nationalism (Imperialism), Racism and War (2020); Putin's War Against Ukraine: Revolution, Nationalism, and Crime (2017, 2019); and Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism (2015). He has also published six think tank monographs, and 165 book chapters and scholarly articles.