



Why does Russia want Ukraine?



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“The main thing is that Ukrainians will never become a full-fledged people and an equal member of European civilization until power flows from the state to a self-organized people able to force those in power to do what the people want.

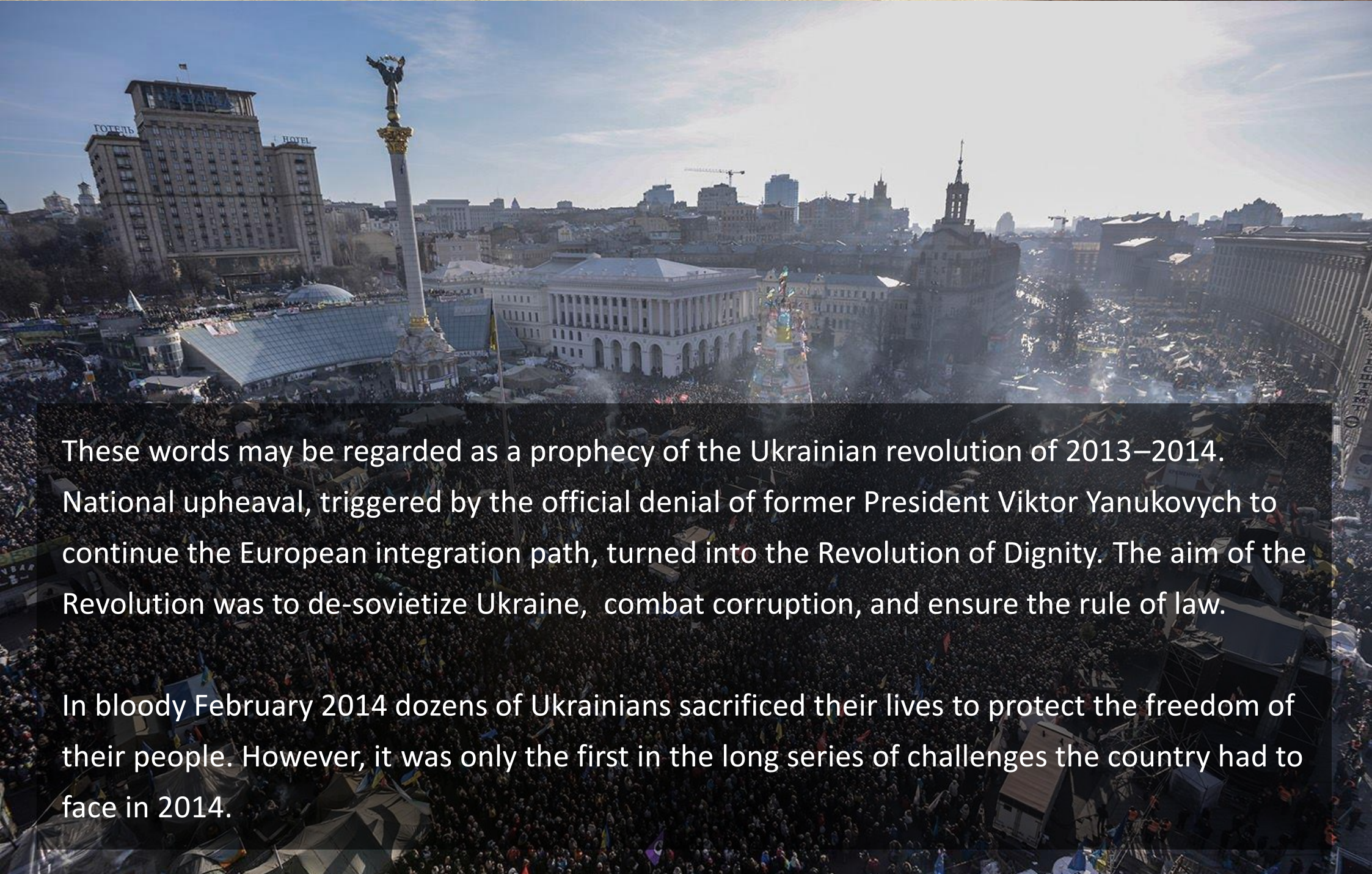
[...]

No state will ever make Ukraine Ukrainian. Only self-organized Ukrainians can do this, and I am deeply convinced that they will.”

James Mace, an American historian and researcher of the Holodomor in Ukraine.
The Day paper, 18 February 2003.

Ukrainian revolution of 2013–2014

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These words may be regarded as a prophecy of the Ukrainian revolution of 2013–2014. National upheaval, triggered by the official denial of former President Viktor Yanukovich to continue the European integration path, turned into the Revolution of Dignity. The aim of the Revolution was to de-sovietize Ukraine, combat corruption, and ensure the rule of law.

In bloody February 2014 dozens of Ukrainians sacrificed their lives to protect the freedom of their people. However, it was only the first in the long series of challenges the country had to face in 2014.

2014 — the year of “blood and tears” in Ukraine

Why does Russia
want Ukraine?

- March 2014 — Russia’s annexation of Crimea;
- April 2014 — pro-Russian gunmen capture administrative buildings in some cities of Donbas, launch of Anti-terrorist operation (ATO) in Ukraine’s east;
- May 2014 — Russia supported failed separatist referenda in Donbas;
- June 2014 — 10-day ceasefire unilaterally announced by the Ukrainian President to end the conflict;
- July 2014 — Russia’s leading role in the MH17 crash (298 civilians dead);
- August 2014 — a large-scale invasion of regular RF troops to Ukraine.



Ukrainian victims of the Donbas conflict in April–December 2014



Why does Russia
want Ukraine?



- Over 4,700 people killed;
 - Over 10,000 people wounded;
 - 610,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs);
 - 594,000 refugees to other countries.
- (Official UN figures as of 6 January 2015).

The high price of the Soviet past



Why does Russia
want Ukraine?

Ukrainians are paying a terrible price to break away from their Soviet past and build up a democratic country with the rule of law, but not the rule of power. On the other hand, the Kremlin cannot allow this to happen as it sees Ukraine as prerequisite for its own existence.

So why does Russia want Ukraine? What does history say about the roots of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?





“Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia.”

Zbigniew Brzezinski,
The Grand Chessboard, 1997



“Ukraine moving to the West takes away legitimacy of the Russian state, and we [Russians] turn into Muscovy populated by God knows whom. Then a starting point for Russian history is not a thousand-year-old history of Christianity and Christianization of the Kyivan Rus, but Andrey Bogolyubsky of the 12th Century, and it is a totally different story.

Therefore, Ukraine is of immense importance to Russia. First of all, Ukraine signifies the protection of Russian history and, subsequently, statehood. Secondly, through Ukraine, the Kremlin protects its legitimacy. Thirdly, Moscow wants to prevent the Maidan from happening in Russia. Finally, it is a challenge to Europe and the West.”

Lilia Shevtsova in

“Putin is looking for ways to suffocate Ukraine”

(Liga.net, 17 September 2014).

Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire

Why does Russia
want Ukraine?



There are three factors that have come to define Vladimir Putin's behavior towards Ukraine. The first is his ego. Second, he strives for revanche in Europe as he believes that the collapse of the USSR was caused by America, Pope John Paul II, and Europe. The third is Putin's ideology known as Eurasianism.

This theory on the role of Russians in history was first born in Prague 80 years ago and is mainly attributed to the linguist Nikolai Trubetzkoy. Today, the belief is supported by the Russian professor Aleksandr Dugin. Thus, Putin's Eurasianism is not only a geopolitical project, but also a philosophical one. Ukraine is a part of this project as it takes a special place in the Eurasianism theory, being a sort of cradle of history.

Bernard-Henri Lévy in "Traitors and Spies"
(Novoye Vremya, 20 December 2014).

Russian myths about Ukraine

Rus vs Russia



Kyivan Rus

Rus vs Russia



Principalities of Kievan Rus in 11th Century

Kyivan Rus was a medieval country founded in the 9th Century with its capital in modern-day Kyiv.

At its greatest extent in the mid-11th Century under the rule of princes Volodymyr the Great (980–1015) and Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054), the state stretched from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south and from the Vistula river in the west to the Taman Peninsula in the east, uniting the majority of East Slavic tribes.

In the period when Kyivan Rus enjoyed the most intensive political, cultural, and economic development, Moscow did not yet exist.

Moscow gains political influence only in the 14th Century

Rus vs Russia

The first reference to Moscow dates from 1147, when the settlement was created by Prince Yuri Dolgorukiy. Moscow became the capital of the Vladimir-Suzdal principality in 1327.

It was Yuri Dolgorukiy's son Andrey Bogolyubsky that destroyed Kyiv in 1169 and managed to move the political center of Rus to his Vladimir-Suzdal principality.



The Tsardom of Muscovy instead of Russia

Rus vs Russia

The Grand Duchy of Moscow was established in 1283 and rebranded itself as the Tsardom of Muscovy (or Tsardom of Russia) only in the mid-16th Century.

The idea to extend the historical origins of the state by associating it with the ancient Rus was widely promoted by Peter the Great, which resulted in the establishment of the Russian Empire in 1721.

Moscow used the name to justify its expansionist policy and its historical mission to collect the lands of the former Rus.



Grand Duchy of Moscow (Muscovy) between 1390 and 1547

- Core territory of Muscovy, AD 1300
- Territory of Vladimir-Suzdal, acquired by Muscovy by 1390
- Territory acquired by 1505 (Ivan III)
- Territory acquired by Vasili III (1505–1533)

Modern national borders are shown for orientation.

“Russkiy mir”



Vladimir Putin's state philosophy

"Russkiy mir"

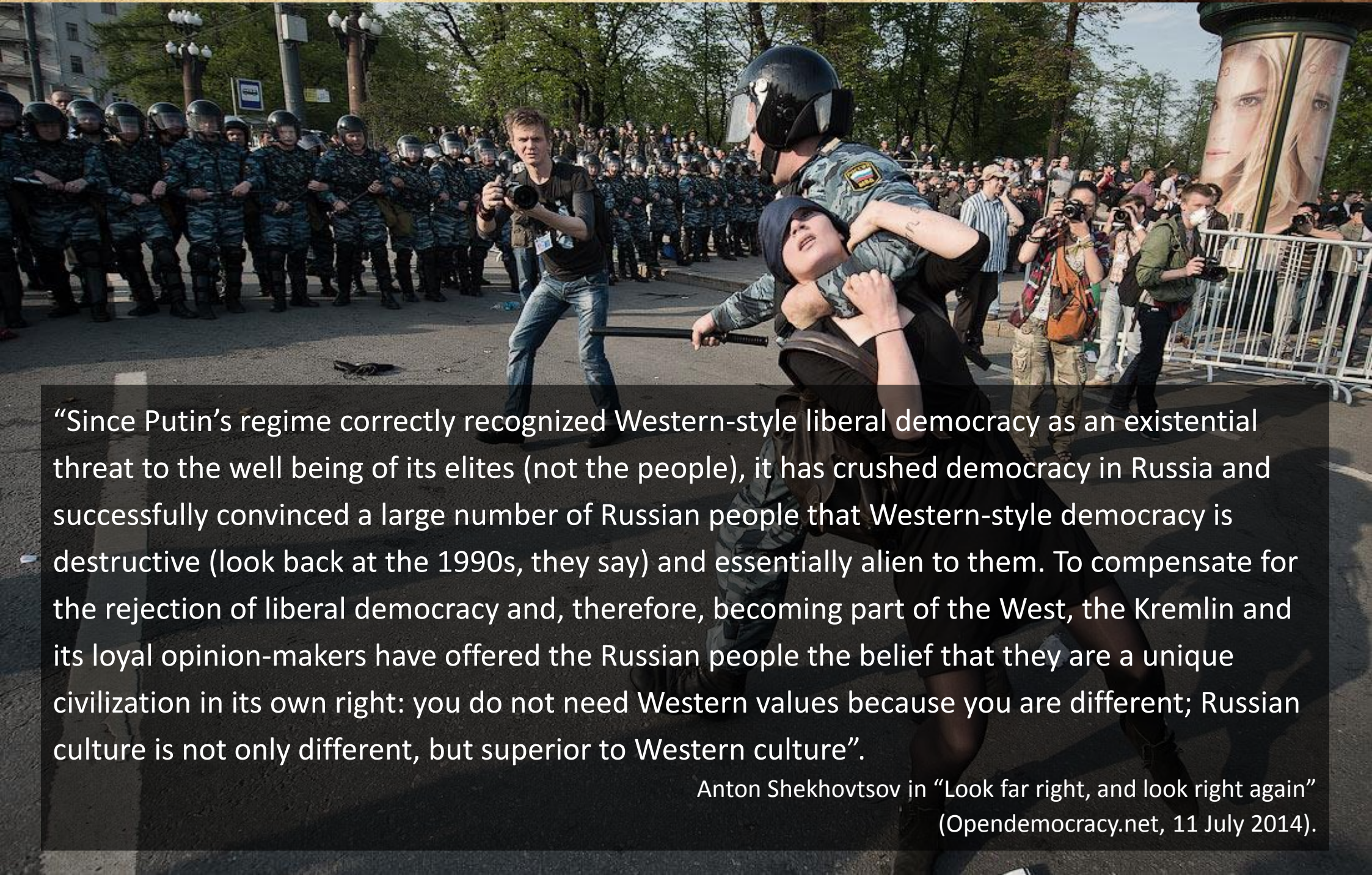
The desire to build the state philosophy on the past, namely the glory of Kyivan Rus, resulted in the elaboration of the concept of "russkiy mir" (Russian world). "Russkiy mir" means an international commonwealth based on affiliation to Russia, Russian language, and Russian culture.



The advocates of the concept believe that it has a right to be treated as a separate civilization space which includes more than 300 million people. "Russkiy mir" was first used in public discourse in 2006 by Vladimir Putin, and ever since it has been gradually adopted as a Russian soft power tool in relations with neighbors.

Democracy threatens Russia

“Russkiy mir”



“Since Putin’s regime correctly recognized Western-style liberal democracy as an existential threat to the well being of its elites (not the people), it has crushed democracy in Russia and successfully convinced a large number of Russian people that Western-style democracy is destructive (look back at the 1990s, they say) and essentially alien to them. To compensate for the rejection of liberal democracy and, therefore, becoming part of the West, the Kremlin and its loyal opinion-makers have offered the Russian people the belief that they are a unique civilization in its own right: you do not need Western values because you are different; Russian culture is not only different, but superior to Western culture”.

Anton Shekhovtsov in “Look far right, and look right again”
(Opendemocracy.net, 11 July 2014).

Back to the USSR

“Russkiy mir”

The problem with this concept is that it is oriented towards the past, and not at the future. As a result, it makes the real modernization of Russia impossible, although in today’s globalized world, it is modernization that keeps countries “in the game”.

“Russkiy mir is an “unwesternizable” and “unmodernizable” community. This is why Putin’s Russia is not fascist, as some commentators suggest: both Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany strove for an alternative modernity rather than rejecting the idea of modernization altogether”.

Anton Shekhovtsov in “Look far right, and look right again”
(Opendemocracy.net, 11 July 2014)

Putin is afraid of revolution

“Russkiy mir”

“Another danger of the Kremlin’s refusal to modernize is that the uniqueness of the “unwesternizable” russkiy mir needs constant corroboration, meaning that hindering the progress of Westernization and democratization in the countries that are allegedly part of russkiy mir is crucial for continuing to substantiate the 'non-modernization' thesis to the Russians. Putin’s attempts, first to sabotage Ukraine’s democratic revolution, and then to undermine the country’s post-revolutionary development were aimed at Russian citizens, to prevent them from observing Ukraine’s successful democratization; otherwise, if those Little Russians did it, why can’t we?”

Anton Shekhovtsov in “Look far right, and look right again” (Opendemocracy.net, 11 July 2014)



The concept of “Russkiy mir”

“Russkiy mir”

The concept of “Russkiy mir” is based on three pillars — Moscow Orthodox Church, Russian language and culture, and a common historical narrative.



Russkiy Mir Foundation

“Russkiy mir”

- The Russkiy Mir Foundation was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education in Russia in 2007
- “Forming “Russkiy mir” as a global project, Russia gets a new identity, new opportunities for effective cooperation with the rest of the world and additional stimuli for its own development” (the official website of the Foundation).
- The network of the Russkiy Mir Foundation consists of 98 Russian centers in 43 countries.
- The country with the largest number of centers — 12 — is Ukraine, which proves how important the country is for Moscow.

Church as a branch of power

“Russkiy mir”


The Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, namely Patriarch Kirill, became one of major advocates of russkiy mir ideas.

Close ties between this church and Yanukovich allowed more efficient broadcasting of these ideas in Ukraine. This is evidenced by the frequency of Kirill’s official visits to Ukraine in 2010–2013 (ten visits in four years).



Russian Cossacks

“Russkiy mir”

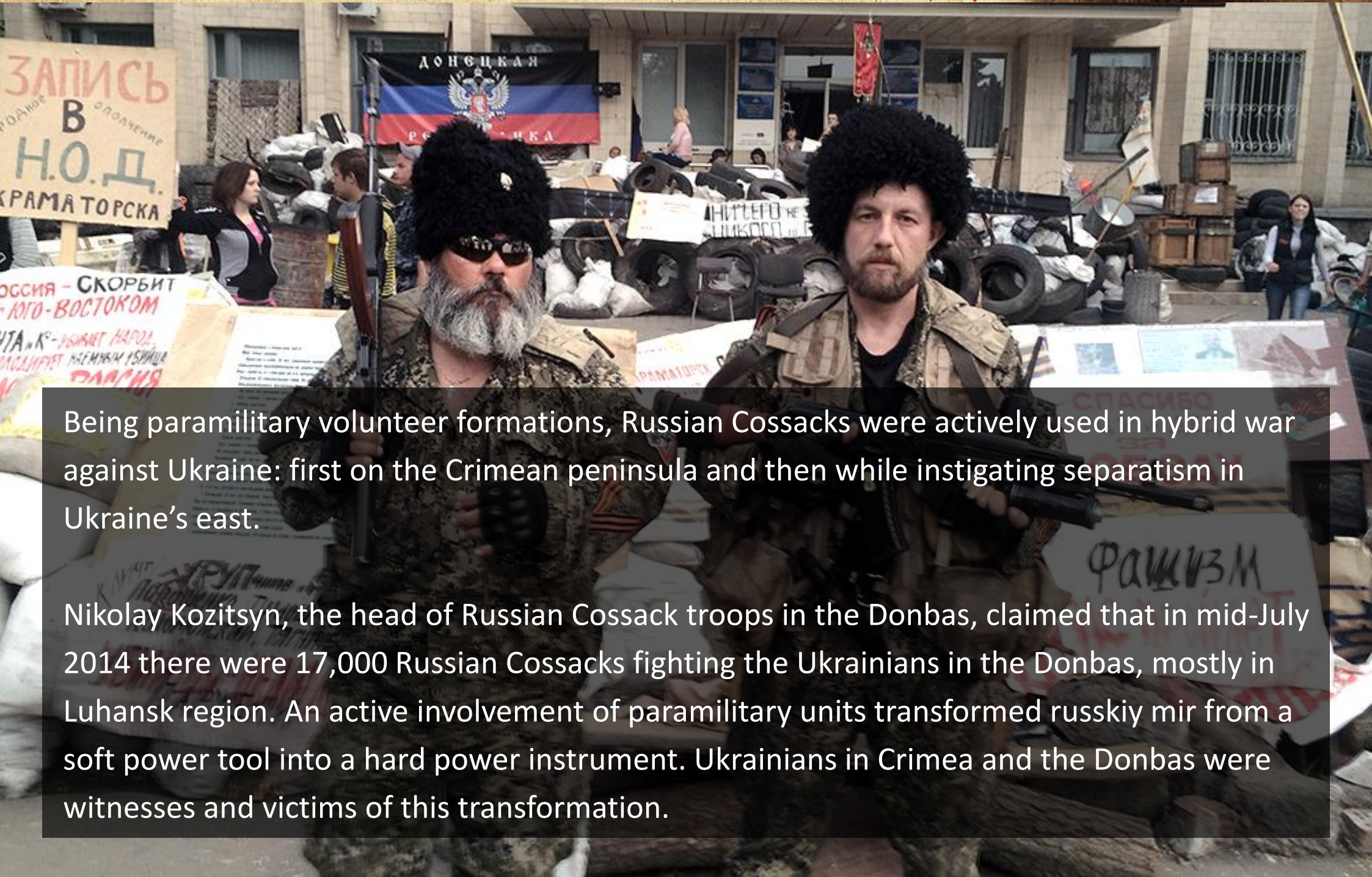


Another driver for the spread of the russkiy mir concept has been the use of Russian Cossacks, which are paramilitary formations that position themselves as defenders of the Orthodox faith.

The Russian government supports the development of Cossack units and their close ties with the Russian church. To do this, there exists a special council at the presidential administration in Russia and the Synod Committee, which are responsible for cooperation with the Cossacks.

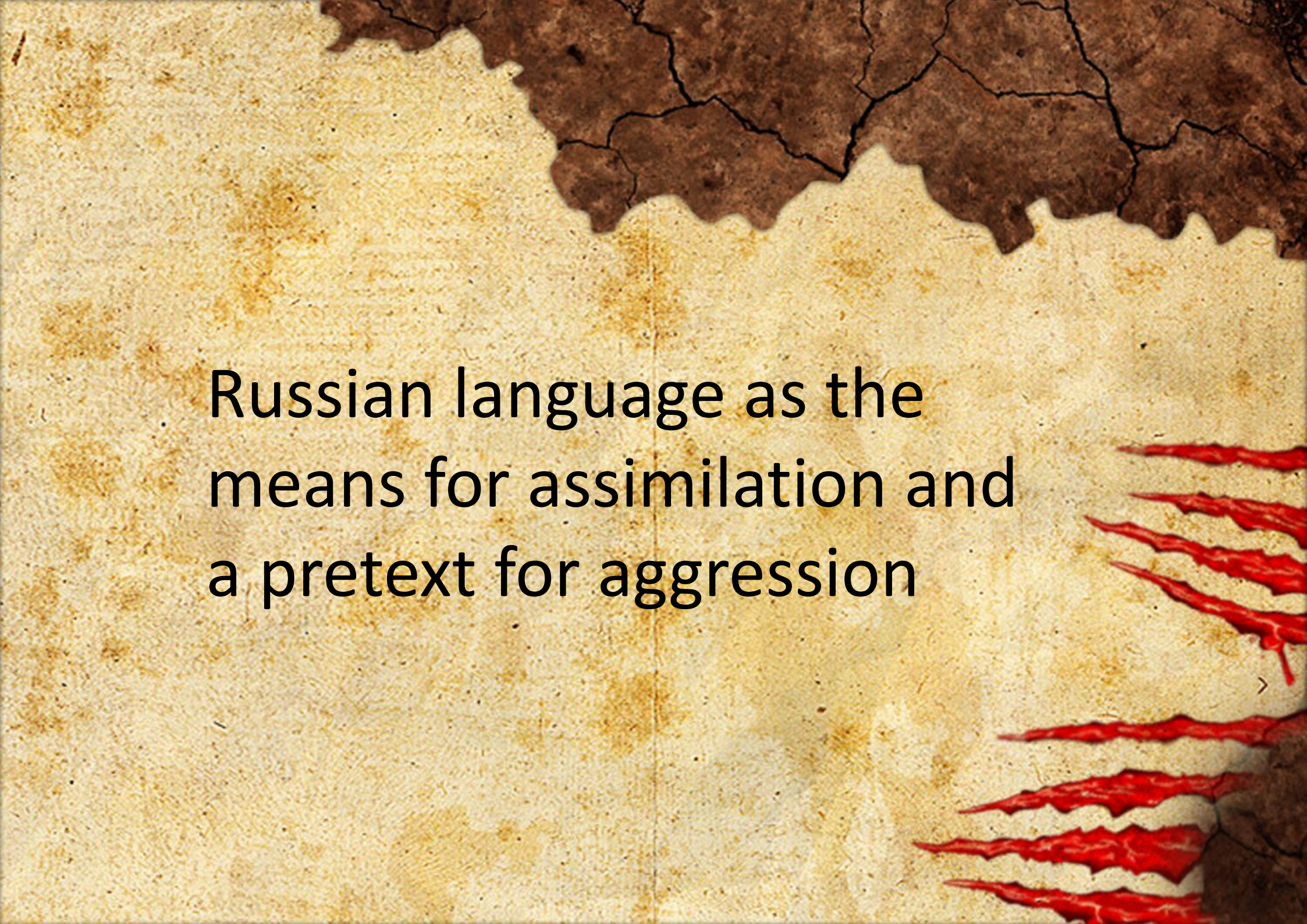
Cossacks as a hard power instrument

“Russkiy mir”



Being paramilitary volunteer formations, Russian Cossacks were actively used in hybrid war against Ukraine: first on the Crimean peninsula and then while instigating separatism in Ukraine's east.

Nikolay Kozitsyn, the head of Russian Cossack troops in the Donbas, claimed that in mid-July 2014 there were 17,000 Russian Cossacks fighting the Ukrainians in the Donbas, mostly in Luhansk region. An active involvement of paramilitary units transformed russkiy mir from a soft power tool into a hard power instrument. Ukrainians in Crimea and the Donbas were witnesses and victims of this transformation.



Russian language as the
means for assimilation and
a pretext for aggression

History of bans on the Ukrainian language usage

Russian language as the means
for assimilation and a pretext
for aggression

For centuries, Russian language was used as an effective means of colonization and the cementing of Russia's influence on its occupied territories. This has been the case spanning from the reign of the Russian Empire to the USSR and to the Russian Federation.

History of bans on the Ukrainian language usage:

- In 1720 Peter the Great forbade publishing in Ukrainian.
- In 1763 Catherine II issued the decree which prohibited teaching classes in Ukrainian at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.
- In 1863 Valuyev's Circular once again banned censors to give consent on printing Ukrainian books.
- Valuyev's Circular: "No separate Ukrainian language has ever existed and cannot exist".
- In 1876 the ban on Ukrainian books was reiterated by the Ems decree.

Communists against Ukrainian language

Russian language as the means
for assimilation and a pretext
for aggression

In the early Soviet times (1922), Communists developed a theory that two cultures were fighting in Ukraine: urban Russian and rural Ukrainian.

In this fight, only Russian was supposed to win.

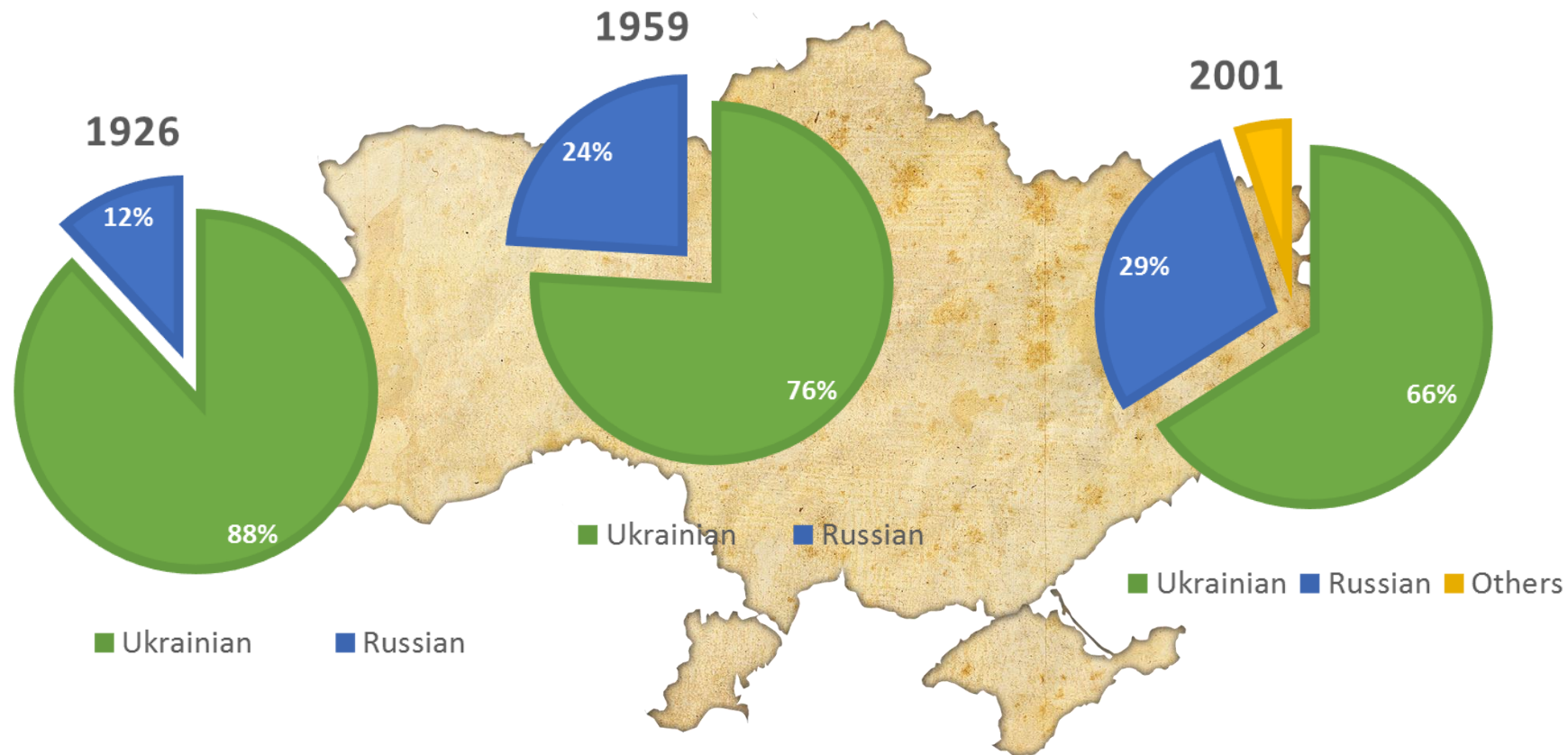
In the 1930s the regime persecuted hundreds of thousands of pro-Ukrainian intelligentsia and opinion-makers.

The differences between the Ukrainian and Russian languages were artificially smoothed through the introduction of new dictionaries and grammar rules for Ukrainian. Millions of Ukrainians were starved to death or deported, while Russians were encouraged to re-populate the vast Ukrainian territories, especially in the east and south.

Obligatory conscription, whereby Ukrainians were forced to do military service in remote regions of the USSR, was another means of Russification.

Ukrainian and Russian languages

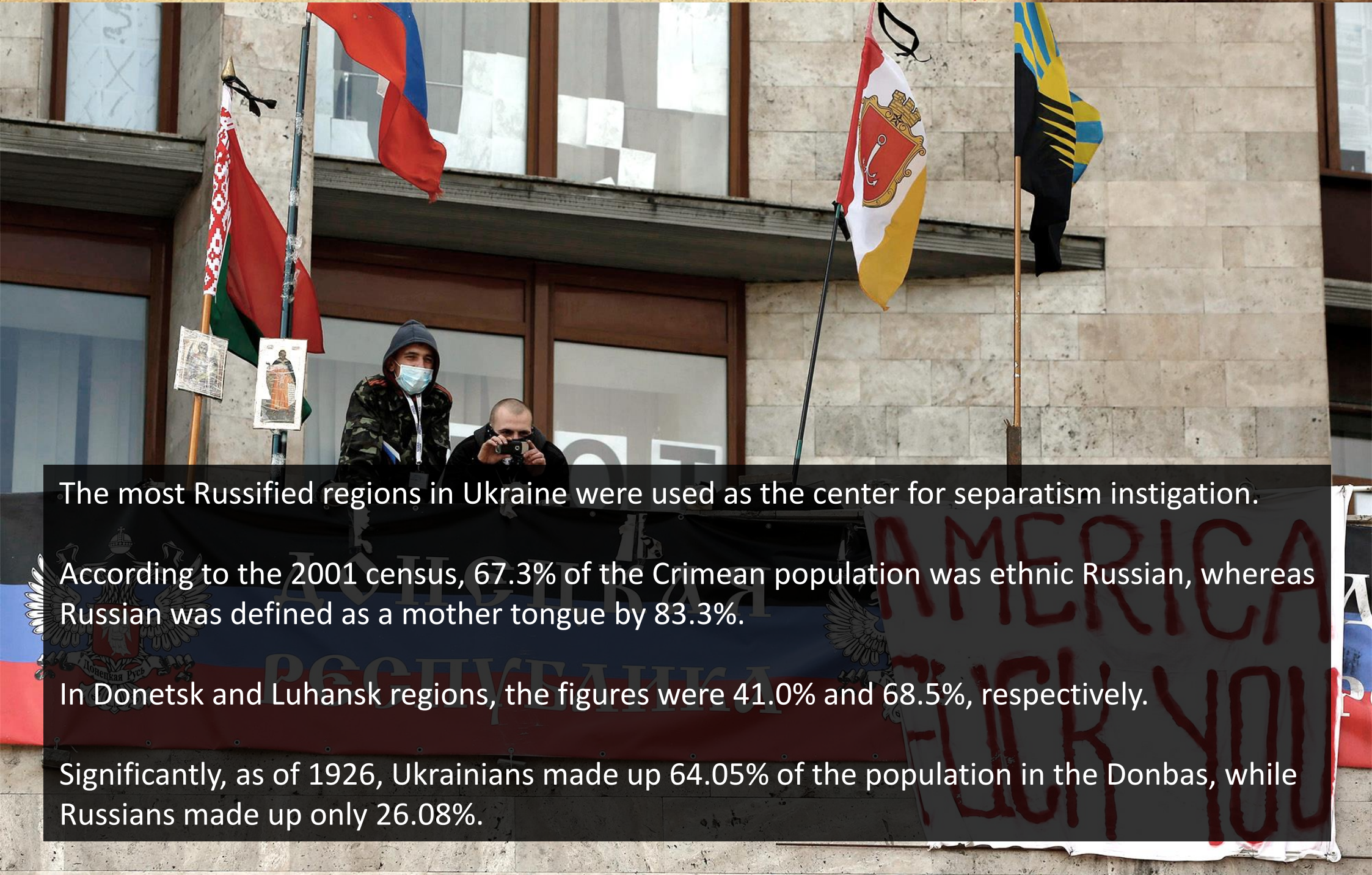
Russian language as the means
for assimilation and a pretext
for aggression



Further, in 1926, only 11.9% of the Ukrainian SSR population listed Russian as their mother tongue, while in 1959 the percentage increased to 24.3% and in 1989 to 32.8%. According to the most recent census (in 2001), 67.5% of Ukrainians said they spoke Ukrainian as the first language, while 29.6% spoke Russian.

Separatism centers

Russian language as the means
for assimilation and a pretext
for aggression



The most Russified regions in Ukraine were used as the center for separatism instigation.

According to the 2001 census, 67.3% of the Crimean population was ethnic Russian, whereas Russian was defined as a mother tongue by 83.3%.

In Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the figures were 41.0% and 68.5%, respectively.

Significantly, as of 1926, Ukrainians made up 64.05% of the population in the Donbas, while Russians made up only 26.08%.

THE PROJECT NOVOROSSIA



Separatism failed

The project
Novorossia



The initial plan of the Kremlin was to spread the idea of separatism to the whole south and east of Ukraine, especially to key regions such as Kharkiv and Odessa.

However, as of 2001, Kharkiv region was made up of 29.4% Russians and 42.6% Russian speakers, and Odessa region was made up of 24.2% Russians and 39.6% Russian speakers.

The fact that there were fewer people susceptible to Russian propaganda and the ideas of Novorossiia alongside the more effective counteraction of the Ukrainian authorities helped to prevent separatist reactions in these regions.

The Holodomor



Genocide of Ukrainians

The Holodomor

Bans on language, the deportation of Ukrainians, and the encouragement of Russian migration to Ukraine were relatively soft power tools that were employed by the Russian Empire and the USSR.

When the Kremlin saw that Ukrainians continued to pose a threat to the regime in Moscow, they designed even more brutal instruments.

In 1932–1933, for instance, they starved millions of Ukrainians to death by expropriating all the foodstuffs in Ukrainian villages and denying Ukrainians access to international aid.


“In order to have complete centralized power in his hands, Stalin found it necessary to physically destroy the second largest Soviet republic, meaning the annihilation of the Ukrainian peasantry, Ukrainian intelligentsia, Ukrainian language, and history as understood by the people; to do away with Ukraine and things Ukrainian as such. The calculation was very simple, very primitive: no people, therefore, no separate country, and thus no problem. Such a policy is GENOCIDE in the classic sense of the word”.

James Mace in “Legacy of the Famine: Ukraine as a postgenocidal society” (The Day, 18 February 2003).

Stalin's scorched earth policy



The Holodomor

A grainy, black and white photograph showing a person lying on a stretcher, possibly a victim of the famine. The person is positioned horizontally across the upper half of the frame. The background is dark and indistinct. The overall tone is somber and historical.

“Stalin’s sociological scorched earth policy maimed Ukraine to such an extent that it created a discontinuity in the normal development of the Ukrainian people, producing a unique situation. While in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, etc. the collapse of communism could and did result in the restoration of independence lost by the previous states, in Ukraine, except for its western territories, the Ukrainian nation — as a community possessing a broad consensus regarding its identity, history, and cultural values — has remained in a sense a national minority in its own country. In other words, the people as such was so deformed that when Ukraine finally became independent there was no broad consensus concerning its future. All that remained was the surviving structures of Soviet Ukraine”.

James Mace in “Legacy of the Famine: Ukraine as a postgenocidal society”

(The Day, 18 February 2003).

Millions of deaths



The Holodomor

The Demography and Social Studies Institute at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine:

The Holodomor resulted in demographic losses of 3.2 million people in Ukraine only.

Most Ukrainians died in Kyiv region (15% of the population), in Kharkiv, Vinnytsia, Chernigiv and Odessa regions.

Artificial resettlement



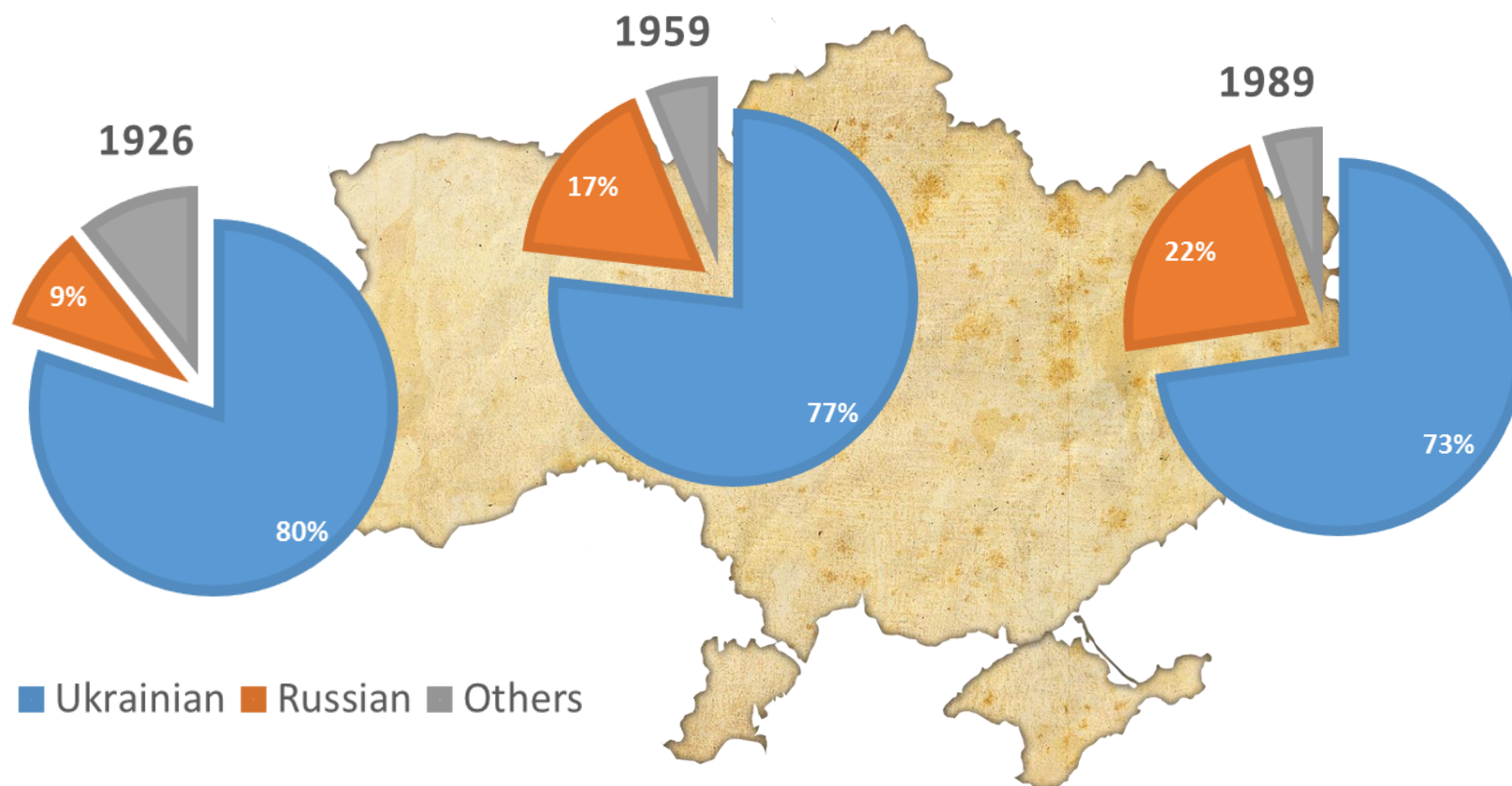
The Holodomor

In order to compensate for human losses, on August 31, 1933, the Council of People's Commissars issued a decree, "On resettlement to Kuban, Terek and Ukraine".

It was proposed to organize the migration of 15,000–20,000 families to Ukraine and 10,000 families to Kuban and Terek.

Obviously, Ukrainian regions that were re-settled by mostly Russians again helped to cement Moscow's grip on its disobedient periphery.

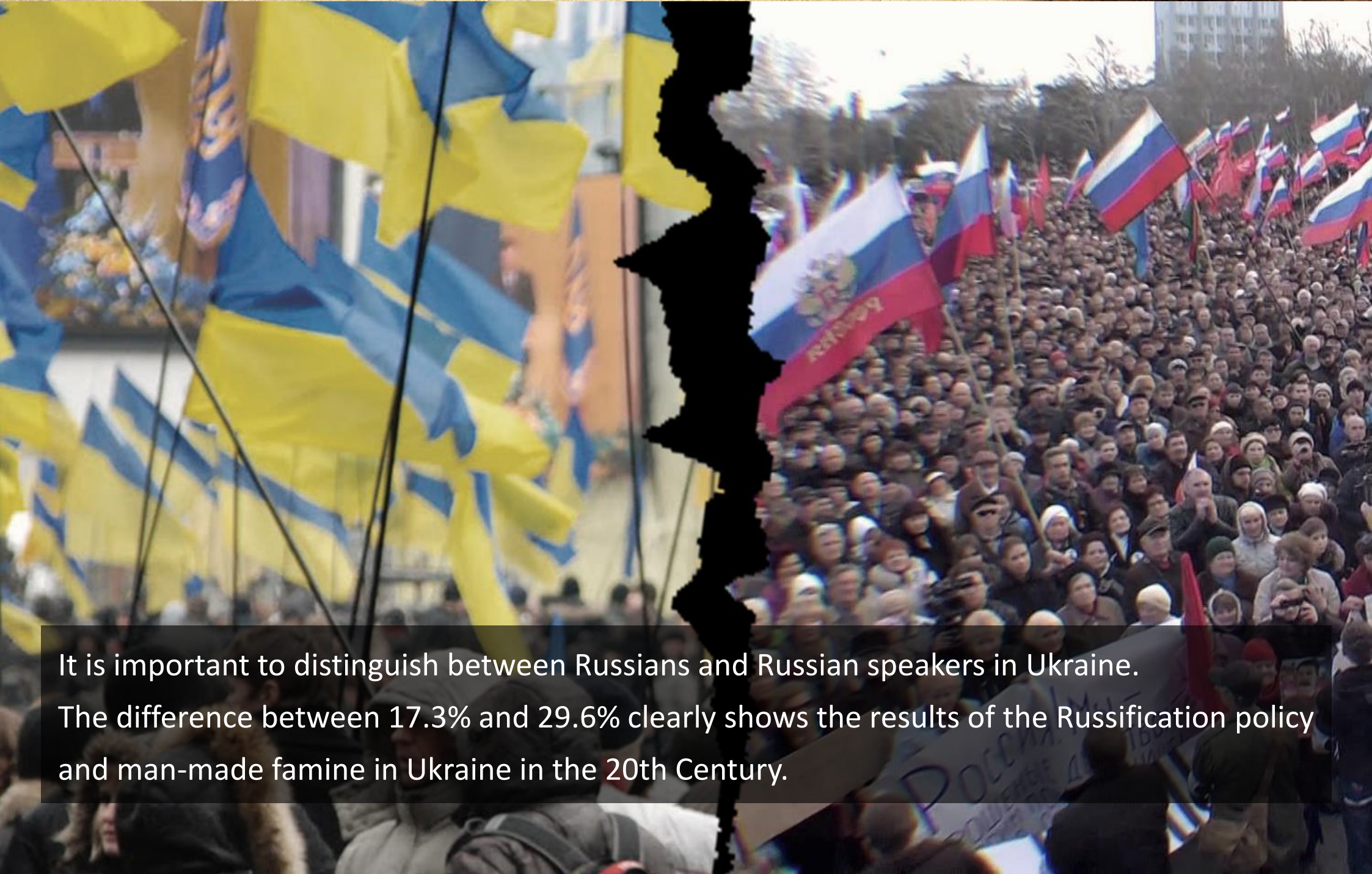
Results of Russification



In 1926, 80% of the population in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was Ukrainian, whereas only 9.2% identified themselves as Russian. In 1959, the ratio was 76.8% versus 16.9%, respectively, and in 1989, 72.7% versus 22.1%. Only after Ukraine proclaimed independence in 1991 did the statistics begin to show a slight improvement in terms of Ukrainian population increase. As of 2001, the Ukrainian population was 77.8% Ukrainian and 17.3% Russian.

Russification policy

Russian language as the means
for assimilation and a pretext
for aggression



It is important to distinguish between Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine. The difference between 17.3% and 29.6% clearly shows the results of the Russification policy and man-made famine in Ukraine in the 20th Century.



The myth about Crimea
being historically Russian land

Crimean history

The myth about Crimea
being historically
Russian land

Russians claim that Crimea is a historically Russian territory, with Sevastopol being a city of Russian military glory.

However, the period of Russian rule over Crimea is much shorter than those of other empires.

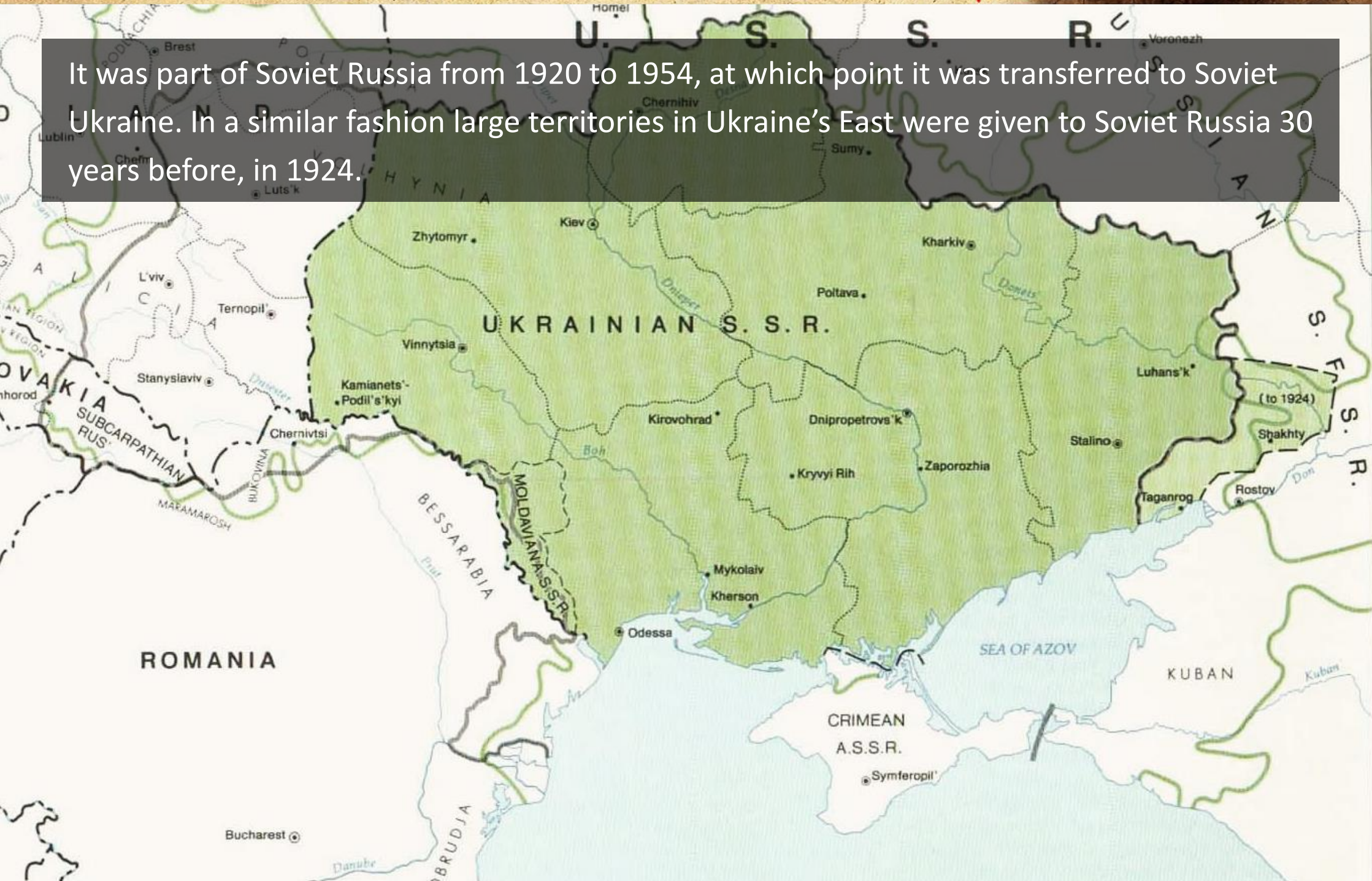
- In 530–1204, the peninsula belonged to the Byzantine Empire.
- In 1239, Mongols gained control over Crimea and held it till 1441.
- The Crimean Khanate existed more or less independently from the Ottoman Empire from 1441 to 1783.
- It was only at the end of the 18th Century that the Khanate was conquered by Russians.

All in all, Crimea was part of the Russian Empire for 135 years (1783–1917, 1919–1920).

Crimea becomes part of Ukraine

The myth about Crimea
being historically
Russian land

It was part of Soviet Russia from 1920 to 1954, at which point it was transferred to Soviet Ukraine. In a similar fashion large territories in Ukraine's East were given to Soviet Russia 30 years before, in 1924.



Crimea becomes part of Ukraine

The myth about Crimea
being historically
Russian land

The official reason for the “gift” was the celebration of the 300th anniversary of Ukraine’s signing of the Pereyaslav Treaty with Russia, which de facto started the process of Ukraine’s integration into then Muscovy.

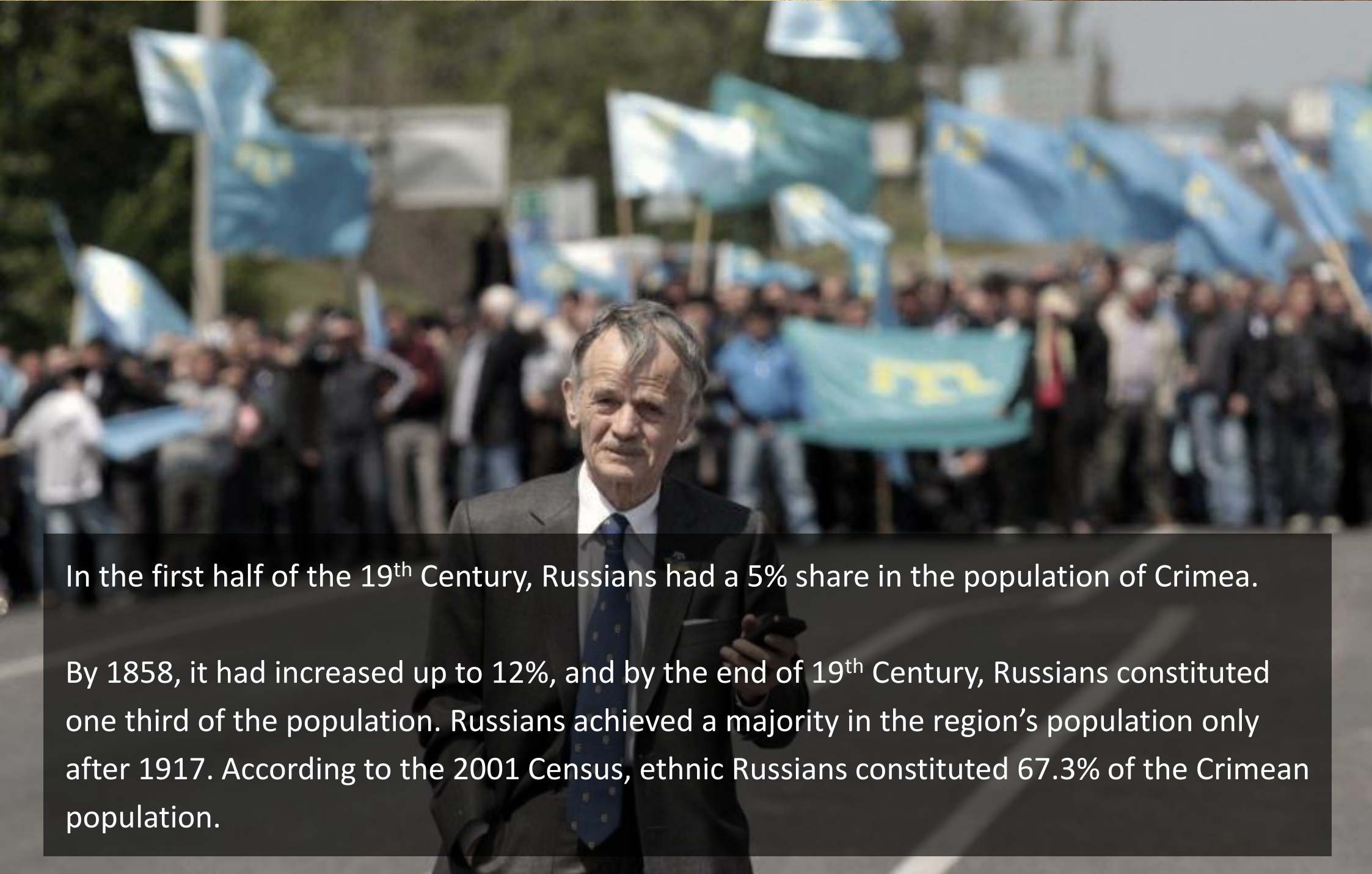
However, some commentators say that the major idea was to put the burden of Crimean post-WWII recovery on Soviet Ukraine.

In those times, Ukrainian human resources were especially needed, as the peninsula had been significantly depopulated due to the deportation of ethnic minorities by Stalin.



Crimean nations

The myth about Crimea
being historically
Russian land

A man in a dark suit and blue tie stands in the foreground, holding a tablet. Behind him, a large crowd of people is gathered, many waving Ukrainian tricolor flags. The scene appears to be outdoors, possibly during a public event or protest.

In the first half of the 19th Century, Russians had a 5% share in the population of Crimea. By 1858, it had increased up to 12%, and by the end of 19th Century, Russians constituted one third of the population. Russians achieved a majority in the region's population only after 1917. According to the 2001 Census, ethnic Russians constituted 67.3% of the Crimean population.

In 2014 Russia annexed Ukrainian Crimea

The myth about Crimea
being historically
Russian land





Repressions against Crimean Tatars

First repressions of Crimean Tatars by Russians

Repressions against
Crimean Tatars

As a result of Russia's victory over the Ottoman Empire in 1783, Crimea was first occupied and then annexed. It caused two waves of mass migration among the Crimean Tatars: first in the 1790s and then again in the 1850s.

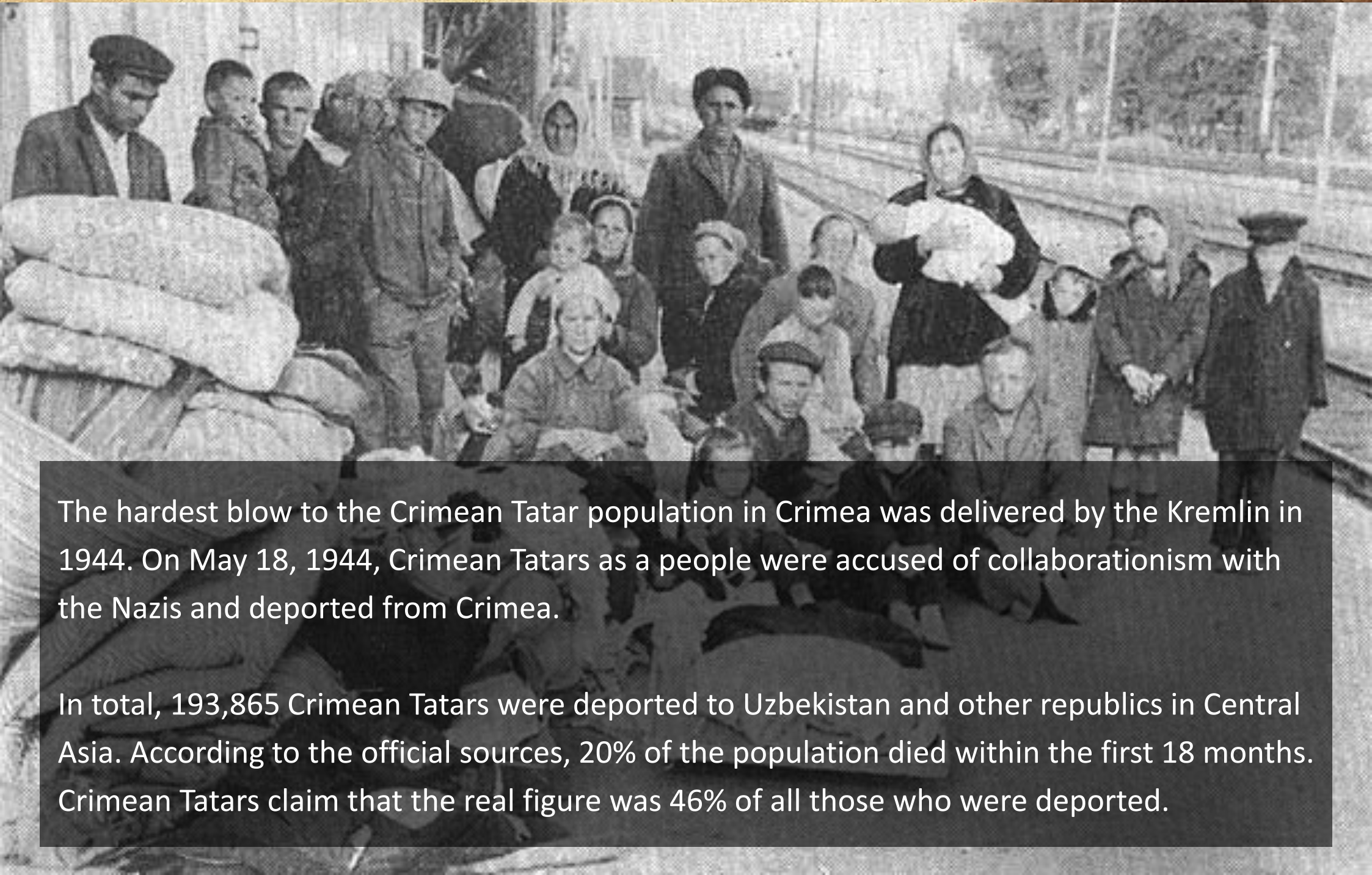
Repressions by the Russian administration and the expropriation of lands resulted in the depopulation of the steppe zone in Crimea and the decay of local agriculture. Meanwhile, Russians were encouraged to colonize these areas.

Before 1783 there were around 1 million Crimean Tatars in Crimea. By the end of the 19th Century, their numbers had decreased to 200,000, which made up one quarter of the total population on the peninsula.



Deportation of Crimean Tatars

Repressions against
Crimean Tatars



The hardest blow to the Crimean Tatar population in Crimea was delivered by the Kremlin in 1944. On May 18, 1944, Crimean Tatars as a people were accused of collaborationism with the Nazis and deported from Crimea.

In total, 193,865 Crimean Tatars were deported to Uzbekistan and other republics in Central Asia. According to the official sources, 20% of the population died within the first 18 months. Crimean Tatars claim that the real figure was 46% of all those who were deported.

Crimean Tatars support Ukraine

Repressions against
Crimean Tatars



Crimean Tatars were not allowed to return home until 1989. Ukraine's independence accelerated the process.

Currently there are 270,000 Crimean Tatars living in Crimea, or 13% of the total population.

Crimean Tatars often claim that they take the most pro-Ukrainian position in the peninsula.

The persecution of Crimean Tatars after the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea



Repressions against
Crimean Tatars

After Crimea was again annexed by Russia in March 2014, Crimean Tatars became the first target for persecutions.

On March 3, 2014, Reshat Ametov, a Crimean Tatar activist who went on a single silent protest, was kidnapped and found dead in two weeks.

Thus far, several dozens of Crimean Tatars have been kidnapped or beaten since March 2014.



The persecution of Crimean Tatars after the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea



Repressions against
Crimean Tatars



In May and July 2014, leaders of Crimean Tatars Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov were recognized as personae non grata by the Russian authorities and banned from entry to the peninsula.

Moscow forbids Crimean Tatars to organize mass gatherings. Majlis, the representative body of Crimean Tatars, was expelled from its premises in September 2014.

The persecution of Crimean Tatars after the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea

Repressions against Crimean Tatars



Ukraine currently has no means to protect its citizens on the peninsula, which is officially recognized as a temporarily occupied territory.

In April 2014, Crimean Tatars were recognized as indigenous people by the Ukrainian Parliament.

Unfortunately, it did not help to improve the situation with the human rights violations on the peninsula.

Why does Russia want Ukraine?



In this piece, we talk a lot about history.

Some may say that the economy or real politics is of greater importance.

However, it is the historical narrative that has become a real weapon employed by Russia against its neighbors. The russkiy mir concept as an ideology of Russian expansionism is mainly based on this narrative.

Historical myths were widely used in neighboring countries as a tool to destabilize and distract attention from the present issues through initiating a debate over the past.

The International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS) is one of Ukraine's top independent think-tanks involved in developing and analyzing public policy.

The ICPS Mission is to promote reforms, democratic principles of government, and social transformations in Ukraine on the basis of European integration. ICPS specializes in such areas as democratic governance, foreign policy, economic analysis and energy policy.

The publication "Why does Russia want Ukraine" is prepared in terms of "European Universities: Lectures which will Tell the World about Ukraine" project.

The project goal is:

- To initiate public academic debate on the current situation in Ukraine, its historical background and future development;
- To increase the interest of European academic community in Ukraine;
- To promote Ukrainian studies as a separate area of research at the key European universities;
- To establish cooperation between Ukrainian and European scholars, which may lay the foundation for future cooperation between universities.

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