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RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

State Duma Elections in Crimea

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Abstract:

United Russia surprised few by dominating the first Duma elections held in Crimea in over a century. But lingering disaffection with the quality of its leadership in cities such as Sevastopol could undermine its ability to carve out a durable hold over the new Crimean political landscape.

Russian Elections in Crimea

In 2016, Crimea participated in its first national elections in 100 years as a member of the Russian Federation. Although the vast majority of the international community still does not recognize the region's annexation in 2014, 1.8 million voters were eligible to select politicians to represent them in the State Duma in Moscow. These voters were asked to select among a number of Russian political parties that have only recently laid down roots and competed within Crimean politics.

However, many Crimean citizens who had hoped for a clean break with pre-annexation politics found themselves choosing from a small set of elites with long political histories in the region. United Russia (UR) dominated the elections by successfully co-opting influential persons from both the Ukrainian Party of Regions (POR), which ruled Crimea prior to annexation, and the leaders of the "Crimean Spring." All four UR candidates won seats in single-member districts, while the party took over 70% of the proportional representation vote. UR's association with former elites however opened it up to strong challenges from new political forces which capitalized on public discontent with the way integration into Russia is being handled. The fierce political battle that resulted for the deputy seat from Sevastopol may be indicative of the challenges the ruling party faces in the future consolidating its grip over local politics.

The Electoral and Party System in Crimea

The September 2016 Russia State Duma elections utilized a mixed-member system by which half of the 450 deputies were elected through party lists and the other half in single-member districts. Four of these single-member districts are located on the Crimean Peninsula, one in the federal city of Sevastopol and three others covering the rest of the Republic of Crimea.[1] Several Crimean politicians were also included on national party lists, making the peninsula eligible to receive up to eight deputies in the 7th convocation of the State Duma.

The Duma elections occurred amidst continuing economic difficulties for the local population. Since annexation and the imposition of sanctions by the West, private investment has fallen dramatically while inflation has surged. Massive transfers from Moscow have helped cushion some of the impact, but have not completely compensated for drops in agricultural production and the lack of workable infrastructure. Compounding the damage has been the slow return of tourism, which still has not regained its pre-2014 levels, when Crimean ports were regularly visited by European cruise ships.

Not all of the major Russian political parties were completely unfamiliar with Crimean politics prior to annexation in 2014. United Russia and Ukraine's Party of Regions first began building ties in Crimea in the 2000s, when the latter ruled locally. Numerous similarities existed between the two parties, including a big tent approach to governing that downplayed the importance of ideology and focused on building political machines rather than providing public goods. Top UR politicians promoted cooperation between the parties by organizing events in Crimea, even naming Party of Regions their "key and only partner in Ukraine" in 2005.[2]

These pre-existing ties helped improve United Russia's electoral viability following Crimea's March 2014 referendum to join Russia. To some onlookers, UR orchestrated a near wholesale takeover of Party of Region's electoral machinery right after annexation. United Russia moved into the Party of Region's headquarters in Simferopol. Previous administrative staff were rehired to work for UR and the ranks of candidates to regional and federal elections swelled with former members of the Party of Regions.

But not all the old guard were kept on. The massive membership roll inherited from POR was slashed, and several of the top faces of United Russia now (for example, Prime Minister Sergey Aksenov and First Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Sheremet) hail from pro-Russian parties such as Russian Unity and were much less

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1   After annexation, Sevastopol became a federal city akin to Moscow and St. Petersburg, while the rest of Crimea became the Republic of Crimea.

2   Korrespondent.net. "Members of United Russia Arrived in Crimea to Campaign for the Party of Regions," October 12, 2010. Accessed at: <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1125420-chleny-edinoj-rossii-priehali-v-krym-agitirovat-za-partiyu-regionov>

prominent pre-annexation. These strategic moves were intended to attract many popular leaders from the "Crimean Spring" while capitalizing on the mobilization legacy the Party of Regions had achieved in the region. By the fall of 2014, UR politicians had quickly risen to the top of the legislative and executive institutions in both Sevastopol and the Republic of Crimea and were beginning to display the normal traits of a ruling party.

The party's stake in the Duma elections relied heavily on President Putin, whose approval ratings in Crimea after orchestrating the annexation have remained astronomically high.[3] Local UR leaders, however, have not fared as well. Concerns arose early on that corrupt local networks were siphoning federal money intended for infrastructure and co-opting real estate sales for private interests. Politicians such as regional legislature chair and UR regional party head Vladimir Konstantinov are closely connected to large construction companies and use their authority to carve out a piece of the action.[4] To some, annexation had ushered in the same set of rapacious, power-hungry elites that had plagued the region before.

Systemic opposition parties from Russia have largely failed to capitalize on any societal discontent towards the new UR authorities. Without pre-annexation party structures to work with, the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and Just Russia have struggled to build cadres and attract capable leaders. Each has tried to capitalize on splits within the United Russia elite to attract candidates. The Communist Party tried importing candidates from the Russian mainland, only to see local voters turn away from carpetbaggers in the regional elections of 2014. The bench of Crimean politicians is admittedly short, which further undermines political recruitment.

Other actors in Crimea have tried to pick up the slack in challenging United Russia, most visibly Alexei Chaly, the self-anointed "People's Mayor" of Sevastopol who helped spearhead secession from Ukraine. Since then, Chaly has been a thorn in the side of local authorities, especially United Russia politicians who he views as having let down the dreams of the "revolution."[5] His

petition to the Kremlin documenting corruption in Crimea forced President Putin to take the unusual step of convening a sit-down between regional big wigs. Since resigning from the Sevastopol City Council in 2015, Chaly has prodded government leaders from the outside, even trying to organize a referendum for the people to decide whether or not to elect their regional governor.

During the Duma campaign, Chaly threw his hefty popular support behind Party of Growth (PR) candidate Oleg Nikolaev. A successful businessperson from Sevastopol, Nikolaev had run the local chapter of Delovaya Rossiya, the nationwide trade association led by ombudsman Boris Titov. When Titov entered politics by establishing the PR party, Nikolaev was viewed as one of its candidates with the best change of winning a seat in the Duma. Chaly's widespread popularity breathed life into Nikolaev's campaign for Sevastopol's Duma seat and helped galvanize many locals disappointed with the extent of reforms since annexation.

The other outstanding question in the run-up to the Duma election concerned the Crimean Tatar minority. At roughly 13% of the population, the Crimean Tatars have faced significant political repression since 2014. Prominent leaders opposed annexation and then found themselves exiled for five years. Authorities have also banned the Tatars' representative body, the Mejlis, from operating, while deputies have seen their access and opportunities to appear in mass media, organize public demonstrations, and raise funds severely curbed. Leading activists declared their intention to boycott the State Duma election, citing maltreatment at the hands of the government.

Those Crimean Tatars looking for representatives who share their opposition towards the annexation had few options in the Duma elections to choose from. Non-systemic opposition parties like PARNAS and Yabloko basically boycotted the campaign in Crimea. With leaders on record calling for the return of the region to Ukraine, these parties faced an uphill if not impossible climb to win over the average voter still enamored with annexation. If there was one commonality across candidates from all parties, it was a steadfast commitment towards the integration of the peninsula with Russia proper. What set them apart more significantly were the personalities put forward to oversee that transition.

Domination by United Russia

The unified election day on September 18, 2016 passed with minimal fanfare. Official turnout in Crimea was recorded at 42.4% and 40.3% in Sevastopol, numbers comparable to the rest of Russia, which saw the lowest figures in the post-Soviet period. Even so, the Western international community for the most part refused to

3   Sofiya Samohina and Vadim Nikiforov. "Crimea and Sevastopol Get Acquainted with the New Campaign" Kommersant. September 8, 2016. Accessed at: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3082977>

4   Aleksander Gorniy, "Crimea: Year-End Results 2016". Echo Moskva, January 11, 2017. Accessed at: <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/amountain/1907600-echo/>

5   Peter Hobson. "Battle for Sevastopol: How a Crimean Romantic Fought the Kremlin's Bureaucrat," Moscow Times, April 8, 2016. Accessed at: <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/battle-for-sevastopol-how-a-crimean-romantic-fought-the-kremlins-bureaucrat-52439>

recognize the legitimacy of Crimean polls. The United States, France and Germany all declared the elections illegal, while the main monitoring body, the ODIHR office from the OSCE, declined to send observers to Crimea.

This lack of international monitors complicates efforts to assess electoral integrity. But violations were noted by journalists and unofficial observers. For example, reports surfaced of municipal employees facing pressure to turnout for the ruling party.[6] At the storied Massandra winery outside of Yalta, director Yanina Pavlenko used a rally to honor employees to publicly endorse the United Russia candidate running in that district. Administrative resources were also heavily deployed in United Russia's favor. The party's candidates held strong advantages accessing airwaves and plastered the region with advertisements. Officials in Armyansk even distributed smartphones to voters as an incentive to turn out.

In the end, the electoral results were mostly as anticipated. United Russia took 72.8% of the proportional representation vote, which allowed four candidates to accede to the State Duma. This initially included Prime Minister Sergey Aksenov, whose departure for Moscow would have left a gaping hole at the top of the government. Aksenov ultimately refused his mandate in true "locomotive" style, making way for Prosecutor General Natalia Poklonskaya, a national celebrity in her own right due to her role during annexation, to take his spot. The Communists and LDPR trailed UR significantly, each earning slightly over 13% of the party list vote. United Russia candidates, which included the vice-speaker, first vice-speaker, culture committee chairman of the Crimean State Council, won all three single-member districts in the Republic of Crimea.

However, competition for the seat from Sevastopol's single-member district was considerably more intense. Dmitry Belik, the UR candidate and another former functionary of the Party of Regions, ultimately won with 33.8% of the vote, edging out Nikolaev (PR) and Communist candidate Nikolay Komoyedov, a former Black Sea fleet commander. But this outcome was far from ordained. Disapproval with the way United Russia officials had overseen road construction and the allocation of attractive real estate had led many to expect a possible upset for Nikolaev. But United Russia kicked its political machine into high gear, with accusations flying of dirty tricks by the eventual winner.[7]

Statistical Analysis

One quirk of Crimea's electoral administration allows for more in-depth analysis of the results of the elections. During the integration process into the Russian Central Electoral Commission, local Crimean officials broadly imported the old precincts from when the peninsula was governed by Ukraine. A simple comparison of the two lists of electoral precincts reveals overwhelming overlap between the two elections. Of the 1,398 electoral precincts used the Crimean Republic and Sevastopol in the 2016 Russian State Duma elections, 1,258 (90%) were also employed in the Ukrainian Verhovna Rada elections from 2012.[8] This allows for a unique window into how Crimean voting behavior shifted following annexation.

First, turnout dropped by roughly 10% between 2012 and 2016. Part of the drop could be attributed to electricity blackouts which rolled through several precincts. But the lack of interest among voters could be more political in nature. As seen in Figure 1 on p. 6, the boycott by Crimean Tatars appeared to drive down turnout in regions where the minority is heavily concentrated such as Bakhchysarai (44.6%) and Simforopolsky rayon (47.6%). However, the placement of a Crimean Tatar Ruslan Balbek on United Russia's list (and ultimate ascension to the Duma) may have undercut the community's ability to unite behind the boycott. Furthermore, voting was down in general in coastal cities, where citizens have been most adversely affected by the drop in tourism. United Russia's vote share dropped in areas where turnout was lower, as seen in Figure 2 on p. 6.

Several administrative turnout tricks also appear to have been imported. Figure 3 on p. 7 plots the distribution of turnout by electoral precinct across Crimea. One can easily see the spike in abnormally high turnout in a number of precincts at the far right of the graph. In all, 45 electoral precincts noted turnout above 95%, with voting held in these places in hospitals, schools, and budgetary institutions. These districts had no history of such high turnout in the past, averaging just 54%, for the 2012 Rada elections.

Finally, there is interesting variation in how Crimean voters adopted new Russian parties after years participating in Ukrainian politics. Table 1 on p. 5 presents party conversion rates across electoral precincts, that is, the simple correlation between the vote share each major Ukrainian political party (the columns) received in 2012 and the vote share major Russian political parties (the

6   Christopher Miller. "Activists Say Crimeans Face Threats, Intimidation Ahead of Russian Vote" RFE/RL, September 13, 2016. Accessed at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-crimea-elections-activists-intimidation-russia/27984354.html>

7   Sergey Kozlovskiy. "Tricked Expectations: How the Elections Went Over in Sevastopol," BBC Russia Service. September 19,

2016. <http://www.bbc.com/russian/features-37404684>

8   The correlation between the number of people on voter lists for matched precincts between the two elections was 95.8%, further validating the claim that the electoral infrastructure during the Russian campaign was nearly fully reused.

rows) received subsequently in that same precinct in 2016.

As expected, United Russia drew heavily on voters that had previously supported the Party of Regions in the 2012 Ukrainian national elections. However, the party also relied on former supporters of Batkivshchyna, former Prime Minister Yuliya Timoshenko's party, whose leader during the 2012 election, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, went on to become Ukraine's first post-Maidan Prime Minister. United Russia's attempt to move beyond the Party of Region's legacy allowed it to win votes from individuals that had previously voted for POR's main rival.

On the other hand, LDPR and KPRF wound up splitting both the nationalist and the communist vote. LDPR's appeal drew on its explicit Russian nationalism, as well as the personal traits of its leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Voters formerly supporting the Russian Bloc party in 2012 (which fervently supported annexation early on and is now banned in Ukraine) turned away from United Russia in favor of more provocative rhetoric by both parties about a return to Crimea's glory

days under the Soviet Union. Finally, what little support Yabloko and PARNAS, the two main non-systemic opposition parties running from the Duma, achieved came largely from supporters of the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR), which ran in 2012 against corruption and for a more pro-European orientation for Ukraine.

Looking Ahead

Overall, the elections in Crimea lacked any overt surprises. United Russia overcame a strong challenge in the pivotal city of Sevastopol to run the tables across the districts and the party list. However, lingering disaffection with the degree of corruption and inability to tackle structural problems with the economy may spell danger for UR candidates down the line. Expectations soared of a bright future after annexation to Russia, but reality has unfortunately fallen short along multiple dimensions. The overall inexperience of mainland Russian political parties working in Crimea could open themselves up to locally grown politicians who promise a different way forward.

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Data on the Crimea Elections

Table 1:   Conversion Rate between Verhovna Rada 2012 Elections and State Duma 2016 Elections

Russian Political Party (2016)	Ukrainian Political Party (2012)				
	Party of Regions	Batkivshchyna	UDAR	Communist Party (Ukraine)	Russkiy Bloc
United Russia	0.373	0.302	0.08	-0.737	-3.38
LDPR	-0.057	-0.206	-0.037	0.302	1.03
Communist Party (Russia)	-0.095	-0.132	-0.159	0.288	1.13
Just Russia	-0.038	-0.047	-0.093	0.107	0.532
Yabloko / PARNAS	-0.017	0.017	0.045	-0.012	-0.005

Source: table compiled by David Szakonyi with data from the Russian Central Election Commission <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/ region/izbirkom> and the Ukrainian Central Election Commission <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/>
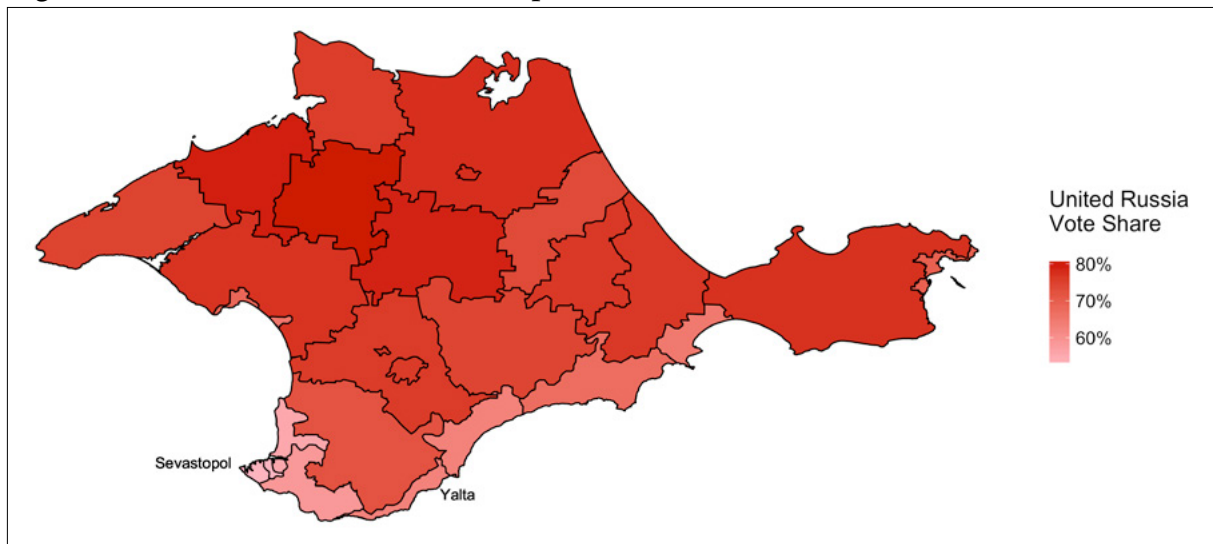
Figure 1: Turnout in September 2016 Elections
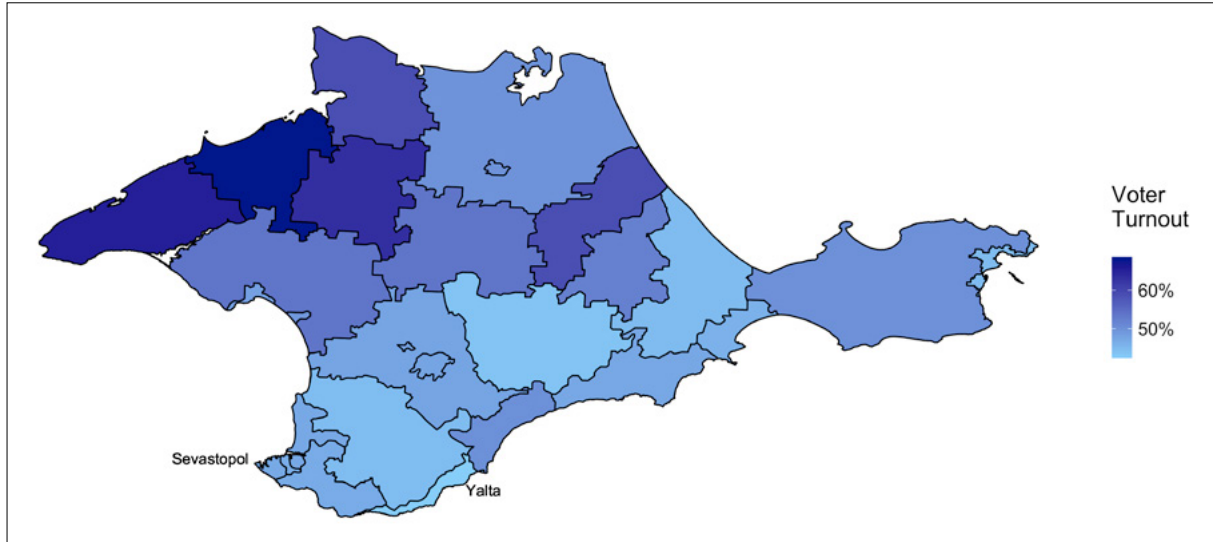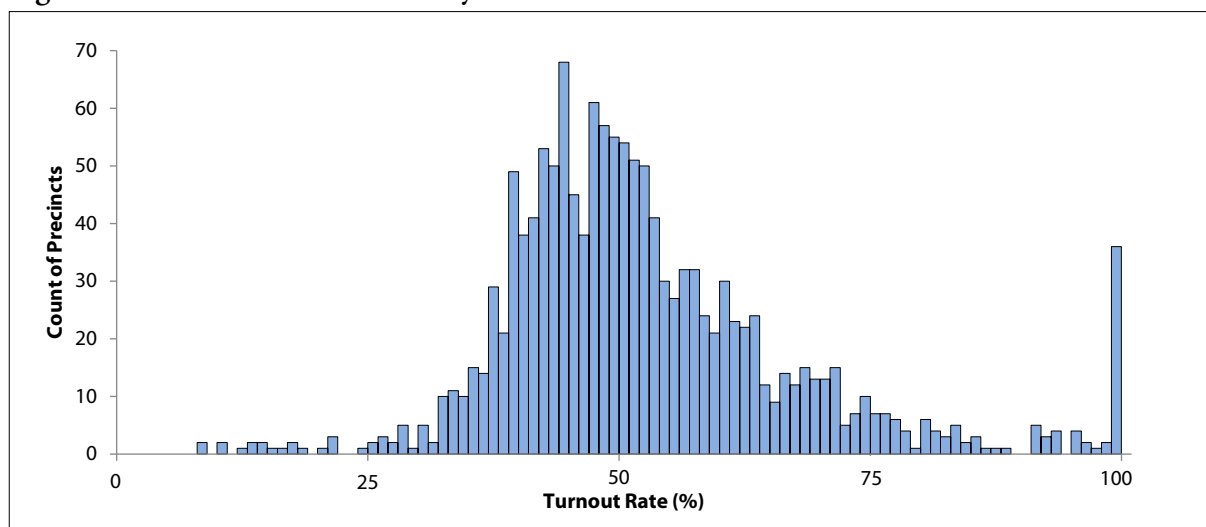

Source: map created by David Szakonyi with data from the Russian Central Election Commission <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>

Figure 2: United Russia Vote Share in September 2016 Elections

Source: map created by David Szakonyi with data from the Russian Central Election Commission <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>

Figure 3: Distribution of Turnout by Electoral Precinct

Source: calculations by David Szakonyi with data from the Russian Central Election Commission <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>

Russian–Ukrainian Relations: From Friendship of Peoples to War

Taras Kuzio, Amsterdam

"Will there be war?
"Looks like it."
"How can brothers fight one another?"
Conversation between a Kyiv taxi driver and author, April 2014.

Russian views of Ukraine are long-standing, they have broad acceptance in Vladimir Putin's regime and the opposition and will not change quickly. The majority of the Russian opposition both support the annexation of the Crimea and view Russians and Ukrainians as one people. Russian great power nationalism views Ukraine and Ukrainians in three ways.

The first is that Ukraine is not a truly sovereign state and an artificial creation propped up domestically by Jewish-Ukrainian oligarchs (an outgrowth of Soviet anti-Zionism) and externally by the US and EU. Russian views of Ukraine as a failed state are long standing. Putin and Russians believe that the Ukrainian people want to live in union with Russia in the Russian World, but are prevented from doing so by oligarchs and Western malfeasance.

The second, as Putin tirelessly repeats, is that Russians and Ukrainians are one people, different but very close. Ukrainians should be therefore part of the Russian World and not in Europe.

The third is that Russian identity is grounded in language and culture and, as Putin told the NATO-Russia Council in Bucharest in April 2008, Russian speakers are therefore "Russians." Russian nationalist dissidents in the USSR, the well-known writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Putin all believe eastern and southern Ukraine (and not only the Crimea) were wrongly included inside Ukraine by Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin. Although mistakenly including Kharkiv in "New Russia," Putin declared eastern-southern Ukraine to be *NovoRossiya* because of its history and because it is Russian speaking. In Russia, Putin

and Russians cannot fathom the concept of a patriotic Ukrainian Russian speaker.

Soviet Friendship of Peoples

Soviet attitudes to Ukraine fundamentally changed in 1932–1934 with the *holodomor* and reversal of indigenization policies that had promoted Ukranianization. This represented a shift away from viewing Russian great power nationalism and imperialism as the main threat to the USSR. Until the eve of the disintegration of the USSR, the bogeyman of Ukrainian "bourgeois nationalism" was a consistent staple of Soviet ideological propaganda, KGB operations, official historiography and religious policy through the Russian Orthodox Church.

In the first addition in the second half of the 1930s the concept of "friendship of peoples" was created which Soviet ideological tirades and official historiography promoted. Ukrainians and Russians had always been very close peoples and throughout history had sought to remain in union with one another. Ukrainians who had sought to break this unity apart were "traitors" in the pay of hostile outside forces—Swedes, Austrians, Nazi's, the CIA, and more recently Western democracy promoting foundations and the EU.

These concepts had always come under challenge from the Ukrainian diaspora and Western radio stations on the one hand and on the other, domestically from dissidents, nationalists and national communists and liberalizers within the Soviet system. During thaws and periods of liberalization, Ukrainians had demanded a return to the indigenization policies of the 1920s and described "Soviet Internationalism" as camouflage for Russification—as seen in the policy paper prepared for Ukrainian Communist Party leaders by Ivan Dzyuba entitled "Internationalism or Russification?" Internal liberalizers (national communists such as Dzyuba, writers, historians, and others) viewed their golden era as the thaw from the death of Stalin in 1953 to 1972, when Soviet Ukraine was ruled by Petro Shelest who was removed from power after being accused of "national deviationism." The next thaw came under Gorbachev.

The launch of the myth of the Great Patriotic War in 1964 and revival of the cult of Stalin from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s took place at the same time as state tolerance for official Russian nationalism in literary journals, theatre and films. From the late 1970s to the mid 1980s the Soviet regime also promoted anti-Zionism which was a disguised form of anti-Semitism. For Ukrainians, the period from 1972 to the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev is a dark "era of stagnation" which witnessed the greatest clampdown since the Stalin era

taking place in 1972 against Ukrainian dissent and culture. This was followed by further repression of the Soviet Union's largest Helsinki Group in Kyiv, Russification and the murders and emigration of scores of dissidents and writers.

Russian and Ukrainian leaders have therefore diametrically opposite views of what constitutes their golden era's. For Putin the mid 1960s–mid 1980s are remembered with nostalgia when he joined the KGB in 1975 and Gorbachev is a traitor for having acquiesced to the disintegration of the USSR. Ukrainian leader's nostalgia is for the two liberalizing thaws after Stalin's death and under Gorbachev.

Independent States but Still the Near Abroad

Russia and Ukraine became independent states in 1991 from different starting points and with vastly contrasting nation building agenda's. Russia and the USSR had been thoroughly integrated in a manner very different to that of Serbia and Yugoslavia and in 1991, Russia did not therefore declare independence and celebrates its "independence day" based on its June 1990 Declaration of Sovereignty. In autumn–winter 1991, Soviet and Russian leaders never believed Ukraine would break away, could not fathom the 90 percent support in the referendum for independence and nevertheless, wished to maintain the Russian–Ukrainian "friendship of peoples" through the CIS. Ukraine was independent but remained very close and part of the "Near Abroad." The attributes of the CIS kept expanding from economic into political and security structures and Russian pressure for Ukraine to fully integrate into them was forever present.

The text of Ukraine's August 1991 declaration of independence already signalled threats to the myth of "friendship of peoples" when it based itself upon "the 1,000-year tradition of state development"—a direct claim to the legacy of the medieval state of Kyiv Rus. Post-Soviet state building in Russia reinforced Soviet myths, while in independent Ukraine these myths were challenged head on through the revival of national historiography, pedagogy, a new currency, monuments, festivals and commemorations. Those deemed traitors in the Soviet Union, such as Hetman Ivan Mazepa who allied with Sweden against Russia, had become heroes depicted on the *hryvnya* bank note.

The influence of the Ukrainian diaspora on the development of Ukraine in the 1990s can be seen by sales of hundreds of thousands of copies of the book "Ukraine. A History" by the, Toronto-based, Orest Subtelny, after it was translated into Ukrainian in 1991 and Russian in 1993. Since then Toronto-based

Paul R. Magocsi's *A History of Ukraine* has been translated and published in Ukraine.

In 1983, the Ukrainian diaspora launched its commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the holodomor. This de-Stalinization campaign reached Soviet Ukraine in the second half of the 1980s and and continued to expand in independent Ukraine over the next three decades. Today, after two further Stalin cults, one in the "era of stagnation" and another under Putin, a majority of Russians believe that Stalin was a great leader. Meanwhile, a majority of Ukrainians believe that Stalin was a tyrant and they view the *holodomor* as an act of genocide.

Russia has had better relations with Presidents Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovych and poorer relations with Presidents Leonid Kravchuk and Viktor Yushchenko. The differences between these relationships were exaggerated. Kravchuk, although a western Ukrainian, was elected by eastern Ukrainians in 1991. Neither of the two Yushchenko's were western Ukrainians; former First Lady Kateryna Yushchenko's father was from Kharkiv and mother from Kyiv while President Yushchenko was from Sumy in north eastern Ukraine.

Kuchma was first elected on a moderate pro-Russian platform in 1994 but it took him his entire first term in office to reach an agreement with Russia on and ratify a treaty that recognised the Russian–Ukrainian border. Throughout Kuchma's two terms, the Russian parliament and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov made territorial claims on the Crimea and Sevastopol. Yanukovych was the most pro-Russian of Ukraine's five presidents and implemented all of the demands made by President Dmitri Medvedev in his August 2009 open letter to Yushchenko. Nevertheless, Russian–Ukrainian relations were often strained and Putin demanded Ukraine pay the highest gas price in Europe. Although Yanukovych bought into the Russian view of the 1933 famine and the myth of the Great Patriotic War, he could not hope to dismantle the national narrative in the humanities and historiography, which dominates universities in western and central Ukraine, and particularly Kyiv. Higher education in industrial eastern Ukraine is more focused on science and technical subjects.

Twenty-two years of relations between Russian and Ukrainian independent states were replete with tension over attitudes to the Soviet past, state policies in the fields of national identity, language and history and foreign policy orientations. The Soviet "friendship of peoples" myth that Yeltsin and Putin believed should continue to govern Russian–Ukrainian relations was in fundamental discord with an identity that since the nineteenth century had always viewed the Ukrainian language and being part of Europe as its cornerstones.

Betrayal and War Ends the Friendship of Peoples

Russia's invasion and annexation of the Crimea came as a shock to Ukrainians who viewed it as a neighbour, supposedly friendly and with whom there were treaties. Russia kicked Ukraine when it was down and weak. The transfer of the Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 had been touted as part of the Soviet commemoration of the three hundredth anniversary of the "reunion" of Russia and Ukraine in the 1654 Treaty of Peryaslav. Liberal Soviet Ukrainian and diaspora historians had always questioned Tsarist and Soviet views of the Treaty and argued it had been a military alliance of two equal contracting parties. More importantly, Putin in annexing the Crimea had broken the "reunion," and thereby the Soviet rationale behind 1954 transfer, and had fatally undermined the "friendship of peoples."

Ukrainians, irrespective of Putin denying responsibility for the war in the Donbas, have blamed Russian leaders for the conflict. Anti-Russian views are no longer only found in western Ukraine, although directed against Russian leaders and not the Russian people. Three quarters of Ukrainians hold negative views of Putin, the State Duma and Russian government; 93 percent in the West and centre and 50–60 percent in the south, east and Donbas. A similar number view Russia as the "aggressor" and believe Russia's goal is to destroy Ukrainian independence and sovereignty.

Only 16 percent of Ukrainians view the conflict as a civil war between Ukrainian and Russian speakers while 60 percent see it as due to Russian-backed separatism or as a Russian–Ukrainian war. 82 percent view the two separatist Donbas enclaves as "terrorist organisations" and only nine percent believe they represent the population they control.

Putin's military aggression has emboldened Ukrainian national identity because in all wars sitting on the fence is not an option. In this case, the choice of fence sitters—Russian speakers and Ukrainians with dual identities—as to who to support was guided by their deep feelings of betrayal by their "brother" Russians and their territorial patriotism. The majority of Russian speakers opted to back Ukraine, not Putin, which can be seen in the large proportion of Russian speaking Ukrainian soldiers on the front line. Their choice ensured the defeat of Putin's "New Russia" project.

The percentage of ethnic Ukrainians has increased from 72.7 (1989 Soviet census) to 78 (2001 Ukrainian census) to 92 percent today. The percentage of ethnic Russians has dramatically fallen from 22.1 (1989) to 17 (2001) to 6, or nearly a four-fold decline as those with dual identities who previously declared themselves "Russian" have now become "Ukrainian." This process is not completely new

as Kuchma and Ukraine's first Defense Minister Kostyantyn Morozov were "Russians" in the USSR but became Ukrainians after 1991.

In 1991, Ukraine had been propelled to independence by western Ukrainians but ethnic Ukrainian identity was not yet sufficiently popular to elect former dissident Vyacheslav Chornovil as president. By 2004, after over a decade of state and nation building, Ukrainian identity had spread from the west to the centre enabling the Orange Revolution and Yushchenko's election. During the Euromaidan and since Putin's annexation and war, Ukrainian identity has spread to the east-south with the integration of Russian-speakers as patriotic members of the civic nation. The Euromaidan, annexation and war has accelerated de-Sovietisation in Ukraine and spread it into the heartland of *Homo Sovieticus*, pulling down over 1, 500 monuments of Lenin in the east and south. Popular support for membership of the EU and NATO has increased and that for the CIS Customs Union/Eurasian Union has collapsed.

The two separatist enclaves have taken a very different trajectory by following Russia's path of re-Sovietisation and re-Stalinization. Education, history writing and state policies are nostalgic for the USSR which they see reflected in Putin's Russia. A pensioner called Nadezhda told a BBC reporter that the Crimea joining Russia was "a return to the Soviet Union. Our generation was, is and will always be in the USSR. We will die in the Soviet Union" (cf. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39329284>). Pro-Russian nostalgia for the USSR in the Crimea and the two separatist enclaves also leads to support for Putin's Eurasian Union and turning their back on Europe.

Conclusion

Over the course of their quarter of a century of independence, Ukrainians had been disentangling their history and national identity from that of the internationalist, Russian dominated "friendship of peoples." 2014 merely served to speed a process up that would have naturally taken much longer. Such dramatic changes in identity cannot be reversed when pro-Russian forces are marginalised in Ukraine and Russian leaders are viewed very negatively. Stalin, Gorbachev and Putin could be considered Ukrainian nation builders; the former for having united Ukrainian territories and ending age-old Polish–Ukrainian conflicts, Gorbachev for unleashing processes that culminated in an independent Ukraine and the latter for having promoted national integration and completing the burying of the Soviet Union by ending the "friendship of peoples."

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ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen (<www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de>), the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), the Resource Security Institute, the Institute of History at the University of Zurich (<http://www.hist.uzh.ch/>), the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at The George Washington University, and the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language Russland-Analysen (<www.laender-analysen.de/russland>), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia (<www.css.ethz.ch/en/publications/rad.html>), and the Russian Regional Report. The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular e-mail newsletters covering current developments in Central and Eastern Europe.

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The Institute of History at the University of Zurich
The University of Zurich, founded in 1833, is one of the leading research universities in Europe and offers the widest range of study courses in Switzerland. With some 24,000 students and 1,900 graduates every year, Zurich is also Switzerland's largest university. Within the Faculty of Arts, the Institute of History consists of currently 17 professors and employs around a 100 researchers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Research and teaching relate to the period from late antiquity to contemporary history. The Institute offers its 2,600 students a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in general history and various specialized subjects, including a comprehensive Master's Program in Eastern European History. Since 2009, the Institute also offers a structured PhD-program. For further information, visit at <http://www.hist.uzh.ch/>

Resource Security Institute
The Resource Security Institute (RSI) is a non-profit organization devoted to improving understanding about global energy security, particularly as it relates to Eurasia. We do this through collaborating on the publication of electronic newsletters, articles, books and public presentations.