# Crimea remains key battleground and strategic hub in Russia-Ukraine conflict



Crimea holds a complex and significant role in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, symbolising much more than a simple territorial dispute. The peninsula, captured by Russia in 2014, represents the largest prize among the roughly 20 percent of Ukrainian territory seized since the wider Russian invasion escalated in 2022. Its strategic importance stems from the presence of Sevastopol, a port city crucial for controlling both the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Apart from the recently lost naval facility in Tartus, Syria, Crimea remains one of Russia’s few warm-water ports, vital for its naval aspirations.

The peninsula’s status is deeply contentious. Originally ceded to Ukraine in 1954 during the Soviet era, Crimea’s annexation by Russia in 2014 has been declared illegal by much of the international community. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s justification for the annexation is rooted in a mix of historical claims and demographic shifts. Over more than two centuries, Russian settlements and the forced removal of local populations have shaped Crimea’s ethnic and linguistic composition, leading to a majority Russian-speaking population alongside its Tartar heritage.

Before the annexation, Crimean integration into Russia was welcomed by many in Moscow, with some reminiscing about holiday visits to the peninsula during the Soviet era. However, this perspective often overlooks darker historical realities such as the Holodomor famine, Soviet-era repression of Ukrainian culture and language, and mass deportations of ethnic groups.

The 2014 Russian takeover began with covert operations by Russian spetsnaz troops who used the presence of Russia’s navy in Sevastopol as a staging ground to seize control. This coordinated action was part of a broader strategy that involved supporting separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, particularly in regions such as Donetsk and Luhansk. These areas became theatres of intense conflict, with local populations divided between loyalty to Kyiv and separatist factions backed by Moscow. Donetsk city itself, once the regional administrative hub, fell under the control of Moscow-backed authorities following heavy fighting.

The annexation of Crimea was pivotal to Russia’s wider military objectives. The peninsula served as a critical logistics base for the full-scale invasion launched in 2022, with infrastructure developments such as the bridge connecting Crimea to mainland Russia facilitating the movement of troops and supplies. Russian forces also used Sevastopol as the main base to deploy their Black Sea fleet, although Ukraine’s navy adapted by shifting to missile and drone warfare, notably sinking the flagship Moskva and challenging Russian naval dominance.

Crimea remains a focal point of military activity, hosting Russian forces responsible for launching rocket and missile attacks on Ukraine. It functions as a command and control centre for Russia’s operations in the conflict. The continued Russian presence there is seen as vital by Moscow, ensuring control over the Black Sea region.

In the broader geopolitical discourse, former US President Donald Trump has expressed views supporting Russia’s control of Crimea, citing its capture without significant fight in 2014 as justification for its retention by Russia. Following a deadly airstrike on Kyiv, Trump urged a halt to the attacks, writing on social media, “Vladimir, STOP!” However, his statements have been interpreted as prioritising an end to the war without addressing the historical and political complexities underlying the conflict.

The Independent is reporting that Crimea’s contested status and its role in the ongoing war underline the region’s enduring strategic and symbolic significance in Russia-Ukraine relations, shaping the military and political landscape of Eastern Europe.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/crimea-ukraine-war-trump-putin-zelensky-peace-b2742007.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data