Does Ethnicity Matter? Russia, Ukraine, and the Crimean Peninsula (1954-2022)

by

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Abstract

In 1954, the Soviet government announced the transfer of the Crimean Peninsula to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Neither Russia nor Ukraine could have predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union less than four decades after the transfer, but it was consequential in determining the fate of Crimea. Over the past seventy years, Crimea has been in Soviet Ukraine, independent Ukraine, and illegally occupied by the Russian Federation. During these periods, the three main ethnic groups were the Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars. In my research, I examine how the different ethnic groups in Crimea have created a Crimean identity that doesn't represent any official nationalism. I argue that Crimea has a unique regional consciousness that is not solely Russian, Ukrainian, or Crimean Tatar. The research is broken down into three time periods: Crimea in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (1954-1990), Crimea in independent Ukraine (1991-2013), and Crimea under Russian occupation (2014-2022). During each of these periods, Crimea developed as part of the larger state (Soviet Union, Ukraine, and Russia) and also evolved independently as a region. My goal is to create a narrative that is not Russian, Ukrainian, or Crimean Tatar-centric by exploring the role of ethnicity, history, and culture in creating a regional consciousness in Crimea.

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Glossary of Terms

ARC – Autonomous Republic of Crimea

CC CPSU – Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

Crimean ASSR – Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NKVD – Narodny Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del, People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (Soviet Secret Police)

Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – Supreme Council of Ukraine (Ukrainian Parliament). Also known as Verkhovna Rada or Rada.

RDK – Republican Movement of Crimea

RSFSR– Russian Soviet Federalist Socialist Republic

Ukrainian SSR – Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)

Introduction

Ten years ago, Crimean citizens voted to rejoin the Russian Federation in a referendum that was not considered legitimate by the democratic world. It took place on 16 March 2014, after a Russian invasion and Russian troops monitored the process. Two days after the vote, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, held a press conference at the Kremlin welcoming Crimea back to Russia and justifying the reasons why Crimea belongs to Russia. However, for the previous sixty years, the Crimean Peninsula was in the borders of Ukraine. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR from the RSFSR in 1954. After the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine declared independence in 1991, the peninsula remained in Ukraine's territory. Did Crimeans consider themselves part of Ukraine or Russia? And what factors were significant in such choices?

This research examines the concept of regional consciousness in the Crimean Peninsula from 1954 to 2022. In this timeline, I break down my research to the three shifts in control of the peninsula: Crimea in the Ukrainian SSR (1954-1990), Crimea in independent Ukraine (1991-2013), and Crimea under Russian occupation (2014-2022). During each of these periods, Crimea was subject to Soviet, Ukrainian, and Russian policies that either promoted or discouraged people to choose their allegiance. I focus on the three main ethnic groups in Crimea – Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars – and explore how a unique Crimean regional consciousness has prevailed over any specific adherence to or support for Ukraine or Russia.

A note about Crimean history

The Crimean Peninsula holds historical significance to Russia, Ukraine, and the Crimean Tatars. To understand why the history of Crimea matters for contemporary studies, author Neil Kent states, "An understanding of Crimea's long history is a necessity in today's world in order to comprehend what binds and divides Europe in political, cultural and social terms."[1] While, the history of the Crimean Peninsula is part of the history of Europe, it also presents a unique case study because the political landscape of the peninsula remained divided between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The stark political division in Crimea throughout the late 20th and 21st century means the modern history of Crimea is written along national lines. Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar scholarship creates narratives about how the Crimean Peninsula territory symbolizes their national histories.[2] Most scholarship about the Crimean Tatars focuses on the historical, symbolic, and cultural role of the Tatars in the peninsula.[3] The majority of Russian scholarship about Crimea highlights the Tsarist and Soviet roots of the peninsula and emphasizes how Crimea developed within Russian society after the annexation of 1783.[4] At the same time, a

[1] Neil Kent, *Crimea: A History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), 7.
[2] Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*, Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 129.
[3] Examples of publications about Crimean Tatars: Ismail Aydingün and Ayşegül Aydingün, "Crimean Tatars Return Home: Identity and Cultural Revival," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 113–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830601043554; Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 1st edition (Stanford, California: Hoover Press, 1978); Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return*, 1st ed., Anthropology, History, and Critical Imagination (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
[4] Examples of Russian publications: S. Chernyakhovskii and Y. Chernyakhovskaya, *Vershina Kryma. Krym v Russkoi Istorii i Krymskaya Samoidentifikatsiya Rossii* (Moscow: Knizhnyi mir, 2015); A. B. Shirokorad, *Krym-2014. Kak Eto Bylo?* (Moscow: Veche, 2015).

large portion of Ukrainian writing about Crimea focuses on the development of the peninsula as part of Ukraine and diminishes its Russian roots.[5] The Russian and Ukrainian narratives of Crimea began to diversify after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, after 2014, the Russian narrative of Crimea was pushed through publications of Russian Crimean history books.[6] In this research, I take note of all scholarship and look at Crimea from a Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar perspective. Investigating the different perspectives of the ethnic groups is crucial to understanding the creation of regional consciousness in the Crimean Peninsula.

A note on ethnicity, identity & consciousness

To investigate the role of ethnicity and the creation of a regional consciousness, I want to first give a brief background to the concepts. The definition of identity has been debated among the humanities and social science disciplines.[7] Part of the reason for the debate is because the descriptions of identity are often vague and ambiguous. The term "identity" has also become a catch all phrase that seems to have an all-encompassing definition, when in actuality "it explains less than it appears to."[8] One way to provide more direction when talking about identity is looking at social identity theory and considering the basic concept of "us" versus "them." Two key schools of thought are "primordialist" and "modernist." According to primordialist, national

[5] Examples of Ukrainian publications: *Istoriia Krymu v Zapytannіakh Ta Vidpovidіakh* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2015); Volodymyr Serhiychuk, *Ukraìns'kyĭ Krym*, Second (Kyĭv: Ukraĭns'ka vydavnycha spilka, 2013).
[6] It's also important to note that sources published in Crimea in Russian language can also have a Russian bias. One of the Crimean newspapers I use throughout my research, *Krymskie Izvestia,* is critical of the Ukrainian government and favors Russia. But there is a clear shift to outwardly promoting a Russian agenda after February 2014.
[7] Charles Tilly, "Citizenship, Identity and Social History," *International Review of Social History* 40 (1995): 7; Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 17–21; Siniša Malešević, *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 36.
[8] Michael Billig, Banal Nationalism (London: Sage, 1995), 60.

identity is formed by history and culture rather than ideology. Modernists on the other hand stress that national identity is predetermined by the socioeconomic situation of a nation and nationalism becomes a binding ideology.[9] Neither of these approaches directly address the role of ethnicity in the creation of a national identity. In general, ethnic identity relates to the idea of belonging to a specific group in a region.[10] While ethnic communities or ethnies can play different roles in creating community or identity, they can be studied by looking at a region's history, culture, and memories.[11]

Considering the conflicting nature of identity and how ethnicity can be studied, this project's working definition of identity will be based on Anthony Smith's scholarship on nationality. In this definition Smith uses a primordialist approach which considers history, culture, and symbols as a foundation for forming identity. Smith's definition of identity is:

> The continuous reproduction and reinterpretation by the members of a national community of the patterns of symbols, values, myths, memories, and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations and the variable identification of individual members of that community with that heritage and its cultural elements.[12]

This definition relies on two critical factors: a sense of individual and collective identity and the idea of continuity and change of identity. So, in other words, national identities are partly about shared memories, cultures, and symbols but can also change and adapt throughout history. National identities are not a fixed or static concept; they evolve depending on the situation. The reason I will use Smith's definition is because it will allow for an inclusive approach to discuss

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[9] Olexander Hryb, *Understanding Contemporary Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism: The Post-Soviet Cossack Revival and Ukraine's National Security*, Ukrainian Voices: Volume 2 (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2020), 50–51.
[10] Michael Skey, "Boundaries and Belonging: Dominant Ethnicity and the Place of the Nation in a Globalizing World," in Nationalism, Ethnicity and Boundaries: Conceptualising and Understanding Identity through Boundary Approaches, ed. Jennifer Jackson and Lina Molokotos-Liederman (London: Routledge, 2014), 103, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315746999.
[11] Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural* Approach (London: Routledge, 2009), 26–27.
[12] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, 2nd ed., Key Concepts Series (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 20.

how Soviet, Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar identity transformed over the period of my research project.

The definition of national identity can also be applied to national consciousness. National identity describes a specific moment in a nation while national consciousness is the process to create that identity. Furthermore, ethnic identity develops within the national consciousness and is part of the collective memories and history of a nation.[13] A similar understanding of national consciousness can be applied to regional consciousness. Whereas instead of referring to a nation, a region can develop its own specific sense of belonging. The term "regionalism" was first used in the 1890s and can be described as a reaction to the central authority.[14] My research will primarily focus on the concept of regional consciousness in the Crimean Peninsula and how the development of a unique regional identity supersedes a sense of national or ethnic identity. By comparing Crimean consciousness to the different central authorities (Soviet, Ukrainian, and Russian), one can perceive a distinct push for separation. And through this separation, the regional consciousness of Crimea cannot be defined as Russian or Ukrainian.

In the case of the Crimean Peninsula and this research project, regional consciousness can be seen through two different comparative approaches. The first approach is to compare a Crimean consciousness to Russian and Ukrainian identities by examining shared values and culture that create identity. This approach aims to determine whether Crimea has developed differently. The second approach is comparing Crimean over time to see how it changes. The development of the peninsula could show how a unique regional consciousness has prevailed

[13] Hryb, *Understanding Contemporary Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism,* 76.
[14] F. W. Morgan, "Three Aspects of Regional Consciousness," The Sociological Review a31, no. 1 (January 1, 1939): 68-69.

there. To do this, I will look at the Crimean Peninsula after the Soviet transfer to the Ukrainian SSR, in independent Ukraine, and under Russian occupation. My theory involves assuming ethnic groups play a role in creating a Crimean consciousness while at the same time understanding that each ethnic group also has its own distinct identity. By using both approaches, I can investigate how different ethnic groups can form a unique regional consciousness that is separate from a Russian or Ukrainian national identity over six decades.

Outline

The first chapter looks at the period after the Crimean Peninsula was transferred to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (1954-1990) (Ukrainian SSR). The peninsula was subject to Soviet national identity and Soviet Ukrainian laws. The transfer of the peninsula did not significantly impact its demographics.[15] There was a migration of ethnic Ukrainians, but it was countered by the migration of ethnic Russians to Crimea. Soviet nationality policies promoted a Soviet identity, but it was often interchangeable with a Russian identity. The identity of those in the peninsula echoed many traditional Soviet sentiments of the "New Soviet Man" and did not develop any strong feelings of Ukrainian identity. Crimea's Soviet identity mirrored a Russian identity. Furthermore, the absence of the Crimean Tatars during the period meant Crimea had a more unified Soviet/Russian identity. Geographically and politically, Crimea was in the Ukrainian SSR, but socially and culturally, the peninsula was Russian.

The second chapter covers the time Crimea was part of independent Ukraine (1991-2013). During this period, Crimeans were subject to Ukrainian state-building, but also it included

[15] The ethnic demographics of Crimea were significantly impacted before the transfer; Stalin's regime of terror, deaths in the Second World War, and the deportation of the Crimean Tatars did change the population of the peninsula.

the return of the indigenous population, the Crimean Tatars. There was an apparent disconnect between the ethnic Russians in the peninsula and the government in Kyiv during the first few years of independence. The turbulence of the 1990s was overshadowed by the dire economic situation that the entire country faced. There was an appearance of content between Kyiv and Crimea through the early 2000s, but the voting patterns in Crimea showed a bias toward pro-Russian leaders. The Crimean Tatars seemed to be the only pro-Ukrainian unified force in the peninsula. The identity of the peninsula became intermixed between a pro-Russian voice and the Crimean Tatars who favored Ukrainian leadership.

The third chapter examines Crimea under Russian occupation (2014-2022). In March 2014, the Crimean government held a referendum, and the peninsula voted to join the Russian Federation. Deciphering Russian interference and whether Crimeans had a voice, a question can be raised about how unified a Russian identity was within Crimea. Furthermore, after the Russian Federation gained control of the peninsula, the human rights violations against the Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians also suggest that the Kremlin suppressed non-Russian identity. Despite such harsh control, this thesis will explain why the Crimean Peninsula did not have a cohesive Russian or Ukrainian identity and maintained its uniquely Crimean consciousness.

Chapter 1: Crimea in Soviet Ukraine (1954-1990)

In February 1954, the Supreme Soviet of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics announced the transfer of the Crimean Peninsula from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR). According to the announcement, the decision to transfer Crimea was based on the shared economic interests, geographical proximity, and strong economic and cultural connections between the Crimean region and the Ukrainian SSR. Soviet historians emphasized that this transfer was executed as part of the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Treaty, symbolizing the historic union between Russia and Ukraine.[16] The announcement appeared in several Soviet newspapers but did not generate widespread discussion.[17] Though the transfer appeared to be a simple administrative decision, it had significant ramifications for the formation of a unique regional consciousness in Crimea.

This chapter will cover the creation of a Crimean consciousness within the Ukrainian SSR from 1954 to 1990. Through a comparative analysis of Soviet and Ukrainian policies concerning nationalities and the ethnic composition of the Crimean Peninsula, I examine the emergence of a separate Crimean consciousness within Soviet Ukraine, one that coexisted with but was not defined by Russian and Ukrainian identities. The first section provides an overview

[16] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 101. For a thorough study of the treaty itself, see John Basarab, *Pereiaslav 1654: A Historiographical Study* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1982).
[17] The announcement was published in *Izvestiia* on 19 February 1954; *Pravda* on 27 February 1954 and 27 April 1954; and Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik official government newspaper) on 9 March 1954.

of the historical context prior to the 1954 transfer of the Crimean Peninsula. The next section explores how nationality policies and ethnic populations allowed for the formation of a Crimean consciousness. The concluding section will discuss how this consciousness was affected by the return of the Crimean Tatars and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Historical Context

The Crimean Peninsula is located between the Black Sea and Azov Sea and is home to a complex history. During the Middle Ages, Crimea flourished as a multiethnic society. The peninsula was home to Slavs, Greeks, Romans, Turkic Mongols, Armenians, Goths, and other ethnic groups. Being a strategic location for Kievan Rus, the region became a symbolic capital of Orthodoxy after the story of the baptism of Grand Prince Volodymyr in 988 in a city near present-day Sevastopol.[18] The narrative of the Grand Prince's baptism was told in the *Primary Chronicle* and is part of the foundation of Orthodoxy in both Russia and Ukraine.[19] Soviet and Russian historians have used this moment to highlight the Slavic roots of Crimea and as a way to deemphasize a Crimean Tatar or Ottoman history.[20] This also became an important connection for President Vladimir Putin to connect Russian and Ukrainian history. In his 2021 article, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," Putin cites the spiritual unity between Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians through the baptism of St. Volodymyr [Vladimir].[21]

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[18] Kent, *Crimea*, 19–21.
[19] Vera Shevzov, "The Russian Tradition," in *The Orthodox Christian World*, ed. Augustine Casiday (New York: Routledge, 2012), 15–40, 16.
[20] Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples, Second Edition* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 124; Mykhaĭlo Hrushevs′kyĭ, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, ed. Frank E. Sysyn and Serhii Plokhy, trans. Bodan Struminski, vol. 7 The Cossack Age to 1645 (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997), 55.
[21] Vladimir Putin, "Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," President of Russia, July 18, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181. In November 2016, a monument of St. Vladimir was erected in Moscow on "National Unity Day." https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37871793.

However, Ukrainian historian Volodymyr Serhiychuk used the Russian Orthodoxy's narrative to show Crimea's connection to modern-day Ukraine.[22] Serhiychuk further explains that the connection between Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula dates back to political alliances and economic ties in the Renaissance period.[23] Each of these histories presents an explicit national narrative on how the formation of Crimea and later Crimean identity is based on the relationship between Russia and Ukraine.

The Crimean Tatar history of Crimea began in the middle of the 15th century. Because of the invasion of the Mongols from the East, power in the peninsula was consolidated, and the Khanate of Crimea was established in 1441.[24] The Crimean Khanate existed for over three centuries under the leadership of the Tatars. It is difficult to understand the origins of the people who assimilated to create the Crimean Tatars. [25] Still, historians generally agree that the Khanate's creation was the Crimean Tatars' first political state.[26] However, by the late 15th century, it came under pressure from the Ottoman Empire, and they eventually formed a dependent relationship with the Ottomans.[27] Historians debate the extent to which the Khanate was independent or a vassal state for the Ottoman Empire; regardless, the Tatars were subject to militarily protecting the peninsula from potential threats.[28] From the perspective of the Crimean Tatars, the formation of the Khanate established their homeland and later indigenous status in Crimea.

[22] Serhiychuk, *Ukraìns'kyĭ Krym*, 6.
[23] Ibid, 28–41.
[24] Kent, *Crimea*, 27–29. The Crimean Khanate was one of the successors of the Golden Horde.
[25] The Crimean Tatars are described as a Turkish- Muslim group.
[26] Paul R. Magocsi, *This Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 30–33.
[27] Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 8.
[28] Fisher, 37; Kent, *Crimea*, 49; Uehling, *Beyond Memory*, 32.

The Russian rule over the peninsula began in the 18th century. Over four centuries, the Ottoman and Russian Empires waged twelve wars, with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774 marking the conclusion of one of them. Within this treaty, one of the agreements reached between the Russians and Ottomans was the independence of Crimean Khanate. However, the independence of the Khanate did not establish any military or administrative structures.[29] Catherine the Great annexed the peninsula nine years later, in 1783.[30] While there were religious, economic, and territorial reasons for annexing Crimea, there was also a strategic reason: Sevastopol could be used as a military base. The warm waters surrounding Crimea meant the Russian Empire could create a permanent navy.[31] After establishing control of the peninsula, Russia pushed for more territorial authority of the Black Sea region, leading to the Crimean War in 1853.

The Crimean War was the embodiment of imperialist aspirations and the struggle for power in the regions between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. On one side of the war, Russia had expansionist dreams of controlling the Black Sea, and the Ottoman Empire was perceived as weak. On the other side, there were religious disputes over holy sites in Palestine, and Russia insisted on protecting Orthodox Christians living under Ottoman rule.[32] Due to international

[29] Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 53–57.

[30] Alan W. Fisher, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea 1772-1783* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 128. For further readings about Russian imperialism, see: Philip Longworth, *Russia's Empires: Their Rise and Fall: From Prehistory to Putin* (John Murray, 2005); William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia 1600-1914* (Simon and Schuster, 1998); Marc Raeff, *Political Ideas and Institutions In Imperial Russia* (Routledge, 2019). To understand the context leading up to Russia's annexation, see: Brian L. Davies, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1768-1774: Catherine II and the Ottoman Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[31] Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War: 1853-1856*, 2nd edition., Modern Wars (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 3-6. Sevastopol became the main base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

[32] For a detailed account on the background of the Crimean War see: Baumgart, *The Crimean War*; Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (Henry Holt and Company, 2011); D. R. Jones, *The Crimean War: Then & Now* (London: Frontline Books, 2017); John Sweetman, *The Crimean War: 1854-1856*, Essential Histories (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001); Elena I. Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015). I want to highlight the origins of the Crimean War were multifaceted: it was about religion, Christian- Muslim relations, Russian expansionism, European Russophobia, and the complex political concept of the *Eastern Question*.

interest in the region, the British and French Empires joined forces with the Ottoman Empire to fight against the Russians.[33] After three years of conflict, including the Siege of Sevastopol, the Russian Empire agreed to peace negotiations. The British and French were disappointed by the outcome of the war, as it only partially reduced Russia's power and sphere of influence.[34]

One of the results of the Crimean annexation and the Crimean War was a significant demographic change in the peninsula. By 1876, Russians and Ukrainians comprised the majority of Crimea's population, and Crimean Tatars only composed 34%.[35] Two factors drove the shifts in population on the peninsula. Firstly, there was a significant influx of Slavic immigrants into the region. Secondly, there was a notable departure of Crimean Tatars from the area. Many Tatars left the peninsula following Russia's annexation in 1783. It is estimated that somewhere between 50,000-300,000 Crimean Tatars emigrated to the Ottoman Empire.[36] During the Crimean War, the Tatars were viewed with suspicion, and many were charged with treason and exiled from the peninsula.[37] In the aftermath of the war, it is estimated that somewhere between 500,000 – 900,000 Muslims living in the Crimean Peninsula and the Caucasus emigrated to the

[33] Baumgart, *The Crimean War, 11.* The Kingdom of Sardinia (small region in Italy) also played a minor role in the war by sending troops to aid the British and French Empire. Other European Powers, including Austria and Prussia, contributed diplomatically, but remained neutral in the war. The battles were predominately fought in the Crimean Peninsula.

[34] Baumgart*, 215-227.* The Treaty of Paris was signed on 30 March 1856; part of the stipulations for Russia were the neutralization of the Black Sea and cession of Bessarabia.

[35] Volodymyr Yevtoukk, "The Dynamics of Interethnic Relations in Crimea," in *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges and Prospects*, ed. Maria Drohobycky (Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 69–86, cited from *Naselenie Krymskoi Oblasti Po Dannym Perepisei*, (Simferopol, 1989), 7-10. Russian and Ukrainians were grouped together in census records conducted before 1939. In 1897, Russian and Ukrainians made up 45.3% of the population.

[36] Alan W. Fisher, "Emigration of Muslims from the Russian Empire in the Years After the Crimean War," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 35, no. 3 (1987): 356-58. There are no exact figures, these numbers account for the period between 1772-1789. Another estimation suggests between 150,000-170,000 Crimean Tatars remained in the peninsula. Prior to the start of the Crimean War, the Tatars accounted for less than 50% of the population of Crimea.

[37] Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance*, 25. Russian imperial authorities viewed the Crimean Tatars as security risks and worried their loyalty was not with Russia. There was no doubt some Tatars did provide aide and manpower to the French and British army, but not all fought against the Russian forces. So, many of the accusations of treason were false.

Ottoman Empire.[38] The Tsar of Russia, Alexander II, viewed the Tatar population as shameful for their actions in the war. He saw their emigration as a "favorable circumstance to get rid of the harmful population."[39] The mass exodus of the Crimean Tatars and the immigration of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians into Crimea allowed the Russian Empire to consolidate its power in the peninsula.

The Russian Empire collapsed at the second decade of the 20th century, and the Bolsheviks rose to power. The first shift in Russia happened during the 1905 Revolution and Russia's defeat in the war with Japan. The monarchy relinquished some control by creating a constitution and a national elected parliament (the Duma).[40] However, the onset of the First World War and deepening political divides between the elite and peasant class showcased the vulnerability of the Russian monarchy.[41] In 1917, the February Revolution ousted the imperial government and established a constitutional assembly as the new government. Several months later, the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in the October uprising.[42] The next stage of the Russian Revolution led to a civil war and then the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922.[43] In the Crimean Peninsula, the Russian Revolution posed an opportunity for the Crimean

[38] Fisher, "Emigration of Muslims," 356. This was in the period between 1855-1866. Fisher estimated that of that number about one third represented the Muslims, specifically Crimean Tatars, in Crimea (166,000-300,000). That accounted for 15-23% of the entire Crimea population in the 1857 census.
[39] Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance*, 25; Fisher, "Emigration of Muslims," 359.
[40] The October Manifesto (1905) also included the legalization of trade unions and political parties.
[41] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Fourth edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 16-40. Russia was one of the great powers in Europe but was lagged in terms of economic development.
[42] The Bolsheviks were a fraction of the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and led by Vladimir Lenin.
[43] Fitzpatrick, 41-68. The RSFSR was formed in 1917 and the Soviet Union was formed in 1922. For more information about the Russian Revolution and Civil War see: Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*; David Bullock, *The Russian Civil War, 1918-22*, Essential Histories: 69 (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008); Marlène Laruelle, *Memory Politics and the Russian Civil War: Reds versus Whites*, First edition., Russian Shorts (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020); Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Revolution: A New History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017); Ronald Grigor Suny, *Red Flag Unfurled: History, Historians, and the Russian Revolution* (London: Verso Books, 2017).

Tatars to regain independence.[44] While the Tatars did not gain independence, the peninsula was granted autonomy within the newly formed Soviet Union.

When the Bolsheviks solidified their rule, Vladimir Lenin's nationality policies became part of the unifying force.[45] Lenin allowed nationalist movements to exist as an intermediate stage of building the Soviet Union.[46] According to Lenin, the answer to the national question was to allow the right of self-determination with the hope that the right would never be exercised.[47] This meant the foundation of the Soviet Union was based on the idea that a state could be "national in form, socialist in content."[48] The Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Crimean ASSR) was formed in 1921 under the jurisdiction of the RSFSR.[49] Lenin's stance on nationalism raises the question of whether the Crimean ASSR was founded as state-sponsored nationalism for the Crimean Tatars or as a multi-national territorial autonomy for all the nationalities in Crimea.[50] At the conception of the Crimean ASSR, Crimean Tatars accounted for 25.9% of the population - Ukrainians and Russians still made up the majority (51.5%).[51] Despite being the minority population, Crimean Tatar nationalists insisted that the creation of the

[44] Kent, *Crimea*, 100–111; Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 94–108. Throughout the Russian Civil War, the peninsula was occupied by the Bolsheviks (Red Army) and the Anti-Bolsheviks (White Army). The Bolsheviks eventually secured control of the peninsula by compromising with the national minorities. For a detailed analysis see: Grégory Dufaud, "The Establishment of Bolshevik Power in the Crimea and the Construction of a Multinational Soviet State: Organisation, Justification, Uncertainties," *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 2 (May 2012): 257–58.
[45] Vladimir Lenin was the leader of the Bolsheviks (which eventually became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union). He was also the head of the Soviet state.
[46] Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities.* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 113.
[47] James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918–1933*, Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 13.
[48] John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, Second Edition (Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1963), 15; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, The Wilder House Series in Politics, History, and Culture (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 28, https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501713323.
[49] Kent, *Crimea*, 122; Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 130–36; Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 93; Uehling, *Beyond Memory*, 36.
[50] Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 57–59.
[51] Yevtoukk, "The Dynamics of Interethnic Relations in Crimea," 73.

Crimean ASSR was a recognition of their nationalist aspirations.[52] Soviet historians argued the Crimean ASSR was created as a multi-national autonomous territory. However, in 1945 (one year after Soviet officials deported the entire Crimean Tatar population from Crimea for alleged treason), the Soviet leadership under Stalin ended Crimea's autonomous status and demoted it to an oblast.[53] The Crimean Oblast remained in RSFSR for nine more years until the transfer of territory in 1954.

The deportation of the Crimean Tatars in May 1944 was only one step in a series of harsh government decisions that culminated with the evidently benign transfer of the Crimean Peninsula from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.[54] Shortly after the Soviet Red Army regained control of Ukraine and Crimea in the spring of 1944, a secret defense memo to the State Defense Committee known as Decree 5958ss ordered, "All Tatars are to be banished from the territory of the Crimea."[55] The decree stated that the Crimean Tatars had betrayed the Soviet Union during the Second World War, sided with Nazi Germany, and collaborated in the mass extermination of the Soviet people.[56] In the early morning of 18 May 1944, Soviet officials arrived at the doors of Crimean Tatar homes and forcefully removed the families. Over the course of two days, NKVD documents cite, 181,155 Crimean Tatars were deported.[57] However, only 176,746 Tatars arrived at the new settlement in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.[58] The official reports only recorded

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[52] Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 59.
[53] V. O. Kotyhorenko, *Kryms'kotatars'ki repatrianty: problema sot͡sial'noï adaptat͡siï* (Kyïv: Svitohli͡ad, 2005), 13.
[54] I want to note that prior to deportation, between 1917-35, about 150,000 Crimean Tatars were killed, deported, or voluntarily left the Crimean Peninsula. During the Moscow Trails between 1936-38, almost all Tatar leaders were either deported or executed. See Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars,* 142-145.
[55] "State Defense Committee Decree No. 5859ss - On the Crimean Tatars" (Wilson Center Digital Archive, Library of Congress, May 11, 1944), https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111000.
[56] Ibid. Crimean Tatars were not the only ethnic population to be removed from their territory, see Conquest, *The Nations Killers* for a deeper analysis on Soviet ethnic deportations.
[57] NKVD - Soviet Secret Police
[58] Nikolaĭ Fedorovich Bugaĭ, *Iosif Stalin--Lavrentiiu Berii : "Ikh Nado Deportirovat'": Dokumenty, Fakty, Kommentarii [Joseph Stalin - L. Beria: "They Must Be Deported": Documents, Facts, Commentary* (Moscow: Druzhba Narodov, 1992), 144. The 6,409 Crimean Tatars unaccounted for is about 3.5% of the population.

191 deaths during deportation.[59] Crimean Tatar historians assert the actual death counts were much higher, it is estimated that 7-8% of the population died during deportation, and almost half of the population died during the first few years of exile.[60] Decree 5859ss was annulled in September 1967 but did not allow the Crimean Tatars to return to Crimea.[61] The Tatars did have the right to return in November 1989, two years before the Soviet Union collapsed.[62] After the deportation, Soviet authorities stripped the history of the Crimean Tatars from the peninsula.[63] When the Crimean Tatars returned to the peninsula, it was Ukrainian territory.

Given the population changes because of the deportation and the Second World War, there was an influx of Russian and Ukrainian migration to the Crimean Peninsula. By the end of the 1950s, 71.4% of the population consisted of ethnic Russians and 22.3% ethnic Ukrainians.[64] While most of the population were ethnic Russians, the transfer of the Crimean Peninsula in February 1954 meant the peninsula would now be under the authority of the Ukrainian SSR. There were attempts to Ukrainianize the population; however, the majority of the population remained Russian, spoke Russian, and didn't identify with Ukraine.[65] This meant that the population of Crimea was in the process of forming a new consciousness that reflected the new ethnic populations and the border changes.

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[59] Nikolai Zemskov, "Spetsposelentsy Iz Kryma: 1944-1956" [Special Settlers from Crimea 1944-1956]," *Krymskie Muzei*, Simferopol, Tavria, 1/95 (1995): 73.
[60] Uehling, *Beyond Memory*, 80–81. Crimean Tatar historians estimate the death toll during the first few years of exile was 46.2% of the population.
[61] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 132; V. Stanley Vardys, "Case of the Crimean Tartars," *Russian Review* 30 (April 1971): 103; Kotyhorenko, *Kryms'kotatars'ki repatrianty*, 23. The September 1967 decree removed the accusations of treason from the Crimean Tatars but did not address the right to return. Although several thousand Tatars attempted to return to Crimea, they were denied passports for residency.
[62] V. E. Vozgrin, *Istoriia krymskikh tatar: ocherki ėtnicheskoĭ istorii korennogo naroda Kryma v chetyrekh tomakh* (Simferopol′: Kartbaba prodakshn, 2014).
[63] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 67–70.
[64] Kent, *Crimea*, 140.
[65] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 121.

Development of a Crimean Consciousness

The transfer of the Crimean Peninsula to the Ukrainian SSR had social and economic repercussions. The legality of the transfer only became a forefront conversation after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian independence (see Chapter 2). Beyond printing the final announcement and including a few speeches, the party and government newspapers in the Soviet Union (*Pravda* and *Izvestiia*) did not comment further about the transfer of Crimea.[66] Gwendolyn Sasse infers several reasons for the 'Soviet silence' about the transfer: the political sensitivity surrounding Crimea,[67] the focus on the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Treaty, and the view that the transfer of territory did not warrant further discussion.[68] Numerous theories attempt to explain the rationale for transferring Crimea, though Soviet archival documents fail to point to a concrete reason.[69] According to the official announcement of the transfer from the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, the reasons for the transfer were territorial proximity and commonality with Ukraine in the economy and culture. Considering only these reasons for the transfer, economic integration and migration of Russians and Ukrainians to Crimea were most likely anticipated consequences for the peninsula. However, creating a consciousness that was not entirely Russian or Ukrainian was not likely a predicted outcome.

Nationality policies between 1954 and 1990 promoted a Soviet identity, but it was often interchangeably with a Russian identity. There were also attempts to create distinct identities

[66] Sasse, 110–101. *Pravda* was the official newspaper for the Communist Party and *Izvestiia* was the official government newspaper for the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union.
[67] The political sensitivity could refer to either the deportation of the Crimean Tatars or the theory that the transfer was a way to dilute "Ukrainianness" in the Soviet Union by having a majority ethnic Russian population in the Ukrainian SSR.
[68] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 95–106.
[69] The most prominent theory is that Nikita Khrushchev, a former Ukrainian party boss, "gifted" Crimean Peninsula to Ukraine. See the following to break down reasons the transfer was not a "gift": Sasse, 114–16; S. M. Savchenko, *Krym--Shl͡iakh Do Ukraïny* (Simferopol: Tavri͡a, 2006), 180-206; Volodymyr Butkevych, "Who Has a Right to Crimea? (Part 2)," *The Ukrainian Review* 41, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 27; Serhiychuk, *Ukraìns'kyĭ Krym,* 196-216.

within the different Soviet republics.[70] However, the Crimean Peninsula provides a unique case study because of its ethnic composition and history. The transfer of the peninsula meant a predominantly ethnic-Russian region was now in Soviet Ukraine.[71] The following section will analyze the Soviet nationality policies and then examine the effects of the policies in Crimea. The next section will compare the scholarly perspectives on the demographic changes in Crimea and how the different ethnic groups have formed a unique Crimean consciousness.

Government Policies

Soviet nationality policies were crafted by the different Soviet leaders and evolved over time. In general, the policies were rather ambiguous – emphasizing the Soviet Union as both a Russian nation-state and a multi-state federation.[72] The policies shifted between allowing freedom of local nationalities to form identities (indigenization), merging national identities (Sovietization or "fusion"), assimilating identities (Russification), and uniting in diversity (flowering of national identities).[73] The first Soviet nationality policy was initiated under Vladimir Lenin's leadership during the 12th Congress in 1923 – indigenization (korenizatsiia). Lenin's indigenization policy allowed the use of local languages in Soviet administrations, schools, newspapers, and Communist literature. This gave the non-Russian populations a chance

[70] Rachel Denber, ed., *The Soviet Nationality Reader: The Disintegration in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *The "Nationality" Question in the Soviet Union*, Articles on Russian and Soviet History, 1500-1991: V. 11 (New York: Garland Pub., 1992); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge & the Making of the Soviet Union*, Culture & Society after Socialism (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).
[71] The predominantly ethnic Russian population in Crimea was due to the ethnic cleansing of the Crimean Tatars and the resettlements during the 19th and 20th centuries.
[72] Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991*, 1st Harvard University Press ed., Russian Research Center Studies: 91 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 7.
[73] Lapidus, *The "Nationality" Question in the Soviet Union*; Ben Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union: A Study in the Rise and Triumph of Nationalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; Martha Brill Olcott, Lubomyr Hajda, and Anthony Olcott, *The Soviet Multinational State: Readings and Documents* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1990).

to participate in the Soviet government and promoted national identities.[74] Lenin believed that Russian chauvinism was a significant threat to the formation of the Soviet Union, and this policy was a response to that threat.[75] Joseph Stalin's rise to power marked a turning point for the indigenization policies because he insisted that non-Russian nationalism was the greatest threat to the Soviet Union.[76] Although the creation of the structure that was eventually enshrined in the 1936 Constitution guaranteed the rights of national minorities, Stalin frequently violated these rights.[77] Russian became the language of intra-national communication, and minorities who expressed any form of national pride were harshly repressed.[78] Thus, Soviet nationality policies initially allowed for the promotion of national culture but shifted by the late 1920s under Stalin's leadership.

Nikita Khrushchev became the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) in September 1953. For a few years, Soviet nationality policies returned to the policies created under Lenin. In the closing speech of the 20th Congress of the CC CPSU in 1956, Khrushchev condemned Stalin's actions and viewed the only path forward as the "Leninist path."[79] Known as the "secret speech" because it was given in front of a closed session, Khrushchev was still careful not to condemn every action of Stalin. In the

[74] Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union*, 46.
[75] Alexander J. Motyl, ed., *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 170.
[76] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 22.
[77] Olcott, Hajda, and Olcott, *The Soviet Multinational State*, 3. For more information on Stalin's regime see: David Crowe, *Stalin's Soviet Justice: "Show" Trials, War Crimes Trials, and Nuremberg*, (India: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Lynne Viola and Marc Junge, *Laboratories of Terror: The Final Act of Stalin's Great Purge in Soviet Ukraine* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2023); James R. Harris, *The Great Fear: Stalin's Terror of the 1930s*, (United Kingdom: OUP, 2016).
[78] Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52.
[79] "Khrushchev's Secret Speech, 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences,' Delivered at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (Wilson Center Digital Archive, From the Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 84th Congress, 2nd Session (May 22, 1956-June 11, 1956), C11, Part 7 (June 4, 1956), pp. 9389-9403, February 25, 1956).

case of Crimea, he omitted the deportation and the ethnic cleansing of the Crimean Tatars. The short-lived policies of indigenization shifted by the end of the 1950s to focus on Soviet identity. Adopted as part of the 22nd Congress under the Third-Party program and part of the second wave of de-Stalinization, the proposal sought to create the foundation of socialism over the course of a twenty-year plan. While the program laid out industry, agriculture, and technological advancements, it also created the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" and the concept of the *New Soviet Man*.[80] Under Khrushchev and this third program, there were two schools of thought on how the national question was to develop: *rastsvet* (flowering of nations) and *sliyanie* (merging of nationalities).[81] Nations under socialism were supposed to flourish and grow stronger together until eventually merging into one identity: Soviet.[82] The focus on 'Sovietness' continued after Khrushchev was removed from office, but it took a different approach.

After Khrushchev, the leaders of the Soviet Union from 1964-1984 began to follow a more Russo-centric approach to nationality policies. Leonid Brezhnev became the General Secretary of the CC CPSU in 1964. Brezhnev came to power alongside Aleksey Kosygin and Nikolai Podgorny, who served as leaders of the Soviet government and Supreme Soviet.[83] The triumvirate reinforced the idea of collective leadership within the Soviet Union, though by 1970, it was clear that Brezhnev was the greatest authority.[84] Brezhnev maintained some Soviet nationality policies from Khrushchev; however, he shifted back to using the Russian language as the only intra-national language, a similar policy to the one Stalin enacted.[85] After facing

[80] "Text of the Third Draft Program of the C.P.S.U.," *Current History* 41, no. 243 (1961): 299–303.
[81] Lapidus, *The "Nationality" Question in the Soviet Union*, 36.
[82] Kenneth C. Farmer, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Post-Stalin Era: Myth, Symbols and Ideology in Soviet Nationalities Policy*, Studies in Contemporary History: 4 (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1980), 51.
[83] Kosygin was the Chairman of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and Podgorny was the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet.
[84] Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, eds., *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, Studies in Russian and East European History and Society (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 13–14.
[85] Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union*, 96.

economic slowdown and uncertainty, Brezhnev's address about Soviet identity in the 24th Congress focused on the "gradual drawing together of all nations and nationalities," "the intolerance of nationalism," and "respect for all nations and nationalities."[86] Brezhnev saw the inter-ethnic marriages and multi-national composition of the Soviet Army signifying the Soviet Union coming together.[87]

The following two General Secretaries, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, continued the same progression of the Soviet nationality policies as Brezhnev – emphasizing the importance of the ethnic Russian population. In a 1982 speech in front of the joint session of the CC CPSU, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, Andropov stressed the importance of Leninist principles of national policy, the fraternal family of all nationalities, specifically the Russian people. He emphasized the prominence of the Russian language being a service to the Soviet Union and how it naturally entered "into the lives of millions of people of all nationalities."[88] Andropov restated Lenin's goal that the Soviet Union was "not simply the rapprochement of nations, but the fusion."[89] The Soviet nationality policies that Lenin started and Khrushchev reinforced manifested into a Soviet identity that was eerily similar to the Russian identity of the 1970s and 1980s.

The last General Secretary of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, took office in 1985. He adhered to many of the same Leninist goals for the Soviet Union. Still, he made significant reforms to preserve the state, including allowing more freedom of speech (glasnost) and decentralizing economic decision-making (perestroika). However, the nationality policies

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[86] Jessica Smith, ed., *Voices of Tomorrow: The 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: NWR Publications, 1971), 56.
[87] Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union*, 96.
[88] Olcott, Hajda, and Olcott, *The Soviet Multinational State*, 13–15. This speech failed to mention how the true spirit of the Leninist nationality policies highlighted the importance of native language being used in the Soviet Union.
[89] Olcott, Hajda, and Olcott, 15.

remained oriented around ethnic Russians.[90] During the 27th Congress in 1986, Gorbachev said, "National oppression and inequality of all types and forms have been done away with once and for all."[91] Also in 1988, in a report at the Nineteenth All-Union Conference of the CPSU, Gorbachev addressed the question of national groups living outside their national republics, stating that it was a result of the Soviet multi-national state and was up to the Union to consider the interests of every nation and national group.[92] As Gorbachev's tenure continued, freedom of speech allowed for a new spotlight on the question of nationality. The dispersed ethnic groups created tension among territories that were historic homelands of other ethnic groups (Crimea Tatars and the Crimean Peninsula).[93] In November 1989, the Supreme Soviet issued a decree allowing Crimean Tatars the right to return to the Crimean Peninsula.[94] However, the Crimean Tatars returned to a homeland that was now in the Ukrainian SSR and dominated by ethnic Russians.

Politically and geographically, Crimea was part of Soviet Ukraine, but culturally and socially, it was separate. Khrushchev's "flowering of nationalities" policy did not mean the flowering of Ukrainian culture in Ukraine. After the period of Stalinization and the destruction of the Second World War, Ukraine was in crisis – struggling to maintain sovereignty and integrity over its economy and territory.[95] Khrushchev's policy of "merging" identities transformed to merging into an all-Russian identity.[96] The "New Soviet Man" project was rooted in Russian

[90] Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union*, 122.
[91] Olcott, Hajda, and Olcott, *The Soviet Multinational State*, 22.
[92] "O Khode Realizat͡sii Reshenīĭ Xxvii Sezda Kpss I Zadachakh Po Uglubleniiu Perestroĭki," *Pravda*, June 29, 1988, No 181 (25533) edition, 5.
[93] Lapidus, *The "Nationality" Question in the Soviet Union*, 208.
[94] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 133.
[95] Ivan Dzi͡uba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, 3d ed. (New York: Monad Press, 1974), 14.
[96] P. Goble, "Russian National Identity and the Ukrainian Crisis," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 39, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.12.006; Farmer, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Post-Stalin Era*, 59.

language and culture.[97] The Russo-centric approach continued under Khrushchev's successors. This allowed Crimea to hold onto an identity that fostered a dominant Russian culture.[98] The Crimean Peninsula became an embodiment of Soviet nationality policies. Political leaders in Ukraine also allowed for the Russification of the peninsula. Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party who started under Brezhnev, strictly followed Soviet policies.[99] The Russo-centric culture of Crimea was supported further by the high military presence in Sevastopol and because it was a vacation spot for Soviet leaders and citizens.[100] Even though Crimea was a part of the Ukrainian SSR, the regional consciousness of the peninsula was somewhere between a Soviet and Russian identity.

Ethnic population

According to author Paul Robert Magocsi, the transfer of Crimea in February 1954 did not have an immediate impact on the daily lives of the average citizen.[101] The Soviet government began to take steps in the spring of 1954 to rebuild the Crimean economy and incorporate it into Ukraine.[102] This economic rebuilding expanded agriculture and further developed industry in Crimea but did not Ukrainize the peninsula. While there was a population influx, and in 1989, Crimea had over two million people, ethnic Russians remained the majority population.[103]

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[97] I. V. Dii͡ak, *Ukraïna--Rosii͡a: (istorii͡a ta suchasnist')* (Kyïv: Ukrpolihrafservis, 2001), 184.
[98] Rolando Dromundo, *State-Building in the Middle of a Geopolitical Struggle: The Cases of Ukraine, Moldova, and Pridnestrovia* (Columbia University Press, 2018), 313.
[99] Andreas Klinke, Ortwin Renn, and Jean-Paul Lehners, eds., *Ethnic Conflicts and Civil Society: Proposals for a New Era in Eastern Europe* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2018), 131. Shcherbytskyi served as Party Secretary from 1972-1989.
[100] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 129. Crimea was a destination for many Soviet citizens; and notably Soviet leaders had vacation homes in the peninsula. Sevastopol was also home to the Black Sea Fleet – the Soviet Union's naval force.
[101] Ibid, 125.
[102] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 122; Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 125–27.
[103] Serhiĭ Bilen′kyĭ, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*, Stanford Studies on Central and Eastern Europe (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press,

Ukrainian scholarship portrays the surge of ethnic Ukrainians into Crimea as a signal of the development of a Ukrainian identity.[104] However, Soviet census records demonstrate a growing ethnic Russian population and only a small minority of ethnic Ukrainians.

Soviet census data can give information about the ethnic composition; however, they can also give misconstrued data due to how the question was asked. Soviet censuses did not specifically ask about ethnicity but instead asked about nationality (natsional'nost'). Ethnicity and nationality are not necessarily interchangeable terms in English; the former is a cultural term, while the latter is a legal term. In Russian, the two terms used in the census surveys (natsional'nost' and narodnost') can be translated into English as a nation, nationality, ethnic group, or simply "the people." In the recognized general censuses conducted in the Soviet Union, the authorities phrased the question about nationality in ways that allowed for interpretation and permitted the identification of ethnicity.[105] In the first census in 1926, the nationality question asked citizens to identify what *narodnost* (group of people) they belonged to. The language changed in subsequent censuses for respondents to identify the *natsional'nost'* (nationality) to which they consider themselves to belong.[106] Considering these ambiguities, the census conducted in the Crimean Peninsula might not disclose the complete picture of ethnic composition, but it gives insight into how citizens identified themselves.

A partial census conducted in 1920-21 illustrates the two major self-identified ethnic compositions in the Crimean ASSR: 51.5% Russian and Ukrainian[107] and 25.9% Crimean Tatars.

2012); G.N. Dolgova and D.S. Maslyakov, "Istoriko-Politicheskie Osnovaniia Respublikanskoĭ Sub"ektnosti Kryma," *Vestnik Povolzhskogo Instituta Upravleniia* 17, no. 2 (2017): 24–31; Kent, *Crimea*, 142.

[104] Savchenko, *Krym--Shliakh Do Ukraïny*; Serhiychuk, *Ukraìns'kyĭ Krym*.

[105] 1926, 1939, 1959, 1970, 1979 and 1989

[106] Brian D. Silver, "The Ethnic and Language Dimensions in Russian and Soviet Censuses," in *Research Guide to the Russian and Soviet Censuses*, ed. Ralph S. Clem (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 74–75, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1g69xfv.9.

[107] No distinction was made between Russian and Ukrainians in this census.

The 1939 census reveals a growing population of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians and a decrease in Crimean Tatars : 49.6% Russian, 13.7% Ukrainians, and 19.4% Crimean Tatars.[108] After the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944, the proportion of Russian population rose in the 1959 census to 71.4% of the population, with Ukrainians the largest minority at 22.3%.[109] From 1979 to 1989, more than 100,000 Ukrainians moved to Crimea, creating a population of 625,919 ethnic Ukrainians. At the same time, nearly 200,000 Russians moved to Crimea, with a total population of 1,629,542 ethnic Russians.[110] This was not an uncommon trend, ethnic Russians moved to different Soviet republics, including throughout the Ukrainian SSR.[111] However, Crimea continued to hold the strongest and largest ethnic Russian population.

After its transfer to Ukraine, there were attempts to promote Ukrainian culture in the Crimea Peninsula. Along with the migration of ethnic Ukrainians, Ukrainian language schools were created, and administrators attempted to use Ukrainian language.[112] Though, the Ukrainian SSR lacked internal support and political will to continue using the Ukrainian language in Crimea. There were 2,193 primary school teachers in Crimea, and only 94 could teach Ukrainian.[113] Therefore, the dominant language in Crimea continued to be Russian.[114] The efforts of Ukrainization in the 1960s and 1980s was overshadowed by the dominant Soviet

[108] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 275; Yevtoukk, "The Dynamics of Interethnic Relations in Crimea," 73.
[109] Kent, *Crimea*, 140.
[110] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 275; Yevtoukk, "The Dynamics of Interethnic Relations in Crimea," 73.
[111] Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, "Growth and Diversity of the Population of the Soviet Union," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 510, no. 1 (July 1, 1990): 176, https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716290510001012; Nadežda Kindračuk, "Dinamika Čislennosti Ètničeskih Ukraincev v USSR: Na Osnove Itogov Vsesojuznyh Perepisej Naselenija 1959 g., 1970 g. i 1979 g.," *Nowa Polityka Wschodnia* 20 (March 31, 2019): 40–53, https://doi.org/10.15804/npw20192003.
[112] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 121.
[113] Serhiychuk, *Ukraìns'kyĭ Krym*, 235-250.
[114] For a more information on the discrimination of Ukrainian language and the push for the "Soviet" language (Russian) see: Laada Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine*, Culture & Society after Socialism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) 13-20.

nationality policies that promoted Russian language.[115] In the 1989 census, 99.9% of ethnic Russians in the Crimean Peninsula considered their native language to be Russian, and 47.4% of ethnic Ukrainians also considered their native language to be Russian.[116] Considering both language and nationality, Crimea was able to develop a strong Soviet identity.

Unique Regional Consciousness

The ethnic composition of Soviet Crimea and Soviet nationality policies allowed for the development of a Russian identity in the peninsula. Drawing from Anderson Benedict's *Imagined Community* and Anthony Smith's *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, identity is formed by communities creating a national consciousness. While there is a clear prominence of Russian/Soviet identity, Crimea was still located in the borders of Ukraine. Smith argues that cultural identity is subject to change.[117] The transfer of the Crimean Peninsula created a physical border between ethnic Russians living in the RSFSR and those living in the peninsula. Similarly, ethnic Ukrainians living in Crimea were exposed to a higher level of Sovietization and Russification because they were the minority population. Crimea wasn't the only region in Soviet Ukraine with a significant Russian population,[118] but the peninsula was different because it held historical and military significance to Russia. Because of this, Crimea was still closely associated with Soviet Russia, even with a physical border.

Still, creating a regional consciousness also depends on more than unified borders. Anderson highlights the importance of language and literature as the process of building a

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[115] Klinke, Renn, and Lehners, *Ethnic Conflicts and Civil Society*, 130-31.
[116] Yevtoukk, "The Dynamics of Interethnic Relations in Crimea," 71; Ministerstvo Statystyky Ukrainy, "Natsional'nyi Sklad Naselennia Ukrainy," Chastyna I (Kyiv, 1991).
[117] Smith, *Nationalism*, 22.
[118] In particular, Luhansk (Voroshilovhrad) and Donetsk had large Russian populations, while southern, eastern regions, and even central regions were mainly Russophone prior to 1991.

common communication between people.[119] Smith adds that with language, there are also objective and subjective factors of creating identity, such as common institutions, territory, attitudes, and perceptions.[120] A common government, economy, and territory connected Crimea and Soviet Ukraine. However, the peninsula held a stronger Soviet attitude, creating a closer connection to the RSFSR than the Ukrainian SSR.[121] Furthermore, the 1989 census highlighted that many Crimeans considered their native language to be Russian, which makes another connection between Crimea and Russia.[122] As a result, during the period Crimea was in the Ukrainian SSR, the citizens of Crimea started to develop an identity uniquely Crimean – a strong Soviet connection, majority Russian speaking, but geographically, politically, and economically Ukrainian.

Conclusion

The history of the Crimean Peninsula can be highlighted to show the origins of Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, and Russians. The influence of the Soviet Union through its nationality policies kept Crimea close to Russia despite the territorial connection to Ukraine. Most ethnic Russians in the Crimean Peninsula used the Russian language, which also preserved a Russian identity. However, the economic and government ties to Ukraine meant that a Crimean consciousness was in a space between Russia and Ukraine. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine gained independence, and the Crimean Tatars returned to their homelands, the situation in Crimea shifted. Crimean Russians claimed Crimea as their historic home, and Crimean Tatars also

[119] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition. (London: Verso, 2006), 46–52.
[120] Smith, *Nationalism*, 11.
[121] Dromundo, *State-Building in the Middle of a Geopolitical Struggle*, 313.
[122] Yevtoukk, "The Dynamics of Interethnic Relations in Crimea," 79.

claimed Crimea as their homeland based on a more extended history. Yet, Crimea was now part of independent Ukraine.

Chapter 2: Crimea in Ukraine (1991-2013)

The Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR adopted the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine on 24 August 1991.[123] This announcement sparked a wave of activity throughout Crimea, supporting and opposing Ukraine's independence decision. In the second wave of rallies in Simferopol in late September of 1991 pro-Russian activists and Crimean Tatars activists took to the streets to make their demands. On one side, the leaders of the Russian Society of Crimea advocated for Crimea to be annexed to Russia. On the other side, Crimean Tatars advocated for Ukrainian independence because they saw it as the only way to secure their own autonomy in Crimea. The protesters rallied around the Vladimir Lenin monument in the city center, waving Russian flags, Ukrainian flags, and Crimean Tatar flags. Despite the division, there was one common thread: судьба Крыма - в руках крымчан (the fate of Crimea is in the hands of Crimeans).[124]

The collapse of the Soviet Union created an identity crisis in Crimea among the three main ethnic groups (Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars). The Russian nationalist movement tried to declare independence and autonomy in the early 1990s, and while it was unsuccessful, it further exemplified a pro-Russian sentiment in Crimea.[125] The return of the Crimean Tatars changed the political landscape of the peninsula. The Ukrainian government sympathized with the Crimean Tatar population and attempted to make policies to support

[123] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 137.
[124] I. Turčin, "Opi͡at′ Mitingovye Strasti," *Leninist*, September 28, 1991, No 39 (7422) edition.
[125] Nicolai N. Petro, "Understanding the Other Ukraine: Identity and Allegiance in Russophone Ukraine," in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, ed. Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (Bristol, UK: E-International Relations, 2015), 23–24.

rehabilitation. At the same time, the Crimean Ukrainian minority was divided between assisting the Crimean Tatar movement, supporting Ukrainian independence, and remaining neutral toward the Russian nationalist movement.

This chapter will cover the period when independent Ukraine governed the Crimean Peninsula and demonstrate how Crimeans never developed a Ukrainian identity. The 1990s Russian nationalist movement and the return of the Crimean Tatars created a foundation of conflicting ideologies in Crimea. Both groups sought a degree of autonomy and saw the path forward differently. By the beginning of the 2000s, the Ukrainian and Crimean governments seemed to reach a consensus on Crimean autonomy within Ukraine. However, a pro-Russian agenda was reignited between the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan. Despite the Ukrainization efforts, Crimea was not evenly incorporated into Ukrainian society. A Crimean consciousness remained between Crimean Russians, Ukrainians, and Tatars.

1990s Russian Nationalist Movement

The push for autonomy in Crimea began before the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine declared independence.[126] In the autumn of 1990, the Crimean government started to work on reestablishing the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Crimean ASSR).[127] A resolution signed by the members of the Crimean parliament at an extraordinary session of the Crimean Council of Regional People's Deputies on 12 November 1990 approved a referendum

[126] The Verkhovna Rada is the parliament of Ukraine.
[127] Maria Drohobycky, ed., *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges and Prospects* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1995). The Crimean ASSR was first established in 1921 as part of the RSFSR. However, it was dissolved on 30 June 1945, a year after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Oblast remained part of the RSFSR until the territory was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR.

to vote on the restoration of the Crimean ASSR.[128] Two months later, on 20 January 1991, citizens of Crimea[129] were presented with a ballot with one question: "Do you support the restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a subject of the USSR and a participant of the Union Treaty?"[130] The results of the ballot were published in local newspapers and overwhelmingly supported the restoration of the Crimean ASSR.[131] One of the problems with the wording of this ballot was it gave presumptive power to the newly reestablished Crimean ASSR.[132] The ballot question sought to separate Crimea from Ukraine and become a separate republic in the Union Treaty.[133] However, in response to the referendum on 12 February 1991, the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet adopted the resolution to recognize the re-establishment of the Crimean ASSR within the Ukrainian SSR.[134] The hopes of a Crimean ASSR joining the Union Treaty were further dismissed in the summer of 1991 with the failed August Coup and the Ukrainian government declaring independence subject to ratification by a national referendum.[135]

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[128] N.V. Bagrov, "O Provedenii Referenduma" (Krymskij Oblastnoj Sovet, November 11, 1990), http://krym.rusarchives.ru/dokumenty/reshenie-krymskogo-oblastnogo-soveta-narodnyh-deputatov-o-provedenii-referenduma.

[129] This included citizens in the Crimean Oblast and the city of Sevastopol.

[130] "Istoriia Kryma: Kakim Byl Pervyĭ Krymskiĭ Referendum v 1991 Godu," *Vgorode Crimea*, July 8, 2014, https://crimea.vgorode.ua/news/sobytyia/228916-ystoryia-kryma-kakym-byl-pervyi-krymskyi-referendum-v-1991-hodu. The voter turnout was 81% and 94% voted in favor of restoring the Crimean ASSR. I want to note that the initial resolution promised to allow Crimean Tatars to vote, even if they were not present in Crimea, however, the leaders in the Uzbek, Tajik and Kazakh Republics banned Crimean Tatars to participate.

[131] The ballot question was published in *Krymskaia Pravda* on 5 January 1991 and the results of the ballot was published on 22 January 1991. Only 5.6% of the citizens that participated voted no.

[132] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 137–38.

[133] For more information about the attempts to preserve the Soviet Union see: Andrei S. Grachev, *Final Days: The Inside Story Of The Collapse Of The Soviet Union* (Avalon Publishing, 1995); Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2014).

[134] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 134.

[135] "Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Resolution on Declaration of Independence of Ukraine" (Kyiv: Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, August 24, 1991), http://gska2.rada.gov.ua:7777/site/postanova_eng/Rres_Declaration_Independence_rev12.htm. For a more information about the August Coup see: Victoria E. Bonnell, Ann Cooper, and Gregory Freidin, *Russia at the Barricades: Eyewitness Accounts of the August 1991 Coup* (Routledge, 2015).

On 1 December 1991 citizens in Ukraine voted for independence. Only 54% of the voters were in favor of independence in Crimea – the lowest percentage of any region in Ukraine.[136] According to the 2001 Ukrainian Census, Russians accounted for the majority of the population (58.5%), while Crimean Ukrainians and Tatars created the two largest minorities (a combined total of 35.5% of the population).[137] This suggests some Crimean Russians voted in favor of Ukrainian independence; however, the support of the Crimean Tatars has been cited as the reason for the slim majority in favor.[138] Even though the Crimean Peninsula seemed to be solidified in the newly formed Ukrainian state, the Russian nationalist movement continued to push for autonomy and connection with Russia. In January 1992, the *Krymskie Izvestia*[139] published the proposed Constitution of the Republic of Crimea, citing the results of the January 1991 referendum supporting Crimean statehood.[140] During this period, conversations also began about the legality of the 1954 transfer of the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine. The Crimean Russian population appealed to both the Ukrainian and Russian governments on the illegality of the transfer of the Crimean Oblast in 1954. In January 1992, the question of the transfer appeared on the Russian government's agenda.[141] Upon the initiative of Vladimir Lukin,[142] a resolution was

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[136] Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa, eds., *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives* (Bristol, UK: E-International Relations Publishing, 2015), 23.

[137] According to the 2001 Census: there were 1,180,400 Russians (58.5%), 492,200 Ukrainians (24.4%), and 243,400 Crimean Tatars (12.1%). Data from the 2001 Ukrainian Census can be found at: https://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/results/general/nationality/crimea.

[138] Filiz Tutku Aydın, *Émigré, Exile, Diaspora, and Transnational Movements of the Crimean Tatars: Preserving the Eternal Flame of Crimea*, Palgrave Studies in Citizenship Transitions Series (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 12; Andrew Wilson, "The Crimean Tatars: A Quarter of a Century after Their Return," *Security & Human Rights* 24, no. 3/4 (January 2014): 421, https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02404012.

[139] Translated to "Crimean News," it is one of the national newspapers published in the capitol of Crimea: Simferopol. It was founded in 1991, printed in Russian, and covers the work of the Crimean and Ukrainian governments.

[140] "Konstitutsiia Respubliki Krym," *Krymskie Izvestia*, January 3, 1992, No. 2 (2) edition, sec. Proyekt.

[141] Butkevych, "Who Has a Right to Crimea?," 35.

[142] Vladimir Lukin is a Russian politician. At the time of this resolution, he was the chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Economic Relations. He later served as the Russian Ambassador to the United States from 1992-1994 and Human Rights Commissioner of Russia from 2004-2014.

brought to the Russian parliament: "On the Decisions of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of February 19, 1954, and the USSR Supreme Soviet of April 26, 1954, Concerning the Removal of Crimea from the RSFSR."[143] This resolution never created concrete change, but it did keep the discourse about Russia's role in Crimea alive.

Throughout the spring of 1992, the Crimean and Ukrainian governments continued a back-and-forth conversation about what role the Crimean region would have in independent Ukraine. The disconnect between Kyiv and the Crimean Peninsula was seen in April 1992 with the extraordinary session of the Supreme Council of Ukraine, and as the *Krymskie Izvestia* commented, "opinions of Crimeans were not listened to in Kyiv."[144] The continued frustration of Crimea's voice not being heard in Kyiv pushed the Crimean parliament to call for another referendum to secure autonomy.[145] The majority of Crimean Ukrainians and Russians supported the call for independence.[146] However, because of the direct action of the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, Crimean authorities and the Ukrainian government were able to make compromises and suspend any further call for independence.[147] With the conversations of secession lessening, the Russian nationalist movement began to seek other avenues of control, including creating a Crimean president.

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[143] Drohobycky, *Crimea*, 6.
[144] A Sergeev, "Segodn͡ia v Kieve," *Krymskie Izvestia*, April 22, 1992, No. 79 (88) edition.
[145] L. Ivanov, "Referendum Dolzhen Sostoi͡atsi͡a," *Krymskie Izvestia*, May 16, 1992, No. 95 (104) edition; Y. Komod and L. Filatov, "O Referendume v Krymu," *Krymskie Izvestia*, February 15, 1992, No. 35 (44) edition; A. Palmin, "Referendumy Byt," *Krymskie Izvestia*, April 9, 1992, No. 70 (79) edition.
[146] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 172.
[147] Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa, *Ukraine and Russia*, 23; Serhiy Tolstov, "Dimensions of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Ukraine," *The Ukrainian Review* 40, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 41. The Ukrainian government passed both the laws "On the division of power between the governmental structures of Crimea and Ukraine" and "Act proclaiming the state sovereignty of the Crimean Republic". These compromises along with President Kravchuk's threats to withhold agricultural support to areas of Crimea that support succession, put a hold on any talk of independence.

Kyiv initially supported the idea of a Crimean presidency in 1993 because the election of a moderate candidate could help bridge Crimean and Ukrainian relations. In the first round of elections in January 1994, there were six candidates: four independents, one candidate from the Crimean Communist Party, and one candidate from the Republican Movement of Crimea (RDK).[148] On 1 February 1994, after the final runoff results, Yuri Meshkov, leader of the RDK, won the election.[149] Meshkov, a Russian nationalist, created concern for both Ukrainian territorial integrity and the West. In an interview, Meshkov said, "There were no borders in the Soviet Union… We do not recognize the current boundaries." His position questioned the nuclear disarmament pact between Russia, Ukraine, and the United States signed a month prior; he also caused concern that the conflict in Crimea could become violent, as Meshkov said he would create a Crimean National Guard.[150] Moreover, Meshkov emphasized Crimea's connection with Russia and justified the deportations of ethnic groups in the Soviet Union, including the deportations of the Crimean Tatars.[151] Responding to this new threat of secession, the Ukrainian parliament abolished the 1992 Crimean Constitution and the position of Crimean president in March 1995.[152] This meant Crimea was to be ruled directly by the Ukrainian government in Kyiv.

The period between 1995-1998 was defined by attempting to answer the Crimean question within Ukraine. Gwendolyn Sasse argues four main stages existed: "the ratification of an incomplete Crimean Constitution in April 1996, the adoption of the Ukrainian Constitution in

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[148] "Kandidaty v prezidenty Respubliki Krym," *Krymskie Izvestia*, January 15, 1994, No. 8 (517) edition.
[149] "V Minuvsheye Voskresen'ye Zavershilis' Vybory Pervogo Prezidenta Respubliki Krym. Bol'shinstvom Golosov Im Izbran Yuriy Aleksandrovich Meshkov.," *Krymskie Izvestia*, February 1, 1994.
[150] Robert Seely, "Russian Nationalist Winning in Crimea," *Washington Post*, January 31, 1994, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/01/31/russian-nationalist-winning-in-crimea/e5875424-2097-4dc0-85e9-9a3620160bbd/.
[151] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 139.
[152] Serhy Yekelchyk, "The Crimean Exception: Modern Politics as Hostage of the Imperial Past," *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 46, no. 3 (January 1, 2019): 319.

June 1996, new regional elections in March 1998, and the ratification of the final Crimean Constitution by the Ukrainian parliament in December 1998."[153] The Russian national movement began to cool off as the realities of the socio-economic situation could not be tackled without the help of the Ukrainian government. However, the Russian-Ukrainian relationship began to provoke international attention. In the 1997 Forum on Eastern Europe, experts met with Ukrainian and Crimean officials to discuss inter-ethnic relations. A team of Canadian scholars conducted seminars under the "Managing Diversity in Plural Societies" project, concluding that Ukraine must be cautious of Crimea because of its diversity and distinctive needs. If the government provided too much attention to the different ethnic groups, it would only heighten the push for complete autonomy.[154] A *Krymskie Izvestia* article published on 29 March 1997 commented, "Crimea and Canada have a lot in common," and the inter-ethnic problems in Crimea could be resolved by looking at how Canada deals with a pluralist society.[155] Throughout the late 1990s, there were also conversations about Belarus serving as the intermediary between Ukraine and Crimea.[156] Following the adoption of the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty and the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet in May 1997, the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) was approved in February 1998.[157]

[153] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 176.
[154] Ivan Jaworsky, *Ukraine: Managing Diversity in Plural Societies, Focus: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, 1997), 18.
[155] A Dorohan, "U Krym i Kanada mnogo obshchego," *Krymskie Izvestia*, May 29, 1997, No. 94 (1344) edition.
[156] Galina Mamyko, "Krym i Belarus': Put' Sotrudnichestva," *Krymskie Izvestia*, October 22, 1998, No. 208 (1702) edition; Galina Mamyko, "Narody Kryma i Belarusi – Prezhde Vsego Brat′," *Krymskie Izvestia*, October 28, 1998, No 212 (1706) edition.
[157] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 190; Constantine Pleshakov, *The Crimean Nexus: Putin's War and the Clash of Civilizations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 46. The Constitution formally changed the name of the Republic of Crimea to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC). The Black Sea Fleet agreement allowed for a Russian military base in Sevastopol, it also allowed for military troops to be present in the city. In exchange, Kyiv would get discounted natural gas prices.

The fractions of pro-Russian citizens in Crimea never disappeared, but at the turn of the century, Crimea remained firmly in the hands of Ukraine.

The Return of the Crimean Tatars

At the same time as the Russian movement tried to gain traction in Crimea, the indigenous population, the Crimean Tatars, returned to the peninsula.[158] In 1944, the Crimean Tatars were deported for alleged treason during the Second World War.[159] Nearly 200,000 Crimean Tatars were forcibly removed from their homes, and most were taken to the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.[160] There were efforts from the Crimean Tatars to dispel the charges. The 1967 decree from the Supreme Soviet, "On the citizens of Tatar Nationality formerly resident in the Crimea," annulled the accusations of treason and seemed to suggest Crimean Tatars could live freely in the borders of the Soviet Union.[161] However, because of Soviet passport regulations, Crimean Tatars were prohibited from living in the Crimean Peninsula.[162] Over twenty years later, the Supreme Soviet adopted the declaration, "On the recognition of repression against nations forcibly resettled as unlawful and criminal…" which reestablished full legal and political rights for the Crimean Tatars.[163] The return of the Crimean Tatars changed the ethnic composition and political landscape of the peninsula.

The migration of the Crimean Tatars meant Crimean Russians no longer had an overwhelming majority in the peninsula. According to the last Soviet census (1989), Crimean

[158] It's estimated that over 200,000 Crimean Tatars returned to the peninsula during the early 1990s. Forced Migration Projects, *Crimean Tatars: Repatriation and Conflict Prevention.* (New York, N.Y. USA: Open Society Institute, Forced Migration Projects, 1996), 7–8.
[159] "State Defense Committee Decree No. 5859ss - On the Crimean Tatars."
[160] Kent, *Crimea*, 135–37.
[161] Conquest, *The Nation Killers*, 186–87.
[162] Vardys, "Case of the Crimean Tartars," 105–7.
[163] Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, 150.

Tatars comprised 1.6% of the Crimean population, and Russians accounted for the majority at 67%.[164] Two years later, in Ukraine's first census, Crimean Tatars comprised 12.1% of the population of Crimea, and Russians represented only 58.5%.[165] The migration of Crimean Tatars meant the population was no longer two-thirds Russian. While the Crimean Tatars constituted a larger minority of the population before deportation (in the 1937 Soviet census – 19.4%), the new minority population still threatened the dominant Russian identity. The Crimean Russian opposition to the new migration was evident through anti-Tatar propaganda and unwillingness to help Crimean Tatars.[166] An interview with Snaver Khamedov, a Crimean Tatar who returned in the late 1980s, showcased Russian feelings toward the Crimean Tatars:

> After I first arrived, I went several times to the local administration in order to officially register. But each time the authorities refused to give me a residency permit. Why? Because of my Crimean Tatar nationality, I am sure of it. They did not like the idea of us coming back. It made me angry.[167]

Khamedov's story is one of hundreds that echoed the discrimination against the Crimean Tatars returning to the peninsula.

Along with discrimination, Tatars were not able to return to their original settlements. Their homes prior to deportation were now either occupied by Crimean Russians and Ukrainians or simply destroyed. So, instead of seizing their homes that remained, the Crimean Tatars asked

[164] Yevtoukk, "The Dynamics of Interethnic Relations in Crimea," 73. The 1989 census recorded 38,365 Crimean Tatars and 1,629542 Russians in the Crimean Peninsula.
[165] Data from the 2001 Ukrainian Census can be found at: https://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/results/general/nationality/crimea. 243,400 Crimean Tatars and 1,180,400 Russians were recorded in the Ukrainian census. The ethnic Ukrainian composition did not change as drastically – in 1989 Ukrainians accounted for 25.8% and in 2001 Ukrainians were 24.4% of the peninsula.
[166] Part of the "Anti-Tatar" propaganda was promoting the Crimea Tatars as "Islamic extremists." For more information see: Ülkü Nur Zengin, "Identity of Crimean Tatars," Bilig - Journal of Social Sciences of the Turkic World, no. 92 (2020): 170; Askold Krushelnycky, "Ukraine: Crimea's Tatars -- Clearing the Way For Islamic Extremism? (Part 4)," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August 26, 2004, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/1054513.html.
[167] Forced Migration Projects, *Crimean Tatars*, 30.

for land plots – which the Crimean government was reluctant to give out.[168] Crimea, like many other regions in the former Soviet Union, faced a severe housing shortage, which created an even more complicated situation. Crimean Tatars who were unable to secure a land plot were forced to live on the outskirts of cities in makeshift houses.[169] Some Tatars took advantage of the vacant land surrounding Yalta and built homes. However, the land was prone to landslides, and many of the houses were destroyed when the hillside caved in, which put the Tatars in even worse living conditions.[170] Despite the lack of support from the Crimean and Ukrainian governments, Crimean Tatars continued to rebuild their homes and communities.

As more Crimean Tatars returned to the peninsula, the political landscape of Crimea also changed. By the summer of 1991, the Russian nationalist movement and the Mejlis were two of the authorities of Crimea.[171] The Mejlis were the ruling party of the Crimean Tatars. In a 1993 article in *The Ukrainian Review*, the Mejlis were compared to the Islamic parliament in the UK and the Board of Deputies of British Jews.[172] The Mejlis was not a legal entity nor an NGO but maintained international recognition after the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declarations of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.[173] The goals of the Mejlis were to promote safeguard measures for the Crimean Tatars' return to Crimea and their right to national self-

[168] Uehling, *Beyond Memory,* 209. This was seen as a moderate approach compared to other ethnic groups who returned to their homelands. An extreme approach could be seen in Chechnya when Chechens returned from exile and said, "vacate these premises or we will slit your throats." The Crimean authorities justified not giving land plots to the Tatars by citing already established farmlands and plans for future construction. Yet, during this period, the Slavic population received land plots.
[169] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 142. The makeshift houses were built out of scrap materials and were not suitable living conditions. Crimean authorities also did sweeps through the "shanty towns" and ordered the demolition of the houses.
[170] Uehling, *Beyond Memory,* 220.
[171] Magocsi, *This Blessed Land*, 134.
[172] Tolstov, "Dimensions of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Ukraine," 43–44.
[173] "The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (United Nations, September 13, 2007), 9; Ridvan Bari de Urcosta, "Crimean Tatars Losing Hope," *New Eastern Europe*, no. 02 (26) (2017): 80.

determination based on the historical legacy of the lands.[174] Because of the Mejlis, the Tatar National Movement remained united and relatively moderate.[175] The Mejlis leader, Mustafa Jemilev, maintained a critical line, but his stance was more loyal to Kyiv rather than to the Russians in Simferopol.[176] The Mejlis made Crimean Tatars a politically unified voice against the Russian nationalist movement.

As the Crimean Tatars demanded their own autonomy, they also advocated for Ukrainian governance. From the vote for independence to carrying Ukrainian flags, Crimean Tatars became the most prominent "pro-Ukrainian force" in Crimea.[177] While Crimean Ukrainians made up nearly a quarter of the population, the peninsula was one of the regions in Ukraine with a dominant Russophone population.[178] So, the Ukrainian government focused on the Crimean Tatars to gain their support for keeping Crimea in Ukraine. [179] Although many Tatars could not vote in the January 1991 referendum, most Crimean Tatars in Crimea voted for the independence of Ukraine in December 1991.[180] The hope for Crimean Tatars was that with Ukrainian governance, there would be rehabilitation and protection of their indigenous rights. However, throughout the 1990s, all citizens faced socio-economic trouble, and it was exacerbated for Crimean Tatars – without land plots or citizenship, many could not work and did not have a

[174] Tolstov, "Dimensions of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Ukraine," 43–44.
[175] Wilson, "The Crimean Tatars," 431.
[176] Tolstov, "Dimensions of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Ukraine," 43–44.
[177] Wilson, "The Crimean Tatars," 421; Forced Migration Projects, *Crimean Tatars*, 43. According to the Forced Migration Project, Ukrainian Crimean's presence was hardly felt in the peninsula.
[178] Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 149.
[179] Kotyhorenko, *Kryms'kotatars'ki repatrianty*, 49.
[180] Yekelchyk, "The Crimean Exception," 316.

voice to make change.[181] Despite such problems, Crimean Tatars remained a prominent influence in Crimea.

Crimea between the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan

The Color Revolutions in the early 2000s in the former Soviet Bloc were meant to topple the undemocratic regimes and bring a new age of democracy.[182] The Orange Revolution in Ukraine was no different.[183] However, the Orange Revolution looked very different in Crimea than in Kyiv. Crimea remained relatively passive to the protests.[184] During the 2005 presidential elections, most Crimean Russians and Ukrainians supported Viktor Yanukovych.[185] Only 15% of the Crimean voting bloc supported Viktor Yushchenko, and the leaders of the Mejlis claim that 12% of support for Yushchenko came from the Crimean Tatars.[186] The newspaper headline announcing the election results cites, "Crimeans voted for stability."[187] This statement points to the pro-Russian sentiment present in Crimea.

While the Orange Revolution did not create political unrest in Crimea, the election of Yushchenko and his pro-Western agenda created a backlash that heightened the pro-Russian agenda in Crimea. The question of a NATO military zone and the Georgian Crisis in 2006 and

[181] Kotyhorenko, *Kryms'kotatars'ki repatrianty*, 28. Crimean Tatars who arrived after 13 November 1991 could not use the right to "automatically" receive Ukrainian citizenship. They had to apply and wait instead – which meant many resources and government aide could not be acquired.
[182] For more in depth explanation of the Color Revolutions see: Lincoln A. Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fj606.
[183] For a more detailed explanation of the Orange Revolution see: Ingmar Bredies, Andreas Umland, and Valentin Yakushik, eds., *Aspects of the Orange Revolution*, Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014); Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2005).
[184] Bredies, Umland, and Yakushik, *Aspects of the Orange Revolution*, 51.
[185] Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 91.
[186] Wilson, "The Crimean Tatars," 421. The "12%" is in reference for the population of the Crimean Tatars in Crimea.
[187] L Radeva, "Krymchane Progolosovali Za Stabil′nost′," *Krymskie Izvestia*, November 23, 2004, No. 218 (3204) edition.

2008, respectively, resulted in Crimea being further pulled into Russia's sphere of influence. A separatist movement in Crimea formed in June 2006 following a decision by the Ukrainian parliament to exclude Ukraine from any military bloc.[188] This bill allowed the United States Navy and Ukrainian Marines to conduct joint military exercises in Feodosiya;[189] however, the bill did not mean Ukraine would be a part of NATO.[190] Still, many Crimeans protested with signs saying, "occupiers go home!" and the Crimean Parliament responded by issuing a regulation that Crimea was a NATO-free zone.[191] Following the talks about Ukraine joining NATO, Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, said if Ukraine joined NATO, it would lead to a "colossal geopolitical shift."[192] This statement only heightened the Russian propaganda in Crimea leading to distrust with the Kyiv government.[193] Elites on both sides, Crimean Russians and Crimean Tatars, started to become dissatisfied with Kyiv's policies.[194] Both groups felt the Ukrainian government was not addressing their problems, and this alienation was worsened by Russian influence on the peninsula.

The Kremlin's agenda began intensifying in 2006-08 with an information campaign appearing in media and youth pamphlets. It emphasized the question of the "status of Crimea."[195] There is also evidence that the Kremlin supported the radicalization of Crimean Tatars by

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[188] Dromundo, *State-Building in the Middle of a Geopolitical Struggle*, 270.
[189] A city in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea located on the east coast of the Black Sea.
[190] "Nato Denies Georgia and Ukraine," *BBC News*, April 3, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7328276.stm. At the 2008 Bucharest summit, NATO decided not to grant Georgia and Ukraine membership.
[191] Lunyka Adelina Pertiwi and Wan Sharina Ramlah Wan A. A. Jaffri, "Russia's Foreign Policy towards Crimean Separatism: Its Learning from Georgia-Russo War," *Malaysian Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (December 1, 2019): 92, https://doi.org/10.22452/mjir.vol7no1.5.
[192] Nick Paton Walsh, "Russia Tells Ukraine to Stay out of Nato," *The Guardian*, June 7, 2006, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/08/russia.nickpatonwalsh.
[193] Jakob Hedenskog, *Crimea: After the Georgian Crisis*, FOI-R 2587-SE (Stockholm, Sweden: FOI, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Division of Defence Analysis, 2008), 4.
[194] Dromundo, *State-Building in the Middle of a Geopolitical Struggle*, 314.
[195] Hedenskog, 15–16. The "status of Crimea" referring to whether Crimea belongs to Ukraine or to Russia.

financing various Islamic movements in Crimea.[196] By discrediting and villainizing the Crimean Tatars, the Russian Federation further alienated the Crimean Tatar identity on the peninsula. This also created a potential opportunity for Russia to invade the peninsula to protect ethnic Russians from "extremist" Crimean Tatars.[197] However, by late October 2008, the information campaign toned down, partially because the Kremlin wanted to avoid any more anti-Russian discussion following the Georgian Crisis. Even though there were significant pro-Russian feelings in the peninsula, Russia had to continue to be diplomatic with Ukraine because of the Black Sea Fleet military base agreement in Sevastopol.[198]

As tensions grew between Crimea and Ukraine, the 2010 presidential elections allowed for a small window of improvement for ethnic interrelations. Despite the Orange Revolution and the push for a more democratic Ukraine, Yanukovych won.[199] Similar to the 2005 election, the Crimean Tatars held the majority of the small voting bloc not voting for Yanukovych.[200] The outgoing president, Yushchenko, did very little to resolve or support the Crimean Tatar issue in Crimea. Yanukovych had a slim window to address the Crimean Tatars in the summer of 2010. However, the meeting between the president and the Mejlis did not go well after a standoff because Yanukovych invited known critics of the Mejlis.[201] The Crimean Tatars' relations with the pro-Russian president were not discussed further. The issues also became overshadowed by the anxieties throughout Ukraine when Yanukovych delayed signing the long-awaited European

[196] Ibid, 28.
[197] Ibid, 28–30.
[198] Ibid, 21-23. The government of Kyiv announced it would not extend the lease of the Black Sea Fleet in 2017.
[199] For a deeper analysis on the 2010 Ukrainian presidential election see: E.S. Herron, "How Viktor Yanukovych Won: Reassessing the Dominant Narratives of Ukraine's 2010 Presidential Election," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 47–67, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325410388560.
[200] Wilson, "The Crimean Tatars," 421. In the second-round runoff, the main opponent of Yanukovych was Yulia Tymoshenko, not Yushchenko. She was a key figure in the Orange Revolution, but later became an adversary of Yushchenko after he dismissed her as Prime Minister. Tymoshenko won 12% of the vote in round one and 17% in round two. Crimean Tatars reported that they were part of the voting bloc backing Tymoshenko.
[201] Wilson, 420–21.

Union Association Agreement in Vilnius. He announced on 21 November 2013 that Ukraine would not sign it and would instead sign an economic alliance with the Russian Federation. This sparked a wave of pro-EU demonstrations throughout Kyiv and Ukraine.[202] Three weeks after the protests began, *Krymskie Izvestia*'s front page was filled with concern about the protests with headlines of: "No to the Orange Coup," "Crimea supports the President," and "Ukraine and Russia cannot live without each other."[203] People in Ukraine saw Euromaidan in two ways; on one side, it was a democratic revolution, a grassroots movement against corruption and authoritarianism. On the other side, it was a neo-fascist coup supported by Western governments to villainize Russia.[204] The majority of Crimean Russians were on the latter side.

Crimean Consciousness in Ukraine

The independence of Ukraine did not result in a Ukrainian identity in Crimea; instead, it promoted a Crimean consciousness. The 2001 census shows the ethnic composition of the peninsula being 58.5% Russian, 24.4% Ukrainian, and 12.1% Crimean Tatar.[205] Crimea was the only region in Ukraine with a majority ethnic Russian population, made more critical by the fact that the vast majority of the population was Russophone.[206] From the beginning of Ukrainian sovereignty, the Crimean government voiced its opinion against Ukrainian authority. Even with the turbulence of the 1990s and the Russian nationalist movement, the Ukrainian government only remained in control of the peninsula through compromises and blunt authority. The support

[202] Olga Bertelsen, ed., *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenges of Change* (Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem Press, 2017), 42. The demonstrations became known as the Revolution of Dignity or Euromaidan.
[203] "HET - ORANZhEVOMU PEREVOROTU!," *Krymskie Izvestia*, December 19, 2013, No. 233 (5403) edition.
[204] Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa, *Ukraine and Russia*, 417.
[205] Data from the 2001 Ukrainian Census can be found at: https://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/results/general/nationality/crimea.
[206] Crimean Tatars are the notable exception to the Russophone population in the peninsula. Majority of the other regions in Ukraine are also Russophobe.

of the Crimean Tatars was crucial during this period. However, the Ukrainian government's lack of continued support for the Crimean Tatars created a point of contention. In a way, after the Orange Revolution in 2004, Russian nationalists and Crimean Tatars were a unified coalition against Kyiv. Both groups felt that the Ukrainian government wasn't doing enough to support Crimea. While the Crimean Tatars and Russian nationalists saw different paths forward, they agreed the path forward should not be to further Ukrainize the peninsula. The attempts to unify Crimea by being a part of Ukraine resulted only in angering the population who did not want to change their everyday life.[207] Crimea developed separately from Ukraine, and though deep ethnic divides remained leading up to 2014, non-Tatar Crimeans generally lacked support for Ukraine.

The Russian agenda in Crimea shifted in focus but remained a relevant aspect. The Russian government questioned the legality of the 1954 transfer. And the election of Crimea's president, Yuri Meshkov, was an example of the Crimeans' deep belief in Russia. The Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty and the Black Sea Fleet Treaty seemed to assuage any further aggression from Russia.[208] But in the early 2000s, Russian news outlets began asking the question of whether Crimea was truly Ukrainian.[209] The two revolutions in Ukraine (Orange Revolution and Revolution of Dignity) and the presidential election maps demonstrated that while Ukraine did have division among ethnicity and language, the most prominent factor was regional division.[210] The Crimean Tatars were the only organized force in Crimean that was opposed to the Russian agenda. The majority of other Crimeans were more supportive of a future with Russia.

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[207] D. S. Ryabushkin, "Crimean Events of 2014: Causes, Chronology, Consequences," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 2022): 120, https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2022.2045803.
[208] Pleshakov, *The Crimean Nexus,* 46.
[209] Hedenskog, *Crimea: After the Georgian Crisis,* 16.
[210] Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa, *Ukraine and Russia*, 96–100.

A public opinion survey conducted in the Crimean Peninsula revealed small shifts of opinion in 2009, 2011, and 2013; however, it still demonstrates the overarching divide between Crimeans and the Ukrainian government. The Baltic Surveys/Gallup conducted the survey on behalf of the International Republican Institute, and Rating Group Ukraine conducted the fieldwork.[211] One of the questions in the survey asked whether the respondents felt, in general, that Ukraine was going in the right or wrong direction. Comparing the three years the survey was conducted, the majority felt that Ukraine was going in the wrong direction (80% in November 2009, 62% in both October 2011 and May 2013).[212] The increase in support of Ukraine going in the right direction in May 2013 (24%) could be linked to the pro-Russian President Yanukovych.[213] These responses provided a stark reflection of Crimea not being satisfied with Ukraine.

The survey also asked about the status of Crimea and the identification of residents in the peninsula. For the question of the status of Crimea, one option was to keep the status quo (autonomy in Ukraine); it was supported by 49% of the respondents in 2011 and 53% in 2013. Another option was Crimean Tatar autonomy within Ukraine, which rose from 4% support in 2011 to 12% in 2013. The last option was Crimea becoming a region in Russia, which was supported by 33% of respondents in 2011 and dropped to 23% in 2013.[214] While these results, on the surface, show slightly more support for Ukraine and less support for joining Russia in 2013, they also indicate a growing divide with Crimean Tatars preferring autonomy. The question

[211] Baltic Surveys Ltd./The Gallup Organization and Rating Group Ukraine, "Public Opinion Survey Residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea May 16 – 30, 2013" (International Republican Institute, May 2013). The survey was funded by the United States Agency for International Development.
[212] In 2009: 6% felt Ukraine was going in the right direction and 14% answered NA/DK. In 2011: 11% felt Ukraine was going in the right direction and 26% answered NA/DK. In 2013 24% felt Ukraine was going in the right direction and 14% answered NA/DK.
[213] Yanukovych was in his fourth year as president in May 2013.
[214] There was also an opinion of Crimea becoming an oblast in Ukraine which 6% of respondents supported in 2011 and 2% in 2013 and an opinion of DK/NA to which 8% responded in 2011 and 10% in 2013.

about identification (regardless of passport) gives a glimpse of the different groups that were surveyed: 40% Russian, 24% Crimean, 15% Ukrainian, and 15% Crimean Tatar. Besides the clear plurality of those who identified as Russian, a Crimean identity shows a potential common ground between the ethnic groups.[215] The public opinion survey cannot give a complete picture of Crimea.[216] Still, it does show that citizens were divided over a Russian Crimea, a Ukrainian Crimea, and Crimean Tatar Crimea.

A Crimean consciousness evolved over the period of independence to 2013. The first phase can be seen after the independence vote; there were two distinct groups: those who wanted to be a part of Ukraine and those who wanted to be a part of Russia. Crimean Tatars could be seen supporting Ukraine but also in a subgroup wanting a level of national autonomy. There was also a divide between the group of Crimeans who supported Russia: some supported the idea of becoming a part of Russia, while others wanted a level of national autonomy under Russian authority. During this period, many other factors, including socio-economic conditions, meant many people were in the middle because the focus was on survival, not the government. After the finalized Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Orange Revolution, a divide still existed, but there was a common ground of dissatisfaction with Ukraine. At the start of Euromaidan, the dissatisfaction continued – on one side, some Crimean Russians wanted to maintain their connection with Russia. On the other side, the Crimean Tatars continued to be left without significant support from Ukraine to exist as the region's indigenous population. The stages of Crimean consciousness were not uniform or unified. Nevertheless, it was unique to Crimea, and all groups felt a strong connection to the peninsula.

[215] Both Russian and Ukrainians who responded also identified as Crimean; however, the Crimean Tatars who responded only identified as Crimean Tatar.
[216] The sample was 1,200 permanent Crimean residents older than 18 and the response rate was 61%.

Conclusion

The common thread in Crimean consciousness is that Crimeans should decide their own fate. The majority of Crimeans supported a level of autonomy that was seen during the Crimean ASSR (1921-1945), the short-lived revival of the Crimean ASSR (1991-1992), and the ARC (1998-2014). This suggests that even though Crimeans were divided in their support of Russia and Ukraine, many still identified with autonomy within Crimea first. The period after Ukrainian independence highlighted Crimea's unique regional consciousness. Looking at the referendum ballot for Ukrainian independence, 54% voted in favor, and 46% voted against, which shows the divide. The common ground found between Crimean Russian and Tatar elites was the dissatisfaction with Ukrainian policies, emphasizing a Crimean factor over a specific ethnic group factor. The survey results also show how a separate Crimean identity could be used to explain both the Crimean Ukrainians and Russians in the Crimean Peninsula.

The dynamics of Crimea changed once again in 2014 with the annexation of the peninsula to Russia. The referendum ballot and annexation have not been internationally recognized; however, there is still the question of whether the Russian Federation supported or coerced Crimean separation from Ukraine. Furthermore, has the unique Crimean consciousness changed because of the Russification of the peninsula?

Chapter 3: Crimea under Russian Occupation (2014-2022)

Euromaidan led to two different futures in Kyiv and Crimea. What started as a civil protest in Kyiv against Viktor Yanukovych's decision not to sign the EU Association Agreement spiraled into similar demonstrations across the country about the future of Ukraine in November 2013.[217] It became known as the Revolution of Dignity – "the beginning of a new history" in Ukraine.[218] It was a turning point in Ukraine, away from corruption to a brighter future. As the protests grew, so did the government crackdown and the protests turned violent.[219] Whether it was a revolution that had just begun or an unfinished revolution from 2004, Kyiv began to change. The sentiments of change echoed throughout the Western and Central regions of Ukraine, but they were not reflected in Crimea. The Crimean government supported Yanukovych's decision not to sign the EU Association Deal.[220] In a speech supporting Yanukovych, Vladimir Konstantinov, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the ARC, said, "The government of the country made a decision that is in the national interest and desire of the

[217] David R. Marples and Frederick V. Mills, eds., *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution* (Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem Verlag, 2014), 10.
[218] Iurii Andrukhovych, "Simsot Liutykh Dniv, Abo Rol Kontrabasa v Revoliutsii," in *Maidan. (R)Evoliutsiia Dukhu*, ed. Antin Mukharskyi (Kyiv: Nash format, 2014), 146.
[219] Wilson Andrew, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 2014), 86; David R. Marples, *Ukraine in Conflict: An Analytical Chronicle* (Bristol, UK: E-International Relations, 2017), 42. One of the actions the Ukrainian government took was enacting the "anti-protest laws" also sometimes referred to as "dictatorship laws" or "repression laws" on 16 January 2014. They were meant to limit the freedom of speech and assembly and not allow the operation of NGOs; however, it essentially created a dictatorship in Ukraine. While most of the laws were repealed twelve days later (28 January), the laws escalated the protests in Kyiv.
[220] Lyudmila Radeva, "Ukrainu Ne Ustraivaet Položenie «Nezakonnoj Ženy», U Kotoroj Massa Objazannostej i Nikakih Prav, Govorili Deputaty, Obsuždaja Političeskuju Situaciju v Strane," *Krymskie Izvestia*, November 28, 2013, No. 219 (5389 edition; V. Krasnopolskaya, "Privlekatel′nost′ Ob- Evrosojuza Ne Povod Stroit′ No- My Ohota Otnošenija s Nim Dlja- Na Kabal′nyh Uslovijah," *Krymskie Izvestia*, November 28, 2013, No 219 (5389) edition; Olga Egorova, "My - Ne Bednye Rodstvenniki Evropy," *Krymskie Izvestia*, November 28, 2013, No. 219 (5389) edition.

overwhelming majority of Crimeans."[221] The protests were viewed with caution, and there was a growing divide between Kyiv's protestors and the opinions of Crimeans.[222] By the end of December, there was an ever-increasing demand for 'the voice of Crimeans to be heard.'[223] Three months later, Crimea held a referendum vote. Was it the voice of the Crimean people, or was it Russian interference? The future of Kyiv changed with Euromaidan – a new government and a return to the path of Ukraine set by Yushchenko.[224] The future of Crimea also changed with Euromaidan when it became subject to a Russian invasion. [225]

This chapter will cover the most recent period of Crimean history – Crimea under Russian occupation.[226] As seen in the previous chapters, a unique regional Crimean consciousness formed while Crimea was in the Ukrainian SSR and independent Ukraine, and this chapter will show how, even under the authority of Russia, a Crimean consciousness still existed as a separate phenomenon. Through the referendum vote and Russification of the Crimean Peninsula, Crimeans only further developed a consciousness that lies somewhere between Ukraine and Russia. This chapter will explain how a Crimean consciousness was created and

[221] "Vystuplenie Predsedatelia͡ Verkhovnogo Soveta ARK Na Plenarnom Zasedanii Krymskogo Parlamenta 27 Noi͡abria͡ 2013 g," *Krymskie Izvestia*, November 28, 2013, No 219 (5389) edition.
[222] L Radeva, "Iznanka 'Evromaĭdana,'" *Krymskie Izvestia*, December 12, 2013, No. 227 (5397) edition; S Odintsov, "Vladimir Konstantinov: Diktatura Maĭdana Ne Proĭdet!," *Krymskie Izvestia*, December 14, 2013, No. 230 (5400) edition.
[223] Anna Gulyaeva, "Golos Kryma Dolzhen Byt′ Uslyshan!," *Krymskie Izvestia*, December 17, 2013, No 231 (5401) edition.
[224] Anna Chebotarova, "Renegotiating Ukrainian Identity at the Euromaidan," in *Regionalism without Regions*, ed. Oksana Myshlovska and Ulrich Schmid (New York: Central European University Press, 2019), 393.
[225] I will primarily use the terminology of Russian occupation or the Russian annexation of Crimea because Crimea has not formally been recognized as Russian territory by the international community. Please see United Nation's General Assembly Resolution 11493, "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling Upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of the Crimean Region." https://press.un.org/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm.
[226] Another note on phrases, "the most recent period" of Crimean history refers to 2013 to 2022. Because of the Russian Federation's escalation of war in Ukraine on February 2022 and as the outcome of the war is still unknown, I will not be discussing the current events in Crimea.

preserved over the past decade by first looking at how Russia gained control of the peninsula and then the policies enacted by the Russian government to maintain control.

Russian Annexation of the Crimean Peninsula

In March 2014, the citizens of Crimea voted to rejoin the Russian Federation. The international community never recognized the territorial change of borders; however, on 18 March 2014, President Vladimir Putin openly accepted the Crimean Peninsula and referred to the Crimean people as an important part of Russia's past and future.[227] The referendum vote was held only a few weeks after masked Russian military officers wearing uniforms without insignia appeared in Crimea and appointed pro-Russian leaders into the government.[228] According to the election results, there was an 83.1% voter turnout, and 96.7% voted in favor of the union with Russia.[229] The United Nations voted not to recognize the territorial change, and the Ukrainian government opposed the referendum because it violated the Ukrainian Constitution.[230] Going through the Russian governments' swift move into Crimea, the referendum vote, and the legality of the election raises the question of whether this was the voice of Crimeans or a military takeover.

A week before the "little green men"[231] arrived in Crimea, the Chairmen of the Supreme Council of the ARC met with the Chairmen of the Federation of Council of Russia in Moscow.[232] Under the pretense of wanting "to stop violence, robbery, and unconstitutional

[227] Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."
[228] Andrew, *Ukraine Crisis*, 110.
[229] Ibid, 113.
[230] United Nations, "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region," March 27, 2014, https://press.un.org/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm; Milena Ingelevič-Citak, "Crimean Conflict – from the Perspectives of Russia, Ukraine, and Public International Law," *International and Comparative Law Review* 15, no. 2 (2015): 31–35.
[231] The "little green men" is in reference to the Russian military officers who arrived in Crimea with guns but no insignia.
[232] Vladimir Konstantinov is the Chair of the Supreme Council of the ARC and Valentina Matvienko is the Chair of the Federation of Council of Russia in Moscow.

actions," Konstantinov reiterated that Crimea was united and opposed to the radical changes in Kyiv.[233] Then, on 25 February, Russian-backed activists began an "Anti-Maidan" movement carrying Russian flags.[234] Days before the Russian military arrived at the government buildings on the peninsula, another rally occurred in Simferopol. Citizens from Simferopol, Alushta, Feodosiya, and Kerch gathered and asked the government to convene an extraordinary session to discuss the residents' concerns about the events happening in Kyiv. The protesters insisted they represented not only the Russian population but all the nationalities of Crimea. They did not wish to live under the "Nazi regime" in Kyiv.[235] In the early morning hours of 27 February, armed military men took control of the government building in Simferopol.[236] At gunpoint, the government of Crimea was changed, and a motion to hold a referendum was passed.[237] Sergei Aksionov, the leader of the Russian Unity Party, was appointed the new Prime Minister.[238] Aksionov asked Putin to send military assistance to secure peace on the peninsula, and on 1 March, the Federation Council permitted the sending of Russian troops to Crimea. It wasn't until a year later that Putin acknowledged he ordered Russian troops to Crimea in February 2014 to "support Crimean self-defense units."[239] With Russian military and political control of the peninsula secured, a vote was to be held on the fate of Crimea.

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[233] "V Moskve Govorili o Kryme," *Krymskie Izvestia*, February 21, 2014, No 33 (5444) edition.
[234] Olga Bertelsen, ed., *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenges of Change* (Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem Press, 2017), 190-192.
[235] Igor Okhrimenko, "Krymchane Trebuiut Zashchitit′ Ikh Ot Pravovogo Bespredela," *Krymskie Izvestia*, February 26, 2014, No 36 (5447) edition.
[236] Bertelsen, *Revolution and War*, 193. The protests and coup were relatively peaceful, although there were reports of injuries and deaths leading up to the 27 February. See: JC Finley, "Unrest in Crimea Leaves 2 Dead; Government Buildings Seized," *United Press International*, February 27, 2014, https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2014/02/27/Unrest-in-Crimea-leaves-2-dead-government-buildings-seized/6371393516263/; "Two Die in Rallies Outside Crimean Parliament, Says Ex-Head of Mejlis," *Kyiv Post*, February 26, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20140226214735/http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/two-die-in-rallies-outside-crimean-parliament-says-ex-head-of-mejlis-337708.html.
[237] Andrew, *Ukraine Crisis*, 110.
[238] Bertelsen, *Revolution and War*, 192. The Russian Unity Party (Russkoie Iedinstovo) is a pro-Kremlin all-Crimean political movement that had received only 4% of the vote in the most recent elections.
[239] Ibid, 192–93.

The Crimean referendum vote was initially scheduled for 25 May 2014. It was announced in a special issue of the *Krymskie Izvestia* published on 28 February.[240] Within the announcement, it said the referendum would have one question to which citizens could vote in favor or against: "The Autonomous Republic of Crimea has state independence and is part of Ukraine on the basis of treaties and agreements." On the front page of the special issue of the newspaper was a section that explained the referendum to the citizens:

> Crimeans should know that:
> 1. The issue submitted for referendum does not contain the following provisions:
>   - on the independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea;
>   - on the exit of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea from Ukraine;
>   - on the entry of the Autonomous Republic into another state.
> 2. The question submitted to the referendum does not contain provisions on violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.
> 3. The purpose of the referendum is to improve the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea so that the rights of autonomy are guaranteed in case of any changes to the central government or the Constitution of Ukraine.
> 4. The provisions on the referendum are based on European standards and are aimed at ensuring that the central government bodies of Ukraine coordinate their decisions regarding the status and powers, legitimate interests of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea with the authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and make the most important ones on the basis of a republican referendum.
> 5. All steps taken are aimed at ensuring that autonomy is taken into account, discussed, and coordinated with the decisions of the central authorities.

The next day, on 1 March, it was announced the referendum would be pushed forward and would take place on 30 March 2014.[241] However, a week after the announcement of the referendum, there was a decision to change the date again and to adopt two questions on the ballot. At the extraordinary plenary meeting of the 8th session of the Supreme Council of the ARC on 6 March

[240] *Krymskie Izvestia,* 28 February 2014, Special edition.
[241] N. Petrov, "Chronology of the Transformation of the Crimean Peninsula into a Russian Region," *Russian Politics and Law* 54, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 96, https://doi.org/10.1080/10611940.2015.1160720.

2014, it was announced the referendum vote would take place on 16 March 2014 and would have two questions:

1. Do you support the reunification of Crimea with Russia with all the rights of the federal subject of the Russian Federation?
2. Do you support the restoration of the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of 1992 and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine?

According to the remarks from the session, the reasons for changing the date and questions for the referendum were that despite efforts to work with Kyiv, they could not come to a compromise. Konstantinov stated he saw two paths forward: to stay with Kyiv or to remain faithful to Crimeans and go our own way. He reiterated that the referendum was "our reaction to the escalation of the conflict on the part of Kyiv."[242] Ten days later, the referendum took place. With over 80% voter turnout, 96.77% of voters in the Autonomous Republic and 95.60% of citizens in Sevastopol voted in favor of the first option – a reunification with Russia.[243] Two days later, on 18 March, Putin gave a public speech addressing the Crimean referendum and his approval of the results:

> In people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia. This firm conviction is based on truth and justice and was passed from generation to generation, over time, under any circumstances, despite all the dramatic changes our country went through during the entire 20th century.[244]

After the Supreme Council of Crimea declared independence on 21 March 2014, the Russian Federal Assembly ratified Decree No. 147, "On the recognition of the Republic of Crimea." According to Russian law, Crimea became Russian territory.[245]

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[242] Anastasia Sviridova and Natalia Dorn, "Referum Proĭdet 16 Marta," *Krymskie Izvestia*, March 7, 2014, No 42-43 (5453-5454) edition.
[243] Dromundo, *State-Building in the Middle of a Geopolitical Struggle*, 316.
[244] Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."
[245] Ingelevič-Citak, "Crimean Conflict – from the Perspectives of Russia, Ukraine, and Public International Law," 30. It's important to clarify that the Crimean Peninsula became Russian territory according to Russian law only.

Ukrainian authorities did not accept the results of the referendum. Before the vote, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dissolved the Crimean parliament because it violated the Ukrainian Constitution. According to the constitution, changes to Ukrainian territory can only be resolved by an all-Ukrainian referendum (article 73); therefore, the Crimean referendum was invalid.[246] The Ukrainian Constitutional Court stated in a judgment on 14 March 2014:

> The Constitutional Court of Ukraine considers that the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, by adopting the Resolution, which provides accession to the Russian Federation as its subject, addressing to the President and Federal Council of the State Duma of the Russian Federation to initiate the procedure of accession to the Russian Federation as a subject of Russian Federation, putting to the referendum mentioned questions, violated constitutional principle of territorial integrity of Ukraine and exceeded its authorities, and thus the Resolution does not comply with Articles 1, 2, 5, 8, paragraph 2 of Article 19, Article 73, paragraph 3 of Article 85, paragraphs 13, 18, paragraph 20 of Article 92, Articles 132, 133, 134, 135, 137, 138 of the Constitution of Ukraine.[247]

The international community responded with support for Ukraine's territorial integrity. With 100 votes in favor, 11 against, and 58 absent, the United Nations adopted the resolution not to accept status changes in the Crimean region. [248] There was a political debate about why Ukraine did not fight to keep Crimea in Ukraine. According to the documents from Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council[249] meeting on 28 February 2014, there was concern that an attempt to react with any military action in Crimea could escalate to further conflict with Russia.[250] Ukraine and

[246] Ingelevič-Citak, 32.
[247] Case No. 1-13/2014, Constitutional Court of Ukraine, judgement, 14 March 2014. mfa.gov.ua [online]. 15.3.2014 [accessed 2024-01-02]. Available on: http://mfa.gov.ua/en/news-feeds/ foreign-offices-news/19573-rishennya-konstitucijnogo-sudu-v-ukrajini-shhodo-referen- dumu-v-krimu.
[248] United Nations, "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region."
[249] Rada natsional′noï bezpeky i oborony Ukraïny
[250] Adam Charles Lenton, "Why Didn't Ukraine Fight for Crimea? Evidence from Declassified National Security and Defense Council Proceedings," *Problems of Post-Communism* 69, no. 2 (April 1, 2022): 149.

the international community do not recognize Crimea as Russian; however, after March 2014, Crimea and Crimeans became subjects of Russia and its law.

Russification of the Peninsula

For over two decades, the Crimean Peninsula was part of Ukraine, subject to Ukrainian laws, and its residents were citizens of Ukraine. After March 2014, the peninsula became a part of the Russian Federation, subject to Russian laws, and Crimeans became Russian citizens.[251] The Russian agenda in Crimea was present since before Ukrainian independence - the Russian nationalist movement in the 1990s was the first wave of the Russian agenda, and while it failed, it never completely disappeared. Through language, media, the Black Sea Fleet, and a Russian historical narrative that sees Sevastopol as a Russian Hero City, Russia has been able to continue its agenda against the Ukrainian government subtly.[252] Russian-language media in Crimea, beginning in November 2013, began casting doubt on the Ukrainian government's ability to lead the country and emphasizing the violence of Euromaidan.[253] After the change of the Crimean government in February 2014, even the local newspapers began to appear even more heavily biased towards Russia.

The Russification of the peninsula began before the referendum even took place. In the days leading up to the referendum vote, *Krymskie Izvestia* started publishing articles about where and how to vote – along with articles boasting about Russian life. By comparing living

[251] Ingelevič-Citak, "Crimean Conflict – from the Perspectives of Russia, Ukraine, and Public International Law," 30. Crimean residents seemed to be given the option to keep their Ukrainian citizenship; however, the procedure was not clearly outlined, the application had to be completed within a month, and only a handful of institutions in the peninsula would accept and process the application. So, while it was an option, it was not something residents could take.
[252] Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa, *Ukraine and Russia*, 70. Russia has used the Crimean War and Great Patriotic War (the Second World War) as its main propaganda themes in the Crimean Peninsula.
[253] Austin Charron, "Whose Is Crimea? Contested Sovereignty and Regional Identity," *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 2016): 228.

conditions and yearly wages, Crimean citizens were given reasons why Russian life was better than staying in Ukraine.[254] While promoting democracy and citizens' right to choose, the newspaper continued pushing the connection between Crimea and Russia.[255] Two days after the referendum, the Russian narrative confirmed to Crimean citizens they had made the right choice; on the front page of the *Krymskie Izvestia,* it read, "We're back home."[256] The Russification of the peninsula began to fall into a political vacuum where news in Crimea was only propagated by Russian sources.

The Russian agenda follows the promotion of the political slogan "Crimea is Ours" (Крым – наш).[257] This slogan creates a compelling narrative for Russian nationalism and can be seen as the continued justification for annexing the peninsula in Russia's sphere of influence.[258] The re-writing of Crimean histography also followed this narrative – Crimea has always been a critical part of Russian history.[259] Interestingly, many of the Russian books do not attempt to write a new narrative but instead pull from Tsarist and Soviet historiographical patterns. An important connotation of the Russian slogan is "Crimea is not theirs." Instead of refuting Ukraine's claim on the peninsula, it most often references the Crimean Tatars.[260] This can be seen in Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya's 2015 book, in which the Crimean Tatars'

[254] Anastasia Timofeeva, "Dva Plat͡ʹia͡ v God Ili Odno Za Pi͡atiletku?," *Krymskie Izvestia*, March 12, 2014, No 45 (5456) edition; Albina Istomia, "V Rossii Zarplata u Bjudžetnikov Na Pori͡adok Vyše," *Krymskie Izvestia*, March 14, 2014, No 47 (5458) edition.
[255] Natali͡ia Dorn, "Doroga Domoĭ," *Krymskie Izvestia*, March 11, 2014, No 44 (5455) edition; Anastasia Timofeeva, "Vladimirskai͡a Rusʹ - Bratskomu Krymu," *Krymskie Izvestia*, March 15, 2014, No 48 (5459) edition.
[256] Margartia Shitova, "My Vernulisʹ Domoĭ," *Krymskie Izvestia*, March 18, 2014, No 49 (5460) edition.
[257] Andrew Wilson, "Imagining Crimean Tatar History since 2014: Indigenous Rights, Russian Recolonisation and the New Ukrainian Narrative of Cooperation," *Europe-Asia Studies* 73, no. 5 (May 28, 2021): 845, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1867709.
[258] Stanislav Aleksandrovich Myasnikov, "Why 'Crimea Is Ours': Analysis of the Justification of Crimea Joining Russia in the Speeches of V.V Putin and Russian MFA Representatives," *Politicheskai͡a Nauka*, no. 2 (2020): 234–55.
[259] Wilson, "Imagining Crimean Tatar History since 2014," 843.
[260] Ibid, 845.

indigenous rights to Crimea are compared to the Moors' lack of indigenous rights in Spain.[261] At the same time, there is a similar slogan in Ukraine: “Crimea is Ukraine” (Крим - Це Україна). The publications of “Crimea is Ukraine” are supported by most Western academia, along with Ukrainian publications and Crimean Tatar publications. However, in the peninsula, Crimean residents could not express pro-Ukraine sentiments freely. The push to create a narrative of Russian Crimea meant focusing on the Russian history of Crimea and not allowing a Ukrainian history of Crimea.

Crimean Tatars

The Crimean Tatars remain the most significant anti-Russian movement in Crimea since their return in the late 1980s. Since Ukrainian independence, most Crimean Tatars have aligned politically with Ukrainians even though the Ukrainian government did not fully support the Tatars' rehabilitation and indigenous rights recognition.[262] Despite the reports that the Crimean government acted on behalf of all Crimean citizens, Crimean Tatars did not support reunification with Russia. They remained a united force against the Russian occupation.[263] The voter turnout for the referendum vote suggested over 80% of the citizens voted. However, the Crimean Tatar leader, Mustafa Dzhemilev, stated that 99% of his people boycotted the vote. The refusal to vote on the referendum, along with organizing rallies and launching energy and trade blockages,

[261] Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya, *Vershina Kryma. Krym v Russkoi Istorii i Krymskaya Samoidentifikatsiya Rossii*, 183–84.
[262] It’s important to clarify that aligning politically with Ukrainian does not mean supporting Ukrainian nationalism or supporting all Ukrainian policies. Furthermore, the Crimean Tatars have their own political agenda and cannot be combined into one philosophy or political movement.
[263] Lyudmila Radeva, “Takikh Reshenii Krymskotatarskii Narod Zhdal 70 Let,” *Krymskie Izvestia*, March 12, 2014, No 45 (5456) edition.

made the Crimean Tatars targets of Russian repression.[264] Since March 2014, Crimean Tatars have been discriminated against, and the Russian occupation has drastically changed their way of life.

"People are in panic. Our nation survived a genocide, and there is a fear that there will be a repeat of '44."[265] "It is better to die here than leave again."[266] The sentiments of Crimean Tatars before the referendum vote echoed how it was the historical memory of Russian rule that put fear into people. In Putin's speech in March 2014, he acknowledged the mistreatment of Crimean Tatars, "there was a time when Crimean Tatars were treated unfairly," but underscored it by also saying, "millions of people of various ethnicities suffered during those repressions and primarily Russians."[267] After protesting and boycotting the referendum, Moscow attempted to appease the Tatar population. This included making the Crimean Tatar language one of the official languages of the republic, allocating money for rehabilitation and infrastructure developments, and recruiting Crimean Tatars to positions in government.[268] There was also funding to promote Crimean Tatar culture in the media.[269] These efforts created a façade of social improvement, but

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[264] Mariia Shynkarenko, "Compliant Subjects?: How the Crimean Tatars Resist Russian Occupation in Crimea," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 55, no. 1 (March 1, 2022): 76–77, https://doi.org/10.1525/j.postcomstud.2022.55.1.76.

[265] Harriet Salem, "Crimea's Tatars Fear the Worst as It Prepares for Referendum," *The Guardian*, March 13, 2014, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/13/crimea-tatars-fear-worst-prepares-referendum. The quote is from Crimean Tatar, Delyaver Akie, the secretary of the Mejlis and was said in an interview prior to the referendum vote.

[266] Noah Sneider, "Crimean Tatars Ponder the Return of Russian Rule," *The New York Times*, March 2, 2014, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/world/europe/crimean-tatars-ponder-the-return-of-russian-rule.html. The quote is from Crimean Tatar, Seit-Umerob Murat.

[267] Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

[268] D. Zimin, "Voting Behaviour of Crimean Tatars 2012-2018: For or against Russia?," *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea* 19, no. 2 (April 3, 2019): 299, https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2019.1617944.

[269] "'Shumnaia Semeika': Prem0era Pervogo Sitkoma Na Krymskotatarskom Iazyke ['Hilarious Family': The Launch of First Season of Sitcom in Crimean Tatar Language]" (Krym Realii, 2020), https://ru.krymr.com/a/preniera-pervogo-sitkomashumnaya-semeika-na-krymskotatarskom-yazyke/30434032.html; *Pervaia Krymskotatarskaia Kinoskazka Vykhodit v Ukrainskii Prokat [The First Crimean Tatar Fairy Tale Is in Movie Theatres]*. (TV.ua, 2018), https:// tv.ua/kino/premery/952033-pervaja-krymsko-tatarskaja-kinoskazka-vyhodit-v-ukrainskij-prokat; G Ablekirimova, "Pervaia Krymskotatarskaia Knizhnaia Iarmarka. Kak Eto Bylo [The First Crimean Tatar Book Fair. How It Was].," 2019, https://www.crimeantatars.club/life/ society/pervaya-krymskotatarskaya-knizhnaya-yarmarka-kak-eto-bylo.

the media content was entirely government-controlled.[270] Crimean Tatars were not treated as equal citizens under Russian rule.

Initially, the Crimean and Russian governments promised cooperation with the Crimean Tatars. However, after failing to come to a compromise, Crimean Tatar leaders became the first target of Russian repression.[271] Within months of occupation, the Crimean government began banning Crimean Tatar leaders and activists from entering Crimea. Most notably, in April 2014, the Crimean Tatar leader, Mustafa Dzhemilev, was barred from the Crimean Peninsula.[272] Activists and leaders of the Crimean Tatar community who were not banned from entering Crimea were subject to government raids and arrests. The Russian government insisted they were not targeting Crimean Tatars but religious and separatist "extremists."[273] The narrative of targeting extremists was further pushed when the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people was labeled as an extremist organization and outlawed in Crimea by the Russian Federation Supreme Court.[274] This decision meant Crimean Tatars no longer had a representative institution and vastly limited their independent voice in Crimea. The Russian government attempted to create several pro-Kremlin Crimean Tatar organizations; however, the groups did not gain traction.[275] In less than two years after the Russian occupation, Crimean Tatars were stripped of their political organization and leadership, with no hope for change.

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[270] Sevhil Musaieva, "Ukraine's Strategy to Protect Crimean Tatars Should Be Firm," *Ukrainian Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (January 1, 2019): 48.
[271] Markéta ídková and Hynek Melichar, "Crimean Tatars Before and After the Annexation of Crimea: Identity, Societal Security, and the Prospects of Violence," *ALPPI Annual of Language Politics and Politics of Identity / ALPPI Annual of Language Politics and Politics of Identity* IX, no. 09 (January 1, 2015): 100; Wilson, "Imagining Crimean Tatar History since 2014," 838.
[272] Shynkarenko, "Compliant Subjects?," 82.
[273] Wilson, "Imagining Crimean Tatar History since 2014," 838.
[274] Urcosta, "Crimean Tatars Losing Hope," 81.
[275] Elmira Muratova, "The Transformation of the Crimean Tatars' Institutions and Discourses After 2014," *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics* 13, no. 1 (July 2019): 53, https://doi.org/10.2478/jnmlp-2019-0006.

Not only have Crimean Tatars been subject to political isolation, but they have also faced persecution and human rights violations under Russian occupation. Radio Free Europe's online platform "Crimea.realities" has over 800 articles discussing the conditions of occupation. The articles show a continued pattern of Crimean Tatars being unjustly persecuted – from having their homes raided to being detained and sentenced to jail.[276] Another alarming pattern these articles highlight is the growing number of Crimean Tatars that have disappeared or been murdered.[277] The 2015 International Religious Freedom Report and 2016 Amnesty Report both discuss how Crimean Tatars have been systematically repressed and become targets of the Russian government since the occupation.[278] In 2020, during a U.S. Congressional hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Tamila Tasheva, Deputy Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea,

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[276] "Russia Detains 11 Crimean Tatars," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 5, 2014, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-detains-11-crimean-tatars/28324645.html; "Tatars Held After Raids In Crimea," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 11, 2016, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-crimea-raids-tatars-yalta-bakhchesary/27545630.html; "Five Crimean Tatars Detained During Pickets In Simferopol," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 14, 2017, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/crimean-tatars-detained-protesting-jailing-karametov/28675536.html; "Crimean Tatar Activists' Family Members Detained," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 4, 2018, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/crimean-tatar-activists-family-members-detained/29470312.html; "Russia-Imposed Authorities In Crimea Search More Crimean Tatars' Homes," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 19, 2019, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-imposed-authorities-in-crimea-search-more-crimean-tatars-homes/30008149.html; "Russian Authorities Detain Crimean Tatar Activists After Searching Their Homes In Bakhchysaray," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 11, 2020, sec. Russia, https://www.rferl.org/a/russian-authorities-detain-crimean-tatar-activists-after-searching-their-homes-in-bakhchysaray/30481623.html.

[277] Carl Schreck and Olena Removska, "Snatched In Plain Sight: No Justice In Crimean Tatar's Slaying Five Years After Russian Annexation," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 14, 2019, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/snatched-in-plain-sight-no-justice-in-crimean-tatar-s-slaying-five-years-after-russian-annexation/29821534.html; "Abductions, Torture, 'Hybrid Deportation': Crimean Tatar Activist Describes Six Years Under Russian Rule," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 17, 2020, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/abductions-torture-hybrid-deportation-crimean-tatar-activist-describes-six-years-under-russian-rule/30493504.html; Aleksei Aleksandrov and Reid Standish, "Lists, Disappearances, And Talk Of A Referendum: Life In Russian-Occupied Southern Ukraine," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 23, 2022, sec. Ukraine, https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-kherson-occupation-referendum/31817806.html; "Killed Or Missing In Crimea," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, accessed March 28, 2023, https://www.rferl.org/a/killed-or-missing-in-crimea/27784069.html.

[278] US Department of State, "International Religious Freedom Report for 2015," 2015, https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper; "Crimea: In the Dark - the Silencing of Dissent," Amnesty International, December 15, 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2016/12/crimea-in-the-dark-the-silencing-of-dissent/.

testified that the Russian government deliberately persecuted Crimean Tatars because they were considered a "disloyal group." In the same hearing, Melinda Haring, Deputy Director of Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center and Senior Fellow at Foreign Policy Research Institute, testified that over 25,000 Crimean Tatars have fled Crimea, politically motivated arrests of Crimean Tatars have increased, and over 100 Crimean political prisoners are being held in Russia and their names are not being released.[279] The disregard for Crimean Tatars' rights raises the question of whether their identity is also being stripped from the peninsula.

Crimean Consciousness under Occupation

The Russian occupation of the Crimean Peninsula created the outward impression of Russian identity, but the regional Crimean consciousness built over the last sixty years did not disappear after March 2014. Since Ukrainian independence, Crimean Russians have had the majority opinion – however, they were not the only voice on the peninsula. The previous two chapters show that identity and regional consciousness are multifaceted beyond ethnicity, language, and citizenship. Since the illegal occupation of Crimea, the peninsula has undergone significant Russification in terms of economy, education, and infrastructure.[280] The isolation of the peninsula has suppressed the opposition voice and heightened the Russian voice. Still, the change in citizenship did not dissolve the decades of identity building in the peninsula. By looking at the referendum questions and the history of the peninsula, a Crimean consciousness

[279] "Life Under Occupation: The State of Human Rights in Crimea," Joint House and Senate Hearing, 116 Congress (Washington DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, January 28, 2020), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116jhrg39691/html/CHRG-116jhrg39691.htm.
[280] Dinara Khalilova, "How Has Crimea Changed after 10 Years of Russian Occupation?," *The Kyiv Independent*, February 24, 2024, https://kyivindependent.com/image-draft-10-years-under-russian-occupation-how-does-life-in-crimea-look-like/.

remains somewhere between Russia and Ukraine. This unique regional consciousness did not change because of Russian or Ukrainian politics.

Comparing the original referendum questions posed on 28 February 2014 to the revised questions Crimean residents saw on 16 March 2014, there was one common thread – autonomy. The revised referendum questions on the 6 March 2014 ballot showed a Russian agenda. The decision to change the referendum questions meant citizens had to choose between Russia and Ukraine.[281] However, the original referendum question posed greater independence and autonomy within Ukraine, perhaps showing a more unbiased view of the opinions of Crimeans. The initial question was not about Ukraine or Russia but about having individual autonomy in Crimea.[282] The second referendum, the one that took place, was a clear demonstration of Russian influence and Russian propaganda. While the first referendum reflected a Crimean consciousness and an understanding of the past, it was also a way to move forward within Ukraine.

The idea of autonomy is part of the historical foundation of Crimea. It can be traced back to the Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, and Russians. The history of the peninsula is the accumulation of these ethnic groups that create a Crimean consciousness. So, even after the Russian occupation, Crimean consciousness remains intertwined with these groups.

For the Crimean Tatars, the Crimean Peninsula is the homeland of their people. The Crimean Khanate established the first political state of the Crimean Tatars in the 15th century.[283] According to Crimean Tatar scholarship, they are the indigenous people of the peninsula and have the right to remain in their homeland. They also do not recognize the Russian government's

[281] Sviridova and Dorn, "Referum Proĭdet 16 Marta." Even though citizens seemed to be able to choose between Russia and Ukraine; it should be noted that there was not an option to keep the status quo of Crimea's autonomy in Ukraine.
[282] "Krymchane Dolzhny Znat′, Chto," *Krymskie Izvestia*, February 28, 2014, Special edition.
[283] Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, 1–7; Kent, *Crimea*, 29–45.

authority in Crimea after 2014.[284] The repression and discrimination that Crimean Tatars have faced from ethnic Russians can be seen as an attempt to silence their narrative. The Crimean Peninsula holds historical relevance to the Crimean Tatars and symbolizes their identity and roots.

For Russians, the Crimean Peninsula represents the origin of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Rus Empire in the 10th century.[285] The religious significance of the peninsula is further outlined by the importance of its annexation by Catherine the Great, which connected Crimea with the Russian Empire.[286] Moreover, according to Russian historiography, the Crimean Peninsula continued to develop as a Russian region even when it was a part of the Ukrainian SSR, and the breakup of the Soviet Union and the "loss" of Crimea was a "historical injustice."[287] In addition to the religious and historical significance of the peninsula, it also holds military importance because the Black Sea Fleet is stationed in Sevastopol. The rewriting of the Crimean history after 2014 highlights the Russian agenda in the peninsula.

For Ukrainians, Crimea has been an integral part of their history and culture since the Soviet transfer. An influx of ethnic Ukrainians moving to Crimea during the Soviet period, and the transfer of the peninsula reflected the Ukrainian connection. While Russian historiography uses the term 'the 1954 gift of Crimea,' Ukrainian historiography emphasizes the legal transfer of property.[288] In the independence vote on 1 December 1991, Crimeans chose Ukraine, and according to Ukrainian scholarship that legal referendum had more validity than the all-Crimean

[284] Eskender Bariiev, "Contributions for the Study on Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Context of Borders, Migration and Displacement" (Kyiv: Crimean Tatar Resource Center, February 1, 2019).
[285] Kent, *Crimea*, 19–21; Shevzov, "The Russian Tradition," 16.
[286] Andreas Schönle, "Garden of the Empire: Catherine's Appropriation of the Crimea," *Slavic Review* 60, no. 1 (2001): 1, https://doi.org/10.2307/2697641.
[287] Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."
[288] Serhiychuk, *Ukraìns'kyĭ Krym*, 311.

referendum in March 2014. The Russian repression of pro-Ukrainian Crimeans showcases that some Crimeans want to be in Ukraine and not in Russia.[289] Ukrainian literature emphasizes that Crimea has been Ukrainian since 1954 and will be Ukrainian in the future.

The history of the Crimean Peninsula can be written to exemplify and discredit each group's rights to the peninsula. However, specifically looking at the last sixty years, the Crimean Peninsula has developed within Ukraine and Russia, but it has never been entirely Russian, Ukrainian, or Crimean Tatar. Ethnographic studies showcase the peninsula as a multiethnic region with complex and competing identities. Eleanor Knott's study on Crimean identity looks at "plurality, hybridity, contestation, and generational flux the feelings of identification."[290] Constantine Plekhanov repeats a similar sentiment: "Crimea's identity is transient, fleeting, ever-evolving, never reaching a final point."[291] Since the Russian occupation in 2014, Crimea seemed to be overwhelmingly linked with a Russian identity – and politically, that is true. Nevertheless, Crimeans still maintained roots of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identity under occupation. Perhaps one of the best ways to showcase a Crimean consciousness since 2014 is through the magazine *Meraba, zdravstvuĭte!* (*Мераба, здравствуйте!*).[292] It is a magazine published in Sevastopol with the slogan: 'a newspaper for those who love Crimea.' Along with some political commentary, the magazine highlights the peninsula, with articles about Crimean history and food recipes to Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian, and Russian cultural events.[293] While the newspaper has

[289] Yulia Gorbunova, "Rights in Retreat: Abuses in Crimea," Crimea: Human Rights in Decline (Human Rights Watch, November 17, 2014), https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/11/17/rights-retreat/abuses-crimea.
[290] Eleanor Knott, *Kin Majorities: Identity and Citizenship in Crimea and Moldova* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 70.
[291] Pleshakov, *The Crimean Nexus*, 6.
[292] The title of the magazine also demonstrates a Crimean identity because it uses of both Russian and Turkish (Crimean Tatar) words for "hello."
[293] Emil Ennanov, "Istorija Kinoteatrov v Krymu Ot Sinematografa Do 3D," *Meraba, Zdravstvujte!*, January 12, 2018, No. 1 (108) edition; "Ot Krymskoĭ Vesny k Krymskoĭ," *Meraba, Zdravstvujte!*, January 24, 2020, No 3 (213) edition; Alisa Yakshina, "Ukrainskaia Obŝina Kryma: Priiatnaia Dinamika Razvitiia," *Meraba, Zdravstvujte!*, February 15, 2019, No 6 (165) edition; "Sokrovišnica Krymskotatarskoĭ Kul'tury," *Meraba, Zdravstvujte!*, February

some Russian agenda, examining the publications from 2014-2022 there was a spotlight on each ethnic group. These stories highlight the unique regional consciousness of the peninsula that goes beyond ethnicity, language, and culture. The history of Crimea cannot be looked at through one lens, and a Crimean consciousness cannot be described as one specific ethnic group.

Conclusion

Crimea is not Ukrainian, Russian, or Crimean Tatar; it is a combination of the identities that have been built and maintained throughout the Ukrainian SSR, independent Ukraine, and Russian occupation. The period from 2014 to 2022 started with the Crimean Peninsula being annexed to the Russian Federation, but there was also a continued showcase of a Crimean consciousness. The Russian government tried to force a Russian identity by issuing new laws, rewriting history, and silencing opposition. However, a separate Crimean consciousness remained within Crimea, connecting Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars.

28, 2020, No 8 (218) edition; Elmas Sarieva, "Tradit͡sionnyĭ Krymskotatarskiĭ Kostiu̇m-Èto Obraz Naroda," *Meraba, Zdravstvujte!*, December 6, 2019, No 48 (207) edition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to note the current political climate of Russia and Ukraine. On 24 February 2022, Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Russian war on Ukraine began with the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and escalated when Putin announced a special military operation in Ukraine eight years later. The war is still ongoing as this research project ends. As a historian, I cannot say how the war will end or the fate of the Crimean Peninsula; however, I can comment on how my research illustrates the relationship between Russia, Ukraine, and the Crimean Peninsula.

The complex nature of Soviet identity in the 20th century left a void of what would fill its place after the Soviet Union collapsed. Soviet identity initially allowed some freedom of national expression, but it eventually evolved to promote only Russian culture and language. So, even after the Crimean Peninsula was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR, there was still a strong Russian presence. When the Soviet Union collapsed and borders were drawn between Russia and Ukraine, a new situation emerged: the Crimean Peninsula was politically and geographically in Ukraine but culturally and socially Russian.

The return of the Crimean Tatars and the pressure of the Russian national movement created tension between Crimea and Kyiv. The first solution was to give Crimea more freedom in exchange for not holding a referendum vote. Part of this freedom was the first and only Crimean presidency, but this only proved a means to promote a Russian identity in the peninsula further. As tensions grew and the economic situation worsened, the Ukrainian and Crimean

governments compromised at the end of the 1990s with a new Constitution and the creation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

However, the various ethnic groups still felt their voices were not heard in Kyiv. Even though the Crimean Tatars voted in favor of pro-Ukrainian leaders, there was little support or recognition for their indigenous status. The Crimean Russians in the peninsula continued to support pro-Russian political leaders and protest any attempts by Ukraine to align with the West. Ukraine's attempt to unify the Crimean Peninsula with Kyiv and promote a new Ukrainian identity did not gain traction.

The discontent eventually boiled over when the Revolution of Dignity began in late 2013, and Crimean residents felt further alienated from Kyiv. The initial talks about greater independence and autonomous status in Crimea demonstrated how Crimeans didn't completely align with Ukraine but still felt Crimea should be within Ukraine's borders. However, the final referendum question and annexation of the peninsula demonstrated the fruition of the Russian agenda. Crimea would be politically and geographically in the Russian Federation.

The Russian occupation of Crimea did little to unify the peninsula, and while Crimean Russians' voices were heard, Crimean Tatars' and Ukrainians' voices were repressed. The Crimean Peninsula did not create a complete Russian identity despite Russian leadership.

The future borders of the Crimean Peninsula cannot simply be drawn into Russia or Ukraine without considering the multifaceted Crimean consciousness. The complicated situation in the peninsula is demonstrated by the 2024 National Survey of Ukraine by the Center for Insights in Survey Research.[294] One of the questions asked is: "What will be the territorial boundaries of Ukraine as a result of the war?" Two months after the war began, April 2022, most

[294] The survey data was from April 2022-Feburary 2024 and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The survey was not conducted in the occupied regions of Ukraine (Crimea and Donbas).

respondents believed Ukrainian borders would return to the international recognized borders defined by Ukraine's independence in 1991 (54%). Two years later in February 2024, only 45% of respondents believed Ukraine would return to its original borders. [295] Concerning the future of the Crimean Peninsula, the majority of respondents believe Ukraine will not regain Crimea.[296] The survey gives a glimpse to how Ukrainians' view the prospects for the peninsula; while it is not a complete picture, this insight shows the complexities of Crimea.

My research explored how the identity crisis in Crimea led to the development of a Crimean consciousness that is somewhere between Russian and Ukrainian. Therefore, the political slogans of *Crimea is Russian* and *Crimea is Ukrainian* fail to illustrate the complex nature of the Crimean Peninsula. While the ethnicity of the peninsula is overwhelmingly ethnic Russian, the minority populations of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians occupy a central place in the peninsula. The ethnic composition of Crimea is important, but it is only one factor in creating a unique regional consciousness. Along with ethnicity, the history and culture of the Crimean Tatars, Russians, and Ukrainians encapsulates the unique Crimean consciousness that was created and preserved over the past seventy years.

[295] Sociological Group "Rating," "National Survey of Ukraine," Survey (International Republican Institute: Center for Insights in Survey Research of the International Republican Institute (IRI), February 2024), 15.
[296] One question asked respondents if Ukraine would regain Donbas and Lukansk regions but not Crimea (April 2022: 16% and February 2024: 7%). A second question asked if Ukraine would regain Crimea but not the DNR and LNR (April 2022: 2% and February 2024: 7%). A third question asked if Ukraine's borders would return to the territory controlled prior to the war beginning (April 2022: 22% and February 2024: 16%).

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