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Crimea

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ADDRESSING RUSSIA'S OCCUPATION OF CRIMEA: FROM CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TO PEACEBUILDING

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Which conflict resolution method should be employed to maximise the outcomes of acceptable regional security and sustained peace in Crimea? As the current international conflict management mechanisms are of limited effect, Ukraine pushes for the new Crimean Platform format. The author explores whether the “peacebuilding” approach used to address the armed conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts is hereto relevant. Some good practices of this approach – dialogue, advocacy of humanitarian issues, and people connectivity – can be used for the temporarily occupied Crimea.

Introduction

The phenomenon of temporarily occupied Crimea has been an “unknown known” for many international relations analysts and politicians. Some prefer to treat the issue separately from the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Others submit to the belief that the issue is unsolvable as Russia would never return Crimea to Ukraine.

Behind these approaches is the balancing of a relatively small power of Ukraine versus the formerly imperial, nuclear-armed, and militarily strong Russia. Moreover, when neoliberalism fell out of fashion, a sentiment emerged that neither Crimea nor “Ukraine crisis” should be a security concern for Europe, or even that it is Ukraine, not Russia, that is the greatest security challenge in Europe, and that the EU should not become a junior partner to the US geopolitical ambitions vis-à-vis Russia. Somewhat at odds is the issue of Russia’s human rights violations in Crimea – international reaction to human rights is an element of the liberal international order

that still stands, while democracy and other values that once were considered essential components of “democratic peace” are often labelled as “Western” and discarded.

Conflict Management

Conflict management for Crimea remains centred on bilateral contacts and reactive policy actions in multilateral institutions. The UN Security Council (UN SC), a principal body to address international conflicts, has not been able to act on the issue because of Russia’s veto power. The case descended to the UN General Assembly (UN GA), which has adopted several politically important resolutions, eventually defining the conflict over Ukraine’s Crimea as a “temporary occupation”. First and foremost, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 of 27 March 2014 defined the unlawfulness and inadmissibility of Russia’s seizure of Crimea, and affirmed support for Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, “national unity”, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised


borders. The resolution also invalidated the 16 March 2014 “referendum” in Crimea.

Russia’s objections to international regulation were helped by China’s position. Not recognising Russia’s annexation of Crimea, China has been abstaining from voting, and voted “against” the UN GA resolution of 07 December 2020: A Chinese expert explained that China saw “complex historical dimensions of the situation in Crimea and remains committed to a diplomatic solution that considers the interests of all parties involved”.¹

Even though no sanctions were authorised by the UN, the sanctions over Crimea were imposed by the US, EU, Canada, Japan, Australia, and many other “Western” states, which supplemented personal sanctions with selected sectoral and trade ones – for example, the “Prohibition of Imports into the European Union of Goods from Crimea” or the “Prohibition of European Investments in Crimea”. Unlike the sanctions related to the Minsk process, “Crimea sanctions” are expected to stay even if progress is made toward conflict resolution in Donbas. Of note, Ukraine imposed the sanctions on Russia only in 2015.

All these measures notwithstanding, the situation has not improved, and human rights violations have increased. Moreover, the risk of the conflict relapse into armed hostilities is present and growing. Russia’s militarisation of Crimea and the Black Sea after the annexation was followed by the skirmish and capture of Ukrainian

servicepersons and seizure of naval boats on 25 November 2018 in the Kerch Strait, which prompted analysts to warn, “Further incidents remain a real possibility.”²



Conflict management for Crimea remains centred on bilateral contacts and reactive policy actions in multilateral institutions

Remarkably, Russia’s eventual return of the detainees and the boats to Ukraine might have signalled that there is still a cap for Russia in terms of the degree of violence in foreign policy. Yet, there remains a long-term threat of the conflict’s relapse into armed hostilities: President Vladimir Putin in his March 2014 speech on Crimea’s accession to the Russian Federation referenced Kyivan Rus specifically, and on another occasion, “in December 2019, he once more referred to southeastern Ukraine as ancestral Russian lands, claiming they had been inexplicably and erroneously handed to Ukraine by the Bolsheviks”.³ Additionally, there is a recurring narrative that Russia has a strategic need for the land corridor from the occupied territories of Donbas to Crimea, which calls for watching the military dynamics of the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts when analysing Crimea. This is supported by the entities in control of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions (CADLR) ideologically connecting Crimea and Donbas and advocating for joining Russia.

1 Z. Lihua, *Explaining China’s Position on the Crimea Referendum*, Carnegie-Tsinghua Centre for Global Policy, 01 April 2015 [<https://carnegietsinghua.org/2015/04/01/explaining-china-s-position-on-crimea-referendum-pub-59600> access: 28 February 2021].

2 *Reducing the Human Cost of Ukraine’s War*, International Crisis Group, 04 February 2019 [<https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/reducing-human-cost-ukraines-war> access: 28 February 2021].

3 T. Kuzio, *Putin Forever: Ukraine faces prospect of endless imperial aggression*, Atlantic Council, 13 February 2020 [<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putin-forever-ukraine-faces-the-prospect-of-endless-imperial-aggression/> access: 28 February 2021].

There is an established connection to Crimea in CADLR “oversight” and “governance”. A member of the Russian State Duma “representing” Crimea, Andrey Kozenko, asserted, “The Republic of Crimea has always supported and will continue to support the people of Donbass”.⁴

The UN General Assembly Resolution of 07 December 2020 specifically addressed the militarisation, following up on previous resolutions, 73/194 of 17 December 2018 and 74/17 of 09 December. Of special interest in this resolution was the statement, “Recalling that the temporary occupation of Crimea and the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine by the Russian Federation is in contravention of commitments made in the ... [Budapest] Memorandum”. The resolution specifically voiced the concern over “the efforts of the Russian Federation to extend its jurisdiction over the nuclear facilities and material in Crimea” and the “destabilizing impact on the international verification and arms control regimes ... transfers by the Russian Federation of advanced weapon systems, including nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles”.⁵

Ukraine officially stays committed to a peaceful politico-diplomatic resolution of

the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The Crimean Platform was designed as “a foreign policy instrument of the de-occupation strategy. This flexible international format is aimed at consolidating international efforts and achieving synergy of intergovernmental, parliamentary, and expert levels”.⁶ Among regionally important powers, the idea was supported by the US, calling “like-minded partners” to join this framework.⁷ Apart from Ukraine’s traditional Baltic-Nordic friends, Canada, the UK, Turkey, Georgia, and Switzerland also signalled they would join. Germany and France remain cautious, despite the confirmation that France will participate in inaugural 23 August 2021 summit, but “there’s some need for clarification about its purpose”.

The platform’s security direction will reportedly include discussions “on the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Defence” to address the impact of Crimea’s occupation on the security situation in the Black Sea, but also broader implications for the Middle East and Northern Africa region. The platform will also have a strong focus on the human rights violations in Crimea.⁸

An open question remains whether Russia would be willing to join the new mechanism, and the indications are that this is presently

4 В Донецке стартовал первый день интеграционного форума “Русский Донбасс” (*The First Day of the Integration Forum “Russian Donbass” Has Started in Donetsk*), Russian Center, 28 January 2021 [<https://russian-center.ru/v-donetske-startoval-pervyj-den-integratsionnogo-foruma-russkij-donbass/> access: 28 February 2021].

5 *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December 2020*, United Nations General Assembly, 14 December 2020 [<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/29> access: 28 February 2021].

6 *The Crimean Platform Will Become a Foreign Policy Instrument of De-Occupation Strategy*, “Ukraine Analytica”, 25 February 2021 [<https://ukraine-analytica.org/the-crimean-platform-will-become-a-foreign-policy-instrument-of-the-de-occupation-strategy> access: 28 February 2021].

7 *Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on the Ukraine Conflict and Implementation of the Minsk Agreements (via VTC)*, United States Mission to the United Nations, 11 February 2021 [<https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-the-ukraine-conflict-and-implementation-of-the-minsk-agreements-via-utc/> access: 28 February 2021].

8 A. Demchenko, *Марія Мезенцева: «Українська делегація не змінюватиме платівки стосовно Росії, яка порушила принципи Ради Європи»* (Maria Mezentseva: “Ukrainian Delegation Will Not Change the Record Regarding Russia, Which Violated the Principles of the Council of Europe”), “LB.ua”, 11 February 2021 [https://lb.ua/world/2021/02/11/477425_mariya_mezentseva_ukrainska.html access: 28 February 2021].

unlikely. Thus, the initiative will likely serve to keep Crimea on the international agenda. The platform envisages an international expert component to develop recommendations on the “de-occupation strategy”. Such coordination is needed more than ever, given some uncertainty over future German policy direction toward Russia. As has been noted, “Berlin’s calls for further talks with Moscow, which come whenever Russia makes the headlines, ignore the fact that there is already an abundance of dialogue between the Kremlin and various European leaders – it is just that this dialogue produces no results”.⁹

A Peacebuilding Approach

The concept of peacebuilding, including conflict prevention and transformation, ought to be explored in relation to Crimea. In the ongoing conflict, the immediate goal would be to de-escalate the tension and prevent future armed incidents that could lead to all-out hostilities and a regional war.

International peacebuilding has been quite popular in relation to the conflict in the east of Ukraine. But in fact it was also practised in the past in Crimea, to address internal situation and to learn how the multi-ethnic region, unlike some other territories of former Soviet states, had avoided violent conflict.¹⁰ The basic understanding of peacebuilding at the UN includes “efforts to assist countries and regions in their transitions from war to peace and to reduce

a country’s risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities for conflict management, and laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development”.¹¹

According to some experts, this is a methodology applicable to civil wars, rather than international conflicts, “as wars between nation-states virtually ceased to exist and as fragile states with internal armed conflicts became the main threats to global peace and security”.¹² Nevertheless, the peacebuilding approach is used to strengthen national institutions and national unity. This is extremely useful for Ukraine.



In the ongoing conflict, the immediate goal would be to de-escalate the tension and prevent future armed incidents that could lead to all-out hostilities and a regional war

Furthermore, on a grassroots level, peacebuilding, save for the limitation of the access, may affect the resilience of Ukrainian citizens residing in Crimea. As if in anticipation, Russia reportedly resettled 500,000 to one million persons to Crimea, but the core of its 2.5 million population are still Ukrainian citizens. Interestingly, the EU recently called on Russia to “stop changing

9 G. Gressel, *Dead-end Pragmatism: Germany’s Russia Strategy after Merkel*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 09 February 2021 [https://ecfr.eu/article/dead-end-pragmatism-germanys-russia-strategy-after-merkel/ access: 28 February 2021].

10 G. Sasse, *Conflict-prevention in a Transition State: The Crimean issue in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, “Nationalism and Ethnic Politics”, 8:2, 2002, pp.1-26, DOI: 10.1080/13537110208428659.

11 *Peace and Security*, United Nations [https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/peace-and-security/ access: 28 February 2021].

12 M. Von Der Shulenburg, *Rethinking Peacebuilding: Transforming UN approach*, International Peace Institute, September 2014 [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_e_pub_rethinking_peacebuilding.pdf access: 28 February 2021].

the demographic structure on the peninsula by the resettlement of its own civilian population to the peninsula".¹³

This humanitarian approach may have an intricate relationship with identity issues. Tatiana Kyselova noted that in Ukraine, "identities are not stable, but instead are constantly shifting and mixing, and it is likely that even ethnicity is shifting as well".¹⁴ Enhanced work on a "civic nation" that Ukraine has to a large extent been implementing may also empower the residents in Crimea. International peacebuilders should also support targeted work with Russian speakers: As Taras Kuzio observed, "It is therefore long overdue for Western scholars to come to appreciate and study the phenomenon of Russian-speaking Ukrainian patriotism".¹⁵

An essential element in the peacebuilding approach is the use of dialogue between the parties to the conflict. This supplements the conflict management approach with multi-track diplomacy, involving experts and representatives of civic society organisations. Is there room for such a dialogue over Crimea? In fact, one such dialogue has already been taking place for several years. Reportedly, the fourth Truth, Justice, and Peacebuilding Commission meeting was held in Paris, supported by the EU. The *Declaration of Intellectuals*, adopted at the meeting,

stated that "a lasting and equitable peace in the Donbas and the de-occupation of Crimea are possible and necessary. ... For the establishment of a lasting peace, it is necessary to identify and eliminate the basic reasons for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and also between Russia and the West". The members of the commission include the Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv), the Mohyla Academy (Kyiv), the international association "Memorial" (Moscow), and the College of the Bernardines (Paris).¹⁶

An interesting interplay is among the conflict management, peacebuilding, and advocacy for human rights. It is especially relevant in the context of the Crimean Platform, which will have the human rights element, but it is not clear to what extent it would be a core component in relation to the political, security, economic, and environmental components. A delicate balance may be needed going forward, when a dialogue with Russia becomes possible. Based on the experience of some intrastate conflicts, the UN-connected experts noted that "conflict resolvers, eager to achieve a negotiated settlement to a conflict with minimum loss of life, may insufficiently factor in the relevance of human rights to the long-term success of their work. Human rights advocates, by limiting their activities to shaming, negative publicity, and judicial condemnation of responsible

13 *Ukraine: Declaration by the High Representative on Behalf of the European Union on the Illegal Annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol*, European Council, 25 February 2021 [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/25/ukraine-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-illegal-annexation-of-crimea-and-sevastopol/ access: 28 February 2021].

14 T. Kyselova, *Mapping Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Ukraine: Peacebuilding by Any Other Name*, Mediation and Dialogue Research Center, June 2019 [https://md.ukma.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ENG-Ukraine-Mapping-Civil-Society-Report-2019.pdf access: 28 February 2021].

15 T. Kuzio, *Russian-Speaking Patriotism in Ukraine: Under-Researched and Misunderstood (Part II)*, NYU Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia, 11 February 2021 [https://uacrisis.org/en/73801-possibility-peace-donbas-end-occupation-crimea access: 28 February 2021].

16 *The Possibility of Peace in Donbas and of an End to the Occupation of Crimea*, Ukraine Crisis Media Center, 28 October 2019 [https://uacrisis.org/en/73801-possibility-peace-donbas-end-occupation-crimea access: 28 February 2021].

individuals, may miss opportunities for human rights improvements that could be achieved through the use of negotiation and diplomatic techniques”.¹⁷

One approach in peacebuilding advocates for the restoration of economic connections with occupied territories, which may prevent the parties from hostilities. However, there are serious limitations. First, future de-occupation of the peninsula has to address legal ramifications of seized assets and unlawfully exploited resources. Remarkably, key “investors” in Crimea may be from President Putin’s circle: For example, companies related to Arkady Rotenberg reportedly acquired about 25 percent of “nationalised” resorts and the bulk of lucrative infrastructure contracts.¹⁸ Some experts have concluded that not economic relations but “diplomacy and politics” were the reason that led to the resolution of conflicts, while “the legal status may put constraints on the possible economic activities to mitigate the conflict”.¹⁹

Moreover, Russia may politicise economic connectivity, using it as a sign of the occupation’s recognition in issues such as the resumption of water and electricity supplies and the unblocking of transportation routes. Moreover, economic connectivity is difficult where embargoes are used to repel the occupation. From the humanitarian perspective, for the issue of water or vital

supplies in the future, Ukraine’s government would probably partner with a reputable international organisation, should such a need arise.



Moreover, Russia may politicise economic connectivity, using it as a sign of the occupation’s recognition in issues such as the resumption of water and electricity supplies and the unblocking of transportation routes

The grassroots humanitarian component addressed by international peacebuilders would support President Zelenskyy’s “people-centred” policy toward de-occupation: “Dear Crimeans! It’s time to come back home”.²⁰ Good practices can be learned from the experience of Donbas “line of contact” to focus on the flow of people across the administrative boundary. And some partner support is arriving. Recently, the UK has announced funding for a new project “to improve access to vital services for Ukrainians living in Crimea”. The UK will contribute GBP 168,000 to this project, “which will support the local authorities in the neighbouring Kherson region to help those who are struggling to visit hospitals or apply for Ukrainian passports”.²¹

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- 17 E.F. Babbitt, *Conflict Resolution and Human Rights in Peacebuilding: Exploring the Tensions*, UN [https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/conflict-resolution-and-human-rights-peacebuilding-exploring-tensions access: 28 February 2021].
- 18 Y. Reznikova, *Рассказ о том, как Аркадий Потенберг стал главным владельцем крымских курортов (The Story on How Arkady Rotenberg Became Main Owner of Crimean Resorts)*, “Proekt”, 25 February 2021 [https://www.proekt.media/guide/arkadiy-rotenberg-krym/ access: 28 February 2021].
- 19 *Workshop: Economic Connectivity in European Conflict Regions*, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, 01 July 2016 [https://wiiw.ac.at/files/events/report-economic-connectivity-workshop-16-09-02-n-341.pdf access: 28 February 2021].
- 20 *Address by the President of Ukraine on the Occasion of the Day of Resistance to the Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol*, 26 February 2021 [https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-z-nagodi-dnya-sprotivu-okupac-66821 access: 28 February 2021].
- 21 *UK to Allocate GBP 168,000 to Kherson Region for Project to Improve Life of Ukrainians Living in Crimea*, “Interfax”, 20 February 2021 [https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/725149.html access: 28 February 2021].

Remarkably, applying the peacebuilding approach to the temporarily occupied Crimea could potentially provide synergies with peacebuilding regarding the armed conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and strengthening national unity. Tatiana Kyselova noted that, common for both Crimea and Donbas, “many conventional peacebuilding strategies that originate from other contexts of internal civil wars are not directly applicable here. The external aggression element should be taken into account when designing any peacebuilding intervention, including security aspects and the impact on the geopolitical level of the conflict”. Yet, Kyselova’s research also found obstacles in raising international donor funding: “The exclusion of Crimea as an issue from the peacebuilding agenda in Ukraine was not seen as due to civil society but rather to donors and the Ukrainian government”.²² Hopefully, renewed activism with the Crimea Platform may open more doors in this regard.

Will Russia Ever Return Crimea?

One has to spend a long time to find optimistic expert views on the future of Crimea with Ukraine. Some regional scholars, e.g., Ivan Katchanovski, suggest that “a return of Crimea from Russia to Ukraine is virtually impossible”.²³ Seasoned diplomat Steven Pifer asserted, “Ukraine lacks the leverage to restore sovereignty over Crimea, at least for the foreseeable future. But that does not mean the West should accept it”.²⁴

Nevertheless, there have been several notable historical precedents of reversing

the status of annexed territories. One such relatively recent case was the 1978 Camp David Peace Agreement, whereby Israel gradually returned the occupied Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. The accords included demilitarisation of Sinai to reassure Israel. Notably, the sense of urgency that prompted US administrations to become heavily involved in designing peace was created by the spark of the 1973 war. Yet, as early as 1972, President Anwar Sadat was willing to establish his credibility and was predisposed to the peace process.²⁵

Presently, Russia’s authorities have been dismissing any suggestion of resolving the conflict amicably. The debate over Crimea is legally punishable and a taboo in Russia. Nevertheless, some critical opposition voices, such as that of Garry Kasparov or prominent theatre and movie artists, have publicly opposed the annexation despite facing oppression and hate speech. Others, such as Russian opposition politician Alexey Navalny, admitted the need to have negotiations over Crimea.

Meanwhile, the strategic value of Crimea for Russia, at a close examination, is essentially reduced to securing Sevastopol’s warm water port and naval base, and the advantage of building “important strategic defence capabilities”. It also includes “the need to regain influence over Ukraine’s future direction. ... Should Putin’s strategy fail to achieve the outcomes that he desires, Crimea could well serve an additional strategic function, as a base of operations for future military action against Ukraine”.²⁶

22 Kyselova, n.14.

23 I. Katchanovski, *Crimea: People and Territory before and after Annexation*, “e-IR”, 24 March 2015 [<https://www.e-ir.info/2015/03/24/crimea-people-and-territory-before-and-after-annexation/> access: 28 February 2021].

24 S. Pifer, *Crimea: Six Years after Illegal Annexation*, Brookings, 17 March 2020 [<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/03/17/crimea-six-years-after-illegal-annexation/> access: 28 February 2021].

25 S. Telhami, *The Camp David Accords: A Case of International Bargaining* [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/6847/doc_6849_290_en.pdf access: 28 February 2021].

26 *Crimea’s Strategic Value to Russia*, CSIS, 18 March 2014 [<https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/crimeas-strategic-value-russia> access: 28 February 2021].

And if we admit that the threat from NATO, even today, is more perceived by the Russian authorities than real, then probably the value is in the Kremlin's ambition to control its "near abroad" and project the "great power" status worldwide. Andrei Illarionov even questioned the military strategic value of the Black Sea "lake" and concluded that "from an economic, political, and military point of view, [Crimea] is a huge liability 'earned' by Vladimir Putin and the Putin regime".²⁷

However, in the short term, the costs of President Putin's adventurism appear to be manageable. Russia's economy, despite the impact of sanctions, has been robust enough to absorb those costs, at least at a basic level. According to Leonid Bershidsky²⁸, "The subsidies poured into Crimea have varied between USD 1 billion and USD 2.7 billion a year, a manageable amount for the USD 1.6 trillion Russian economy". Yet, Bershidsky also believes that President Putin lost the "bargaining power" on the world stage, which has a far worse impact. Domestically, "Russians' post-Crimea enthusiasm is gone, eroded by six years of falling incomes. Now, Putin's financial costs are coming, too: Increased social and infrastructure spending are necessary to keep his support from sliding further, and, judging by the lack of reaction in the polls to Putin's recent

promises, as well as pronounced apathy during recent elections, Russians don't trust him, either". In the environment of a slow economic growth and questionable institutional reforms, the burden of the occupied Crimea will likely be increasingly heavier.

Furthermore, the curtailing of electoral democracy could backfire one day – a Russian analyst even mentioned conflicts with "unfavourable" Ukrainian legacy of direct elections of mayors that do not fit with the Russian governance system.²⁹ Small businesses complain about a poor investment climate,³⁰ while no large industries are in place to support growth. Transparency is likely to further decrease, as in order to promote investment in Crimea, the Russian authorities came up with the initiative to establish "special law areas", where international investors would be granted anonymity from sanctions.³¹

Conclusion

Peacebuilding may be useful not only to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the longer term, in the absence of effective conflict management frameworks, but also to prevent the conflict's relapse into violent military escalation. With the current limitations of some international

27 I. Tikhonenko, *Андрей Илларионов о мифах присоединения Крыма (Andrei Illarionov on the Myths of the Accession of Crimea)*, "Golos Ameriki", 31 March 2014 [https://www.golosameriki.com/a/illarionov-on-crimea/1883277.html access: 28 February 2021].

28 L. Bershidsky, *Five Years Later, Putin Is Paying for Crimea*, "Bloomberg", 16 March 2019 [https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-03-16/russia-s-annexation-of-crimea-5-years-ago-has-cost-putin-dearly access: 28 February 2021].

29 Y. Sovayev-Guryev, A. Galanina, S. Izotov, *Наш: россияне не изменили отношения к возвращению Крыма (It Is Ours – Russians Haven't Changed Their Attitudes to the Return of Crimea)*, "Iz.ru", 18 March 2019 [https://iz.ru/857392/egor-sozaev-gurev-angelina-galanina-sergei-izotov/nash-rossiiane-ne-izmenili-otnosheniia-k-vozvrashcheniiu-kryma access: 28 February 2021].

30 Y. Removskaya, *«Происходит сворачивание бизнеса»: как выживают предприниматели на полуострове ("Business Is Collapsing": How Entrepreneurs Survive on the Peninsula)*, "Iz.ru", 18 March 2019 [https://iz.ru/857392/egor-sozaev-gurev-angelina-galanina-sergei-izotov/nash-rossiiane-ne-izmenili-otnosheniia-k-vozvrashcheniiu-kryma access: 28 February 2021].

31 *Власти предложили для Крыма особый правовой режим для защиты от санкций (Authorities Proposed Special Legal Framework for the Protection against Sanctions for Crimea)*, "RBC", 03 February 2021 [https://www.rbc.ru/economics/03/02/2021/6019478c9a794725cd0cce58 access: 28 February 2021].

organisations, where Russia has a strong voting position, to address the temporary occupation of Crimea, the focus should be on bilateral and independent support for humanitarian connections, service delivery to Ukrainian citizens resident in Crimea, and private, including expert, diplomacy.

The absence of Russia's genuine consent for peace negotiations suggests the Crimean Platform could serve to keep the issue on the agenda and build a network of international partners, with synergies to the resolution of the armed conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

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