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LIBERATION & REINTEGRATION OF CRIMEA: WHEN AND HOW

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The paper addresses the situation on the temporarily occupied Crimean Peninsula and the changes brought about by two years of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. The achievements of Ukraine's Armed Forces in the Black Sea, where they have seriously damaged a third of the warships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, are emphasised. The prospects for the liberation and further reintegration of Crimea are analysed. Special attention has been paid to the status of the constitutionally recognised Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the possibility of its transformation into national-territorial autonomy for the indigenous Crimean Tatar people.

February 2014 marked two anniversaries: ten years of the illegal occupation, followed by the attempted annexation of Crimea, and two years of the full-scale Russia-Ukraine war that started on 24 February 2022. Thus, this bloody war — unprecedented for Europe since the Second World War — began in Crimea¹ and must inevitably end with the liberation of the peninsula, and its return to the jurisdiction of Ukraine.

During the early stages of the ten-year war, relatively little attention was paid by the international community to the specific issues and human tragedies related to Crimea.² The sanctions applied were rather weak; a number of resolutions and reports prepared by the leading international

organisations were expressed in very careful wording, and did not directly call Russia what it is, namely, the aggressor that perpetrated an unprovoked military intervention into a peaceful neighbouring country, thus violating all the basic norms of international law.³ It cannot be excluded from consideration that, if it were not for the brutal military aggression by the Russian Federation (RF) which occurred in 2022, the 'civilised democratic world' would have eventually come to terms with Crimea's accession to Russia — if not *de jure*, then *de facto*.

But that shocking event changed everything, including the perception of the increasingly negative development of Crimea's situation.


1. M. Sapuppo, *Putin's unpunished Crimean crime set the stage for Russia's 2022 invasion*, "Atlantic Council", 22.02.2024, <https://bit.ly/4cglKzBn>.
2. С. Грабовський, "Де-факто Росія": чому забувають про окупований український Крим ("*De facto Russian*": *why do they forget the occupied Ukrainian Crimea*), "Obozrevatel", 28.09.2018, <https://bit.ly/3RIQ8ey>; В Германии принципиально не хотят переиздавать атлас мира, на котором Крым «отдан» России (*In Germany, they in principle do not want to republish the world atlas, in which Crimea was "given" to Russia*), 22.05.2018, <https://bit.ly/3RHFll6>.
3. N. Belitser, *Crimea Today: Trends and Developments*, "UA: Ukraine Analytica", 1 (3), 24 May 2016, pp. 47 — 55.

Abundant publications and analyses dealing with military, political, economic, ecological and human rights aspects of the war have since appeared. After the effective resistance of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and the whole Ukrainian people as from 2022 — contrary to the gloomy anticipation of a quick Ukrainian defeat by the much larger, better equipped and vastly resourced army of Russia — high expectations were attached to the counteroffensive of Ukraine in 2023, and the possible de-occupation of Crimea by the end of the year. These expectations did not come into fruition, resulting in a certain sense of disappointment and frustration.

But despite the failed Ukrainian counterattack on the ground, Ukraine's successes in the Black Sea and in the Crimean 'stronghold' of the Russian army are obvious.⁴ According to data from various sources, as of 05 March 2024, from 25 to 29 warships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet have been either completely destroyed or seriously damaged; this constitutes over one third of the Fleet. Such a result is extraordinary for a country having practically no fleet of its own (although two corvettes for Ukraine's navy are being built in Türkiye, and one of them will be ready this year⁵). Among the outstanding Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) achievements, the sinking of the flagship 'Moskva' by the Ukraine-made 'Neptune' missiles in April 2022, can be singled out.⁶

Later on, the AFU liberated Snake Island, carried out several successful attacks on Sevastopol, one of which damaged the headquarters of the Russian navy, and

retook oil platforms in the Black Sea that Russia had seized soon after the annexation of the peninsula in 2014. Also, important was the strike on 26 December, 2023 that hit the large landing ship 'Novocherkassk'; since its original mission of invading Ukrainian ports proved untenable, it was used to deliver munitions and transport personnel. Iranian drones and/or explosives on board caused a powerful detonation that destroyed the ship; according to some data, up to 74 crew members may have been killed, and 27 wounded.



Whereas depriving Russia of this dominant link between Crimea and mainland Russia (especially in combination with cutting the 'land corridor' running through the strip of territory bordering the peninsula and occupied in 2022) would make Crimea's military base practically untenable

As a result of the successful targeting of Russian warships, a significant part of its Navy was driven out of Crimean ports (mainly to Novorossiysk) and practically deprived of the possibility of launching 'Kalibr' cruise missiles, thus reducing the threat of constant attacks from this direction. Ensuring the free passage of ships carrying grain and other cargo through the Black Sea 'humanitarian corridor' created by Ukraine after Russia's withdrawal from the

- 4 P. Dickinson, *Ukraine's Black Sea success offers hope as Russian invasion enters third year*, "Atlantic Council", 15.02.2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraines-black-sea-success-offers-hope-as-russian-invasion-enters-third-year/>.
- 5 B. Dress, *Ukraine racks up wins against Russia in the Black Sea*, "The Hill", 07.01.2024, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/4392118-ukraine-wins-russia-black-sea-war>.
- 6 N. Belitser, *Natalya Belitser: Liberation of Crimea: A path to win the war*, "Baltic Rim Economies", 1/2024, https://www.centrumbalticum.org/en/publications/baltic_rim_economies/baltic_rim_economies_1_2024/natalya_belitser_liberation_of_crimea_a_path_to_win_the_war.

'grain deal' in summer 2023, is also a huge achievement. In such a way, the attempt at a maritime blockade proved a failure, and exports through the Black Sea ports are now gradually approaching pre-war levels.⁷

Intensification of the effective attacks against targets in the Black Sea and the Crimean Peninsula has become possible due to the provision of British Storm Shadow cruise missiles in early 2023, and the French SCALP version (first delivery in August 2023). Of special importance were the strikes on the Kerch Bridge, among the most powerful ones, in October 2002, using a truck with skilfully hidden explosives, and in July 2023 by the 'Sea Baby' naval drones, designed and produced in Ukraine. A new generation of these naval drones was recently presented by the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU),⁸ while the Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) also permanently improves the technological characteristics of their unmanned marine vehicles named 'MAGURA' (an acronym of Maritime Autonomous Guard Unmanned Robotic Apparatus; this is also the name of an ancient Goddess, patroness of warriors).⁹

The Usage of these apparatuses, constantly improved by the SSU and MID, and close collaboration of their high-class operators with the Air Forces and other military bodies allows Ukraine to achieve excellent results. These strikes, and increasingly frequent missile, marine and unmanned aerial vehicle attacks have led to repeated disruptions of the Crimea (Kerch) bridge's

functioning, although they have not been able to completely destroy it. Whereas depriving Russia of this dominant link between Crimea and mainland Russia (especially in combination with cutting the 'land corridor' running through the strip of territory bordering the peninsula and occupied in 2022) would make Crimea's military base practically untenable.

In order to achieve this ambitious goal, Ukraine needs more advanced, precise and long-range missiles like American ATACMS and German TAURUS and, of course, modernised aircraft — in particular, the F-16s promised by the US. Regrettably, only a few ATACMS have been delivered so far, whereas Germany still refuses to provide the TAURUS, despite the increasing pressure on their government from MPs, experts and public figures. As has been said, "German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's reluctance to send the Taurus to Ukraine is a microcosm of the West's ambivalence and complacency".¹⁰

Moreover, the AFU are prohibited from using weapons and ammunitions supplied by the West to attack the territory of the Russian Federation. Not having the opportunity to fight on an equal footing with Russia, whose bombs and shells attack the civilian population and critical infrastructure throughout Ukraine, the Ukrainian army can be compared to a boxer who is forced to "fight with one hand whereas his other hand is tied behind his back". Such an unfavourable situation for Ukraine looks even more one-

7 У лютому українським морським коридором експортували 8 млн тонн вантажів. Це рекорд — Кубраков (*In February, 8 million of cargo was transported by the Ukrainian sea corridor — Kubrakov*), "Censor.net", 01.03.2024, https://censor.net/ua/news/3476341/u_lyutomu_ukrayinskym_morskym_korydorom_eksportuvaly_8 mln_tonn_vantajiv_tse_rekord_kubrakov.

8 SSU shows testing of first Sea Baby drone funded by Ukrainians. "Censor.net", 06.03.2024, https://censor.net/en/photo_news/3477171/ssu_shows_testing_of_first_sea_baby_drone_funded_by_ukrainians_videophotos.

9 Вбивці російських кораблів. Як влаштовані дрони Magura, що відправляють на дно флот РФ (*Killers of Russian ships. How the Magura drones are arranged, sending the Russian fleet to the bottom*), 05.03.2024, https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/droni-magura-v5-harakteristiki-shvidkist-boyova-chastina-infografika-novini-ukrajini-50398451.html?utm_medium=push&utm_source=gravitec.

10 L. Hockstader, *How the West's waffling undermines Ukraine's war effort*, "Washington Post", 10.01.2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/01/10/taurus-missile-germany-ukraine-russia/>.

sided given the fact that Russian stores of weapons are generously replenished by Iranian-made drones and ammunition from North Korea.

Formally, this ban does not apply to Crimea, widely recognised as Ukrainian territory. Nevertheless, the shortage of munitions and continued delays in their deliveries seriously complicate the main task of de-occupying the peninsula. This indecisiveness and hesitation can be explained away by one major reason: it is fear. Fear of 'escalation', of risking to cross one more 'red line' announced by Putin or Medvedev, of a nuclear war, or of NATO involvement, etc... Whereas all the experience gained over the course of this war clearly shows the following: that these threats will not be realised. And because Putin's Russia, with its centuries-old chauvinist-imperialist mentality understands only the language of force, it is high time to demonstrate the strength behind this language, and exhibit real political will — not only in words, but also in deeds.¹¹

Ukrainian people and, in particular, their Crimean compatriots present the best examples of such a force and resilience. In the occupied Crimea, their initial resolve was to use only peaceful, non-violent means of resistance, practised, in particular, by the popular movement 'Crimean Solidarity'.¹² After the beginning of a 'Major War', in addition to this and other non-violent groups such as the 'Yellow Ribbons', more aggressive (and riskier) forms of resistance have also appeared. These include acts of sabotage, the killing of military personnel and the most vicious collaborators;

reconnaissance of facilities, deployment and movement of troops, then transferring this important information to the military and security forces of Ukraine, etc. New partisan structures like the Crimean Tatar-Ukrainian 'Atesh' are of great help to the AFU. The underground warriors have been greatly encouraged by Ukraine's recent successes in the Black Sea, and repeated strikes on the Crimean/Kerch Bridge and Russian military infrastructure on the peninsula.

An important role in the growing hopes for de-occupation has been played by the decisive change in the ideology and strategic planning for the liberation of Crimea. While before the full-scale invasion of 2022 the dominant vision had been determined by the reliance on the exclusively political-diplomatic ways of resolving this military interstate conflict of relatively low intensity, nowadays, more and more policymakers in Ukraine and beyond have become convinced that this goal is impossible to achieve without a military action component. This changing trend can be followed by analysing, for example, the dynamics of moods, topics discussed, and activities planned and implemented during the 'Crimean Platform' events, beginning from its first summit in August 2021, up until those taking place in 2023. Reform of the Ministry of Defence, now headed by Rustem Umerov, has also emboldened the pro-Ukrainian residents of Crimea, especially the Crimean Tatars — both those who left the occupied peninsula and joined the ranks of the AFU, and those remaining in Crimea but longing for its liberation, and now taking part in and/or covertly supporting partisan and other resistance movements.¹³

11 A *New Year's interview with Volodymyr Zelensky*, "The Economist", 01.01.2024, <https://econ.st/3REF16w>; N. Belitser, *Natalya Belitser: Liberation of Crimea: A path to win the war*, "Baltic Rim Economies", 1/2024, <https://bit.ly/3VWiDlF>.


12 N. Belitser, *'Crimean Solidarity': What Is It?* "POID", 15.07.2019, <http://idpo.org.ua/articles/2832-do-you-know-what-crimean-solidarity-is.html>.

13 N. Krychovska, *10 Years of Annexation: Crimea's Decade-Long Stand Against the Criminal Russian Regime*, "Ukraine World", 26.02. 2024, <https://ukraineworld.org/en/articles/analysis/crimeas-annexation>

Meanwhile, over the past two years, the Russian occupation 'rulers' have sharply increased their persecutions and repressions targeting all pro-Ukrainian-minded people or even those just suspected of 'disloyalty'. By the end of 2023, it was known about 190 political prisoners held in Crimea or already transported to the Russian Federation; 123, or almost two thirds of them, were Crimean Tatars,¹⁴ although they make up only 13 — 15% of the Crimean population. As Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, stated while releasing in April 2023 a report on the human rights situation of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, "Crimean Tatars in Crimea, and especially those opposing Crimea's illegal annexation or expressing dissent, are being subjected to numerous patterns of serious violations of human rights, persecution, discrimination, and stigmatisation by the Russian occupying authorities. This is further reinforced by a culture of impunity for such violations that is prevalent in the peninsula".¹⁵

The largest group at risk consists of believers, persecuted for being assumed to belong to the peaceful pan-Islamic movement Hizb ut-Tahrir, recognised in Russia in 2003 as a 'terrorist organisation', but legal in Ukraine and most democratic countries of the world. The Russian occupiers in Crimea are persecuting 107 people in the "Hizb ut-Tahrir case", 104 of them representatives of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people.

These innocent victims of the repressive regime are often sentenced to absurdly long terms of imprisonment — up to 20 years, usually served far away from their families, in Siberia or remote northern oblasts of Russia.¹⁶ In 2023, human rights activists registered 50 such cases; 45 of those transported were Crimean Tatars. Following the emergence of new administrative liability "for discrediting the Russian army" after February 24, 2022, numerous cases were initiated in Crimean courts — more than anywhere else in Russia.



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Representatives of the indigenous people and their whole families are subjected to illegal searches, detentions, abductions, 'disappearances' never properly investigated, and arrests under false charges of 'terrorism' and 'extremism' — without any proven evidence of crimes committed or even wrongdoings breaching the imposed Russian legislation. In all cases, international human rights law and vast majority of articles of the Geneva Convention IV (1949) — the basis of

14 У Криму найбільших репресій зазнають кримські татари — Лубінець (*In Crimea, Crimean Tatars are subjected to greatest repression — Lubinets*), "Ukrinform", 09.12.2023, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/3798034-u-krimu-najbilsih-represij-zaznaut-krimski-tatari-lubinec.html>

15 *Commissioner draws attention to Crimean Tatars' struggle for human rights*, 18.04. 2023, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/commissioner-draws-attention-to-crimean-tatars-struggle-for-human-rights>.

16 H. Coynash, *Crimean Tatar political prisoner: Russia's 19-year sentence will not silence me, nor will such persecution break others*, "KhPG", 03.10.2023, <https://khpg.org/en/1608812871>;

М. Шевчук, *Названа кількість осіб, яких окупанти переслідують в Криму у «справі Хізб ут-Тahrір» (Named the number of persons persecuted by the occupiers in Crimea in the «Hizb ut-Tahrir case»*), "Qirim News", 13.02.2024, <https://qirim.news/news/okupanty-peresliduiut-v-krymu>.

international humanitarian law — have been brutally violated.¹⁷

Let us also recall that already in 2016, the Mejlis — the main representative/executive body of the Crimean Tatar people — was banned by the Russian authorities as an ‘extremist organisation’; and its two Deputy Heads were arrested, Akhtem Chiygoz in January 2015, and Ilmi Umerov in May 2016. On 25 October 2017, both were saved by the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who swapped them for two Russian spies. Nariman Dzhelyal, the only Crimean Tatar leader remaining in Crimea, was arrested on 4 September 2021 on absurd charges of ‘sabotage’ — in fact, due to his active participation in the inauguration summit of the Crimean Platform in Kyiv on 23 August 2021. Criminal cases were also initiated against the Head of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, and charismatic people’s leader Mustafa Djemilev; they were prohibited from entering the peninsula. Now the Mejlis office is functional in Kyiv, whereas many active Crimean Tatars (approximately 30,000) were compelled to move to mainland Ukraine, where some of them joined the ranks of the Ukrainian Army.

Meanwhile, Russia is trying to pursue even those who escaped its grip and moved to Ukraine or other countries. In particular, in November 2023, Russia issued an arrest warrant for famous Ukrainian/Crimean Tatar singer Jamala, Ukrainian Eurovision Song Contest winner (2016), on a charge of distributing ‘fake’ information about

Russia’s armed forces. Earlier, she was put on the wanted list and arrested in absentia.¹⁸

The Russian military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has had a number of other negative consequences for the Crimean residents and, in particular, for the Crimean Tatars. A major threat for them is to be forced to fight against their compatriots, including ethnic Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine. According to some sources, in September 2022, the occupation authorities disproportionately applied to Crimean Tatars forced conscription in order to replenish the Russian army, using for this all possible means and locations. Human rights NGO ‘Crimea SOS’ has estimated that 90% of mobilisation notices have been given to Crimean Tatars, and recognised this step as an action bearing the hallmarks of genocide. It caused panic and a feeling of helplessness, because fleeing the peninsula turned out to be an extremely difficult task, as access to mainland Ukraine had become impossible. As was said by Tamila Tasheva, permanent representative of the President of Ukraine in Crimea, “First they tried to buy us, then they tried to repress us and now they see mobilisation as a way to try to simply get rid of us.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, up to 20,000 of the Crimean Tatars did manage to leave the temporarily occupied peninsula, despite the fact that they had to overcome enormous troubles and difficulties while attempting to gain access to Kazakhstan, Georgia, Türkiye, Poland and other countries.²⁰ Although the exact total number of Crimean Tatars forced to leave their homeland due to its occupation

17 D. Fishman, *Indigenous people suffer kidnappings, torture, imprisonment due to annexation of Crimea*, “The Insider”, 21.03.2023, <https://theins.ru/en/politics/260302>.

18 *Russia puts Ukrainian Eurovision winner Jamala on wanted list*, “Politico”, 20.11.2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-puts-ukrainian-eurovision-winner-jamala-on-wanted-list/>.

19 *A way to get rid of us: Crimean Tatars decry Russia’s mobilisation*, “The Guardian”, 25.09.2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/25/a-way-to-get-rid-of-us-crimean-tatars-decry-russia-mobilisation>.

20 *Appeal of the CTCRC in connection with the illegal mass mobilization of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people into the armed forces of Russia*, “CTCRC”, 24.10.2022, <https://ctrcenter.org/en/activities/465-obraschenie-krc-v-svyazi-s-nezakonnoj-massovoj-mobilizaciej-korenogo-krymskotatarskogo-naroda-v-vooruzhennye-strukturny-rossii-2>.

remains unknown, in 2023 the figure amounted to approximately 70,000.²¹


Is Reunification Possible?

Although the overwhelming majority of the Ukrainian citizenry believes in Crimea being returned to Ukraine through different means that include military force, it looks like this will not occur in the near future or, perhaps, even within the middle-term perspective — despite the encouraging hints by some of the top-level Ukrainian authorities, who had already been proved to miscalculate when discussing this topic in 2022. Nevertheless, since the process of the de-occupation and reintegration of Crimea bears many unresolved problems and challenges and is a rather specific situation, all the accumulated issues need full attention, thorough analysis and preparations; adequate solutions should be found not after the reunification but long before.

In fact, although the actual liberation is still well in the future, strategic and practical planning for the future reintegration of Crimea is already under way. Specialists are dealing with a lot of the administrative issues and trying to find answers to such difficult questions as what to do with traitors, and collaborators (and how to detect all of them); with holders of Russian passports — obtained voluntarily or forcibly, or under the pressure of circumstances; what should be done with private property acquired by illegally arrived citizens of the mainland Russia and with the ‘newcomers’ themselves; how to revive the ruined ecology, and with many other things.

But one of the main challenges relates to the status of the de-occupied Crimean Peninsula, which could hardly be restored as

an Autonomous Republic in its current form. The subject of such an odd kind of autonomy had not been constitutionally defined, but de facto it was Russian autonomy, where the Russian language, culture and general political landscape, preserving quite a few features of the Soviet era, firmly kept dominant positions (although this fact was never officially recognised). In this context, it should be emphasised that the Crimean Tatar nation is acknowledged as an indigenous people of Ukraine by the Decree of the Verkhovna Rada (2014) followed by their adopting in 2021 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On indigenous peoples of Ukraine’.²² Unlike a national minority, such a legal entity as an indigenous people possesses a collective right to self-determination in its historical homeland, according to international law (in particular, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007, which Ukraine officially signed in May 2014).



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This kind of ‘internal self-determination’ of indigenous peoples foresees, inter alia, the possibility of establishing their own national-territorial autonomies within the borders of sovereign independent states, as a tool of exercising this right. Ensuring the implementation of such a scenario in


21 N. Krychovska, *10 Years of Annexation: Crimea’s Decade-Long Stand Against the Criminal Russian Regime*, “Ukraine World”, 26.02.2024, <https://ukraineworld.org/en/articles/analysis/crimeas-annexation>

22 Закон України Про корінні народи України (*Law of Ukraine on Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine*), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1616-20#Text>.

the de-occupied Crimea would be a fair and wise solution to the longstanding problem. It will meet the expectations of the Crimean Tatar people themselves, and strengthen their trust in Ukraine as a truly democratic country. This is why any strategy for the de-occupation of Crimea not only should but must envision the transformation of the so-called administrative-territorial autonomy (as described in Section 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution) into a Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy.²³

However, to achieve a social consensus regarding such a vision of the future of the de-occupied Crimea will be possible only through a sustained educational campaign, and raising the level of awareness and proper understanding of the existing international norms and best practices in this sphere. Unfortunately, this knowledge and understanding are still lacking in the mindsets of many Ukrainian legislators, politicians, opinion-makers and representatives of the popular mass media, not to mention the ordinary people. Meanwhile, the most popular objection asserting that “the existence of any kind of territorial autonomy is not possible in a unitary state and may lead to separatism” simply reveals the ignorance of those who adhere to such a notion. Because the formation of a territorial autonomy for an indigenous ethnic entity differing from the mainstream population is implemented in a number of unitary democratic states in order to avoid undesirable federalisation of an entire country — which also applies to Ukraine.²⁴

Keeping in mind that for the Crimean Tatars Crimea is their only Motherland, and that they have no ‘kin-state’ to which to flee and settle comfortably, if the situation has become unbearable, let us recall a popular question “Whose Crimea”? It serves as a test for identifying political friends and enemies all over the world, due to the choice of answer: either “Crimea is Ukraine!” or “Crimea is Russia!” But in very rare cases you can hear that “Ukrainian Crimea is Crimean Tatar land” ...



However short the Russian and then Soviet rule over Crimea was (starting in 1783), it brought immeasurable sufferings to its indigenous population

In this context, we should be aware that the mythology about Crimea as a “native Russian land” very successfully serves to justify occupation and illegal annexation under the false pretext that “Crimea returns to its roots, to native harbour”, thus causing euphoria within Russian society. This deeply entrenched propaganda also indoctrinates quite a few people and gains followers in other countries. But actually, it has no confirmation in basic facts. As the well-known Ukrainian historian Serhiy Gromenko noted, if we take only written history — from the time of the Cimmerians to today, namely 3,000 years, then the Russian period in the history of Crimea is only 5.5%, whereas the Crimean

23 М. Глуховський, Чи потрібен Криму статус автономії? Рефат Чубаров пояснює позицію кримських татар (*Does Crimea need the status of autonomy? Refat Chubarov explains the position of the Crimean Tatars*), “Glavcom”, 28.06.2023, <https://glavcom.ua/longreads/chi-potriben-krimu-status-avtonomiji-refat-chubarov-pojasnjuje-pozitsiju-krimskikh-tatar-937601.html>; К. Глянько, Чи залишиться статус Криму та Севастополя незмінним після деокупації: експертка дала пояснення (*Will the status of Crimea and Sevastopol remain unchanged after de-occupation: the expert gave an explanation*), “Suspilne”, 19.01.2024, <https://glavcom.ua/longreads/chi-potriben-krimu-status-avtonomiji-refat-chubarov-pojasnjuje-pozitsiju-krimskikh-tatar-937601.html>.

24 Н. Беліцер, Кримські татари як корінний народ, «Національне газетно-журнальне видавництво» (*Crimean Tatars as Indigenous People*), Київ, 2018, ст. 1 — 168.

Tatar period is twice as large — 11.4%.²⁵ Gromenko's abundant research reveals also the ties and alliances established between the Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians at different times, and explains why Crimean prosperity depends so much on mainland Ukraine.

However short the Russian and then Soviet rule over Crimea was (starting in 1783), it brought immeasurable sufferings to its indigenous population, and led to drastic changes in the demographic situation, the apogee of which was Stalin's mass deportation of the entire Crimean Tatar people in May 1944. Repatriation became possible only in the late-1980s of the 20th century, with the collapse of the USSR approaching. According to Russian official statistics, the Russian/Soviet rule reduced the percentage of indigenous Crimean Tatars in Crimea's population from over 84 per cent in 1785 to 12 per cent in 2014.²⁶

Even the limited information given above indicates how vitally important is the task of providing the high-quality education that would allow the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar peoples to win not only on the military front, but also in the information war in which the enemy invests enormous resources. Our unity, mutual support and shared values are destined to ensure our joint victory.

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