

= Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Empire =

The territory of Crimea , previously controlled by the Crimean Khanate , was annexed by the Russian Empire on 19 April [O.S. 8 April] 1783 . The period before the annexation was marked by Russian interference in Crimean affairs , a series of revolts by Crimean Tatars , and Ottoman ambivalence . The annexation began many years of Russian rule in Crimea , which ended with the transfer of the territory to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954 . Russia annexed Crimea for a second time in March 2014 .

= = Prelude = =

= = = Independent Crimea (1774 ? 76) = = =

Before Russia defeated the Ottoman Empire in the Russo @-@ Turkish War of 1768 ? 74 , the Khanate , populated largely by Crimean Tatars , had been part of the Ottoman Empire . In the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca , which was the result of that war , the Ottoman Empire was forced to cede sovereignty over the Khanate , and allow it to become an independent state under Russian influence . Tatars in Crimea had no desire for independence , and held a strong emotional attachment to the Ottoman Empire . Within two months of the signing of the treaty , the government of the Khanate sent envoys to the Ottomans , asking them to " destroy the conditions of independence " . The envoys said that as Russian troops remained stationed in Crimea at Yeni @-@ Kale and Kerch , the Khanate could not be considered independent . Nevertheless , the Ottomans ignored this request , not wishing to violate the agreement with Russia . In the disorder that followed the Turkish defeat , Tatar leader Devlet Giray refused to accept the treaty at the time of its signing . Having been fighting Russians in the Kuban during the war , he crossed the Kerch Strait to Crimea and seized the city of Kaffa (modern Feodosia) . Devlet subsequently seized the Crimean throne , usurping Sahib Giray . Despite his actions against the Russians , Russian Empress Catherine the Great recognised Devlet as Khan .

At the same time , however , she was grooming her favourite ?ahin Giray , who resided at her court , for the role . As time went on , the rule of Devlet became increasingly untenable . In July of 1775 , he sent a group of envoys to Constantinople to negotiate a reentry of the Crimean Khanate into the Ottoman Empire . This action was in direct defiance of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca , which he asked the Ottomans to scrap . Famed diplomat Ahmed Resmî Efendi , who had helped draft the treaty , refused to provide any assistance to the Khanate , not wanting to start another disastrous war with Russia . Empress Catherine gave an order to invade Crimea in November 1776 . Her forces quickly gained control of Perekop , at the entrance to the peninsula . In January 1777 , Russian @-@ supported ?ahin Giray crossed into Crimea over the Kerch Strait , much as Devlet had done . Devlet , aware of his impending defeat , abdicated and fled to Constantinople . ?ahin was installed as a puppet Khan , infuriating the Muslim population of the peninsula . When he heard this news , Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid I noted " ?ahin Giray is a tool . The aim of the Russians is to take Crimea . " ?ahin , a member of the ruling House of Giray , attempted a series of reforms to " modernise " the Khanate . These included attempts to centralise power in the hands of the Khan , establishing " autocratic " rule , much as in Russia . Previously , power had been distributed between the leaders of different clans , called beys . He attempted to institute state taxation , a conscripted and centralised army , and to replace the traditional religion @-@ based Ottoman legal system with civil law . These reforms , aimed at disrupting the old Ottoman order , were despised by the Crimean populace .

= = = Crimean revolts (1777 ? 82) = = =

At the behest of Empress Catherine , ?ahin allowed Russians to settle in the peninsula , further infuriating Crimeans . A group of these settlers had been sent to Yeni @-@ Kale , which remained

under Russian control following the installation of Şahin as Khan . Local residents banded together to prevent the Russian settlement , rebelling against Şahin . He sent the new conscript army he had created to quash the rebellion , only to see his forces defect to the rebels . Revolt spread across the peninsula , and rebel forces advanced on Şahin 's palace in Bakhchisaray . Amidst this rebellion , exiled Crimeans in Constantinople pressed the Ottoman government to act . Bowing to pressure , the government sent a fleet to Crimea , ostensibly to preserve the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca . Russia , however , was quicker to act . Russian forces arrived at Yeni @-@ Kale in February 1778 , crushing the revolt before the Ottoman fleet arrived . When the fleet arrived in March , it found that there were no rebels left to support . It fought a brief skirmish with the Russian navy off Akhtar (modern Sevastopol) , but was forced to flee . Şahin was reinstated as Khan . Minor skirmishes between the Ottoman and Russian navies continued until October 1778 , when the Ottoman fleet returned defeated to Constantinople .

Over the following years , Şahin continued to try and reform the Khanate . Support for his reform programme remained low , and it was seriously undermined by the decision of Empress Catherine to resettle the Crimean Pontic Greeks on the northern shores of the Azov Sea , outside the Khanate . That community , which was Christian , were an essential part of the Crimean merchant class , and had most readily supported Şahin 's reforms . This resettlement caused significant damage to the Crimean economy , and further weakened the position of the Khan . Recognising defeat in Crimea , the Ottoman Empire signed the Convention of Aynali Kavak in early 1779 . In the agreement , the Ottomans recognised Şahin as Khan of Crimea , promised no further intervention in Crimea , and conceded that Crimea was under Russian influence . Crimeans could no longer expect support from the Ottomans . Şahin 's reforms proceeded , gradually removing Tatars from positions of political influence . For a brief period , Crimea remained peaceful .

A new rebellion , sparked by the continuing marginalisation of Tatars within the Khanate government , started in 1781 . Various clan leaders and their forces came together in the Taman , across the Kerch Strait from Crimea . In April of 1782 , a large portion of Şahin 's army defected to the rebels , and joined them in the Taman . Communication between rebel leaders , including two of Şahin 's brothers , and the Crimean administrative elite was ongoing . Religious (ulama) and legal (kadı) officials , important parts of the old Ottoman order , openly declared their antipathy for Şahin . Rebel forces attacked Kaffa on 14 May [O.S. 3 May] 1782 . Şahin 's forces were swiftly defeated , and he was forced to escape to Russian @-@ controlled Kerch . Rebel leaders elected Şahin 's brother Bahadır Giray as Khan , and sent a message to the Ottoman government seeking recognition . It was not long , however , before Empress Catherine dispatched Prince Grigory Potemkin to restore Şahin to power . No significant opposition was fielded against the invading Russians , and many rebels fled back across the Kerch Strait . As such , the Khan was restored to his position in October 1782 . By this time , however , he had lost the favour of both Crimeans and Empress Catherine . In a letter to a Russian advisor to Şahin , Catherine wrote " He must stop this shocking and cruel treatment and not give them [Crimeans] just cause for a new revolt " . As Russian troops entered the peninsula , work on the establishment of a Black Sea port for use by the Empire began . The city of Akhtar was chosen as the site of the port , which would go on to house the newly created Black Sea Fleet . Uncertainty about the sustainability of the restoration of Şahin Giray , however , led to an increase of support for annexing Crimea , spearheaded by Prince Potemkin .

= = Annexation (1783) = =

In March 1783 , Prince Potemkin made a rhetorical push to encourage Empress Catherine to annex Crimea . Having just returned from Crimea , he told her that many Crimeans would " happily " submit to Russian rule . Encouraged by this news , Empress Catherine issued a formal proclamation of annexation on 19 April [O.S. 8 April] 1783 . Tatars did not resist the annexation . After years of turmoil , the Crimeans lacked the resources and the will to continue fighting . Many fled the peninsula , leaving for Anatolia . Count Alexander Bezborodko , then a close advisor to the Empress , wrote in his diary that Russia was " forced " to annex Crimea :

The Porte has not kept good faith from the very beginning . Their primary goal has been to deprive the Crimeans of independence . They banished the legal khan and replaced him with the thief Devlet Giray . They consistently refused to evacuate the Taman . They made numerous perfidious attempts to introduce rebellion in the Crimea against the legitimate Khan ?ahin Giray . All of these efforts did not bring us to declare war ? The Porte never ceased to drink in each drop of revolt among the Tatars ? Our only wish has been to bring peace to Crimea ? and we were finally forced by the Turks to annex the area .

This view was far from reality . Crimean " independence " had been a puppet regime , and the Ottomans had played little role in the Crimean revolts . Crimea was incorporated into the Empire as Taurida Governorate . Later that year , the Ottoman Empire signed an agreement with Russia that recognised the loss of Crimea and other territories that had been held by the Khanate . The agreement , signed on 28 December 1783 , was negotiated by Russian diplomat Yakov Bulgakov .