

T.C.  
ATILIM UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GRADUATE PROGRAM

THE “CRIMEAN QUESTION” IN RUSSO-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS  
1991-2014

Master’s Thesis

Lyudmila Beybulayeva

Ankara-2015

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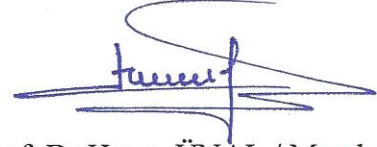
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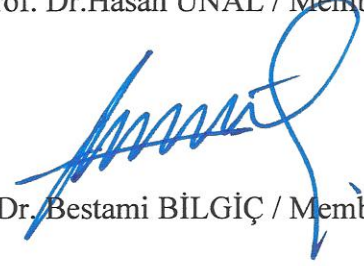
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Lyudmila Beybulayeva



## ÖZET

**Beybulayeva, Lyudmila. Rusya-Ukrayna İlişkilerinde Kırım Sorunu 1991-2014, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2015.**

Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşü; politik, ekonomik ve askeri zeminde ülkeler arasında yeni bir dizi çelişki yaratan yeni bağımsız devletler oluşmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu tür gerilimlerden biri, iç ve dış dengesizliklerin konu olduğu Kırım bölgesindeki Ukrayna ve Rusya gibi iki komşu ülke arasında olmuştur.

Ukrayna'nın otonom olan Kırım, Rusya Karadeniz deniz üssü varlığı, bölgenin etnik kompozisyonu, jeostratejik konumu gibi Rusya-Ukrayna ilişkilerinin bozulmasına neden olan bazı önemli faktörler sunmaktadır.

Günümüzde, yakın zamana kadar dünya ilişkilerinde göze çarpmayan küçük Kırım yarımadası , son dönemde Rusya, Ukrayna ve Batı ülkelerinin birçok uzmanlarının ilgisini çeken, son krizlerden sonra uluslararası ilginin merkezlerinden biri haline gelmiştir. Rusya-Ukrayna ilişkileri üzerinde, Kırım sorunun etkisi ve ağırlığının temel araştırma sorusu üzerine cevap vermek için, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından sonra, Kırım'ın jeostratejik konumu ve çoklu etnik yapısı ve bunun Rusya-Ukrayna ilişkileri üzerindeki etkisi bir araştırma gerektirir. Metodolojik olarak, Kırım sorununun açıklaması, kronolojik yapılandırılmış bakış açıları ile tarihsel olayların çalışmasından geçer. Ana kavramsal ve tarihsel çerçeve; Rus, Ukraynalı, Türk ve Batı uzmanların özel monografi çalışması yoluyla sağlanmıştır.

Bir başlangıç noktası olarak, yarımada sakinlerinin tarihsel arka planını inceledim ve her biri kendisi gibi tarihsel algılanan Kırım'a ilişkin Rus, Ukrayna'lı, Kırım Tatarlarını dikkatlice analiz ettim.

Bu araştırma bize, Kırım üzerindeki tartışmaların kökenini, Karadeniz Filo sorununu ve Ukrayna krizine ilişkin Rusya'nın dış politikasını anlamak için Sovyet sonrası Ukrayna'daki siyasi süreçlerin sonuçlarını genelleştirmeye izin verir. Buna ek olarak, bu tez temelde Kiev'e karşı tavrını yeniden tanımlamış ve Karadeniz yarımadasının ilhak eylemi ile sona ermiş Ukrayna krizleri içine Kremlin'in müdahalesi ile *Euromaidan* protesto nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını açıklamaktadır. Tez araştırma bulguları, sadece yukarıda belirtilen Rus-Ukrayna siyasi ve ekonomik problemlerin nasıl kötüleştiğini değil, aynı zamanda Rusya ve Batı arasındaki ilişkileri ve Avrupa-Atlantik bölgesindeki genel güvenlik iklimini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler: Kırım, Rusya, Ukrayna krizi, Kırım Tatarları, ilhak**

## ABSTRACT

### **Beybulayeva, Lyudmila. The “Crimean question” in Russo-Ukrainian relations 1991-2014, M.A. Thesis**

The collapse of the Soviet Union has contributed to the emergence of new independent states, which consequently created new set of contradictions between countries on political, economic and military ground. One of such tensions happened between two neighboring countries as Ukraine and Russia on Crimean region, which became a subject of internal and external instabilities.

Crimea is the distinct region of Ukraine, which displays certain important factors that contributed to the deterioration of Russo-Ukrainian relations as geostrategic location, the ethnic composition of region, the presence of Russian Black Sea naval base. Currently, the small peninsula of Crimea, which was inconspicuous in the world affairs, recently became the epicenter of international attention via its recent crises, which attracts attention of many scholars of Russia, Ukraine and Western countries. In order to answer on the fundamental research question of the weight and impact of the Crimean question on the Russo-Ukrainian relations, the answer requires an investigation of geostrategic position and multi-ethnicity of Crimea and its impact on Russian-Ukrainian relations after the breakup of Soviet Union. Methodologically, the explanation of Crimean question goes through the study of historical events with a chronologically structured perspectives. The main conceptual and historical framework was provided via the study of special monographs of the Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish and Western scholars.

As a starting point, I have examined the historical background of the inhabitants of peninsula and carefully analyze Russian, Ukrainian, Crimean Tatars perspective regarding the Crimea which each of them historically perceived it as its own.

This research allow us to generalize the results of political processes in the post-Soviet Ukraine, to understand the roots of dispute over Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet issue and Russian foreign policy in regard to Ukrainian crises. Moreover, this thesis explains the causes and consequences of the Euromaidan protests with the deep immersion of Kremlin into Ukrainian crises, which fundamentally redefined its attitude toward Kiev and ended with the act of annexation of Black Sea peninsula. The findings from the thesis research have shown how all abovementioned political and economic problems consequently not only have worsened Russo-Ukrainian relations, but also relations between Russia and the West and in general the security climate in Euro-Atlantic zone.

**Keywords: Crimea, Russia, Ukrainian crisis, Crimean Tatars, annexation**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible to write without the support of many people. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the supervisor Hasan Ali Karasar, who read my endless revision and inspired me much in writing this thesis. I appreciate his vast knowledge in Soviet and post-Soviet history and his valuable guidance which assisted me a lot in the writing process.

I would like to express my appreciation to the professors of the International Relations Department for their valuable knowledge they shared with us during Master course.

I am also grateful to my friends for proofreading, their advices throughout writing process and emotional support during stressful moments.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZET.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
ABBREVIATIONS .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	1

### CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	8
1.1. Crimea before the Russian Rule.....	9
1.2. Crimea as a Part of Russian Empire 1783-1917.....	13
1.3. Crimean People's Republic 1917-1918 .....	16
1.4. Crimea under Soviet Union 1922-1990.....	18
1.5. Autonomous Republic of Crimea Within Ukraine 1991-2014.....	21

### CHAPTER TWO

DEBATES ON THE STATUS OF CRIMEA .....	27
2.1. The Russian Perspective on Crimean Peninsula .....	27
2.1.1. Autonomous republic of Crimea perspective .....	27
2.1.2. Crimea in Russian history.....	30
2.1.3. Crimea as a strategic post .....	34
2.2. The Ukrainian Perspective on Crimean Peninsula .....	37
2.2.1. Crimea as a part of Ukrainian unitary state .....	37
2.2.2. Crimean Tatar perspective .....	38

### CHAPTER THREE

ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION .....	46
3.1. “Revolution” 2014 in Ukraine and Events Leading to the Referendum .....	46
3.1.1. The origins of the Ukraine political crisis.....	46
3.1.2. Referendum .....	54
3.1.3. Crimea: one year after annexation .....	56
3.2. International Community’s Response on Russian Annexation.....	59
CONCLUSION .....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	67
CURRICULUM VITAE .....	2

## ABBREVIATIONS

ARC	Autonomous Republic of Crimea
BSF	Black Sea Fleet
CEC	Central Election Commission
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
Crimean ASSR	Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
EU	European Union
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
N.E.P	New Economic Policy
NKVD	The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
QHA	Crimean News Agency
RDK	Republican Movement of Crimea
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
TIKA	Turkish International Cooperation Agency States
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis mainly covers and emphasizes the significance of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and its impact on the Russian-Ukrainian relations from 1991 until March 2014. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, a number of controversies and contradictions appeared among the successor states, which were later called as potential conflict regions. One of these was the Crimea region, which was located at the epicenter of the Russo-Ukrainian relations during the aforementioned period.

Crimea is a peninsula located on the territory of Ukraine, which is almost completely surrounded by water and has a border with Russia through Black sea. We can count three reasons why Crimea was at the center of dispute between Russia and Ukraine since the independence of modern Ukraine in 1991. First one was the existence of a sizeable Russian community in the peninsula. Second one was the fate of the Russian Black Sea navy base in Sevastopol. And the third one was the fate of the Turkic-Muslim natives of the peninsula, the Crimean Tatars, and their desperate effort to be repatriated to their homeland and settle back at their homes after a disastrous deportation by Stalin in 1944.

One of the key components in the polemics between Ukraine and Russia was the status of Crimea. The “Crimea question” included several factors as geopolitical importance, the Black Sea Fleet, the multiethnic composition of Crimea, particularly the tense interaction between Ukrainian, Russians and Crimean Tatars with its most serious center-periphery challenge, which has attracted attention in the West as well. In addition, with regard to Russian security policy, Crimea’s importance derived from its geostrategic position and its access to the Black Sea by hosting the main naval port of the Black Sea Russian Fleet in Sevastopol.

What are the weight and the impact of the Crimean question on the Russo-Ukrainian relations? This requires an investigation of geostrategic position and multi-ethnicity of Crimea and its impact on Russian-Ukrainian relations after the breakup of Soviet Union. Moreover, the complexity of the “Crimea question” forces us to first focus on the historical background and multi-ethnicity factor, its Soviet-era transfer from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian SSR

in 1954, its being a part of a center-periphery struggle in Ukraine <sup>1</sup> and the existence of the Black Sea fleet naval base on the peninsula.

This thesis represents a short history of the Ukrainian-Russian relations in a historical perspective and a story of Crimea, how this little peninsula has turned from a poor and isolated resort to the very epicenter of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in 2014. Despite the fact that Russia considered Ukraine as the main element of its “near abroad”, <sup>2</sup> her foreign policy preferences created tensions between two states from time to time. Due to the fact that the current situation taking place in Ukraine with annexation of Crimea, which has attracted attention of global audience, politicians, and historians, has characterized the importance of research.

This thesis facilitates English, Russian and Turkish sources in order to develop a balanced view of how Crimea was perceived by the Ukrainian, Russian, Turkic and European perspective. It is mainly based on the secondary sources with exceptions such as the analyses of QHA (Crimean News Agency) which is an indigenous Crimean Tatar news outlet. Methodologically this study is a literature review with a chronologically structured historical perspective.

The main conceptual and historical framework for this thesis was provided by special monographs of the Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish and Western scholars.

The significant socio-economic developments, problems and prospects of dialogue between Russia and Ukrainian relations after the breakup of USSR, the problem of the status of the Black Sea Fleet and its main naval base – Sevastopol, status of strategically important Crimea was discussed in such books as Roman Solchanyk, <sup>3</sup> scientific report of L. B. Vardosmkiy *Rossiya I Ukraina: voprosy sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya v kontekste vzaimnyh otnosheniy*, Steven Pifer’s research

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<sup>1</sup> Roman Solchanyk. “The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Olga Onuch, “Brothers Grimm or Brothers Karamazov: The Myth and the Reality of How Russians and Ukrainians View the Other” *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives* March 2015 E-International Relations(Bristol, UK), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Roman Solchanyk, “Crimea: Between Ukraine and Russia,” *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges, and Prospects*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995.

report,<sup>4</sup> Andrey Baranov *Problema bazirovaniya Chernomorskogo Flota v Rossiysko-Ukrainskikh otnosheniyah posle "Oranzhevoy revolyutsii"*.<sup>5</sup>

In order to take a look at Russian perspective on Black Sea peninsula, I have studied several books and articles which described the symbolic meaning of Crimea and glory of Sevastopol in Russian history as in the work of Serhii Plokyh<sup>6</sup> "The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology", and Karl D. Qualls "Who Makes Local Memories?: The Case of Sevastopol after World War II".<sup>7</sup>

Another book of Russian authors Mochalov, Shershnev and Kasatonov *Krym-Sevastopol-Rossiya. Istoriya. Geopolitik. Perspektivy* was dedicated to common destiny of Crimea, Sevastopol and Russia, about illegitimacy of their break in 1954, which is directly, contradicts to the national interests of Russia and the Russian-speaking population of Crimea and Sevastopol.<sup>8</sup>

Jakob Hedenskog and Robert Larsson's report assisted me to identify the levers of Russia's foreign policy and how and when they have been already used in the context of post-soviet territory. Scholars argue that Russian foreign policy directed on pursues its interests particularly to keep the post-soviet space in its sphere of influence via "soft" and tough means.<sup>9</sup>

In order to understand the socio-economic situation of Ukraine during its independence, examine the new formed elites and their role in the state formation and nation building, the fundamental changes in foreign policy of Ukraine, its security dilemmas and priorities were mainly described in works of Taras Kuzio,<sup>10</sup> Roman Solchanyk,<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Simon.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Steven Pifer, "Crisis Between Ukraine and Russia" *Contingency Planning Memorandum* No. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Andrey Baranov *Problema bazirovaniya Chernomorskogo Flota v Rossiysko-Ukrainskikh otnosheniyah posle "Oranzhevoy revolyutsii"* [http://www.pglu.ru/science/researches/nii-panin/vestnik/v2/Baranov\\_A\\_V.pdf](http://www.pglu.ru/science/researches/nii-panin/vestnik/v2/Baranov_A_V.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Serhii Plokyh, "The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology." *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Jul., 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Karl D. Qualls, "Who Makes Local Memories?: The Case of Sevastopol after World War II." *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 38, no. 2, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> E. Mochalov, L. Shershnev, I. Kasatonov, S. Korolev, *Krym-Sevastopol-Rossiya. Istoriya. Geopolitika. Perspektivy*, Moscow: OOO "IPK Otis-Media", 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Jakob Hedenskog, and Robert L. Larsson, *Russian Leverage on the CIS and Baltic States*, FOI-R-2280-SE, June 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building*. Routledge London and New York, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Roman Solchanyk. "The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Simon, "Ukraine against herself: to be Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian, or Neutral?" *Strategic Forum Institute for National Strategic Studies National defence University* № 238, February 2009.

A special place and lasting value for the study of the history of Ukraine was written by one of the classics, Orest Subtelny. The main importance of Crimea for Ukraine was well analyzed in John Jarowsky's article,<sup>13</sup> where he stressed on security concerns of Ukraine, military and strategically importance of Crimea.

In order to look at the position of Crimean Tatars on peninsula, I have analyzed several books which described the history and development of Crimean Tatars, people memories during the 20th century, deportation and struggle with Soviet authorities for 40 years in order to repatriate back to their motherland, concentrate on politics with Central Ukrainian government and attempts to gain international recognition as the indigenous people of Crimea and claim this area as a homeland. All abovementioned events have been described in such books as Greta Lynn Uehling *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return*,<sup>14</sup> Oxana Shevel,<sup>15</sup> Otto J Pohl,<sup>16</sup> Doris Wydra<sup>17</sup> and Andrew Wilson "The Crimean Tatars: A Quarter of a Century after Their Return".<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, one of the English sources which made an invaluable contribution during research process was Alan Fisher's book *The Crimean Tatars*. This book provided a detailed analysis of the economic, social, ideological, cultural and political developments of Crimean Tatar community starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until the 1990s.<sup>19</sup>

Another book that analyzed the Crimean peninsula, which attracted much attention during the post-Soviet time, was Gwedolyn Sasse's monograph. She has described four main reasons which destabilize the situation in Crimea as geography, multiethnicity, institutional legacies and external actors. Mainly, the book was trying

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<sup>13</sup> John Jarowsky, "Crimea's importance to Ukraine and its future security." *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges and Prospects* edited by Maria Drohobycky, Washington, D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995.

<sup>14</sup> Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond memory : the Crimean Tatars' deportation and return* , New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Oxana Shevel, "Crimean Tatars in Ukraine: The politics of inclusion and exclusion" *Analysis of Current Events* Vol.12 №1-2, January/February 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Otto J Pohl, The Deportation and Fate of the Crimean Tatars, *International Committee for Crimea* [http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/jopohl.html#\\_ftn26](http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/jopohl.html#_ftn26) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>17</sup> Doris Wydra, "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 10: Netherlands 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Wilson, "The Crimean Tatars: A Quarter of a Century after their return" *Security and Human Rights* 24, 2013, pp. 418-431.

<sup>19</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978.

to answer on question of how Crimea could be able to avoid the conflict in such a geostrategically significant region. In the process, author could provide details on wide range of issues related to Black Sea peninsula and her book was an empirically rich and theoretically informed introduction to political life which have already experienced Crimean peninsula.<sup>20</sup>

In order to study the Turkish point of view on Crimean issue, I have looked on many paper researches of Turkish scholars. Mainly, the main questions concluded key facts and events of contemporary Crimean Tatars position after the collapse of Soviet Union, the importance of this region for Crimean Tatars and Turkish position on Crimean Tatars, one of the factor which serve as “bridge of friendship” in Ukrainian-Turkish relations - Turkic ethnic group, Crimean Tatars. All abovementioned issues were discussed in scientific articles of Hakan Kirimli,<sup>21</sup> Filiz Tutku Aydin, Muhammed Kocak.<sup>22</sup>

Another aspect which was described in İsmail Aydıngün and Ayşegül Aydıngün “Crimean Tatars Return Home: Identity and Cultural Revival”(after 1990s) was focus on the cultural revival and ethnic identity of Crimean Tatars after repatriation, and how various ethnic groups perceive each other.<sup>23</sup> Togrul İsmail’s report is about Crimean Tatars’ impact on establishment of friendly Turco-Ukrainian relations.<sup>24</sup>

In order to find explanation on current events in Ukraine, I have examined the main reasons of the dramatic events of 2013-2014 which started as a peaceful demonstration for the support of Ukraine’s pro-European course and escalated into an armed conflict, the economic stagnation of Ukraine, corruption, and other reasons which forced people to participate in demonstrations. With the intensification of the internal conflict in Ukraine, thus the involvement of Russia in these events was increasing, which led to the annexation of Crimea. Significant works of Russian and Western scholars which was devoted to the economical, geopolitical, national roots

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<sup>20</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Hakan Kirimli “The "Young Tatar" Movement in the Crimea, 1905-1909”, *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* Vol. 34, No. 4, Oct. - Dec., 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammed Kocak “Crimea and the Crimean Tatars after annexation by Russia” *SETA Perspective* № 9, June 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Aydıngün, İsmail and Aydıngün, Ayşegül. “Crimean Tatars Return Home: Identity and Cultural Revival” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 33, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Togrul İsmail,. “Politika po otnosheniyu k Krymu: most drujby mejdu Turtsiey I Ukrainoy” (1991-2011g) *Analiticheskiy doklad Crimea policy dialogue* Ankara: 2011.

of Ukrainian crises and its consequences became articles of Dmitrii Trenin,<sup>25</sup> Andrew Wilson,<sup>26</sup> Filiz Tutku Aydin,<sup>27</sup> Sergey Salushev<sup>28</sup> and so on.

Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska report *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*<sup>29</sup> was one of report which helped to look at the crises in Ukraine from the point of view of Russo-Ukrainian relations, and grasped the perspectives of various groups involved, as well as the discursive processes that have contributed to the developments in and interpretations of the conflict.

Dmitrii Trenin's articles helpful with understanding the origins of Ukrainian crises, Russia's involvement into conflict and challenging the global order when pro-Western forces in Ukraine started threatening its vital interests,<sup>30</sup> whereas Mearsheimer in his article talked about the western fault in Ukrainian crises due to its NATO expanding to Russian border thereby provoking Putin on such act.<sup>31</sup>

In this thesis I also tried to use sources of Crimean media, Russian newspapers in order to find out the future and perspective of Crimean peninsula.

First chapter deals with the historical background of Crimean peninsula started from the Cimmerian times until nowadays. In different period of time, the peninsula was inhabited by different settlers who were fighting for controlling this region because of its beauty of nature, fertile soil and strategic location.

Second chapter concentrates on the Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar perspective on the importance of Crimean peninsula. This chapter will examine the historical, symbolic, military and geostrategic importance from the Russian point of view. Apart from it, study the Ukrainian perspective on Crimea from integral and economical approaches, provides an overview of the impact of repatriated Crimean

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<sup>25</sup> Dmitrii Trenin, "Ukraine and the New divide" *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 30 July 2014. <http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=56435> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Wilson, "Supporting the Ukrainian revolution" policy memo *European Council on Foreign Relations*/96 February 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Filiz Tutku Aydin, "Crimean Tatars and Russia's annexation of Crimea" *Turkish policy Quarterly* Vol. 13 № 3, Fall 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Sergey Salushev, "Annexation of Crimea: Causes, Analysis and Global Implications" *Global Societies Journal*, Vol. 2(0), 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska, *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives* E-International Relations Publishing Bristol UK March 13, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Dmitrii Trenin, "The Ukraine Crisis and the resumption of Great-power rivalry" *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 9 July 2014. (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>31</sup> John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's fault" *Foreign Affairs* September/October 2014. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault> (accessed March 22, 2015)

Tatars on Turco-Ukrainian relations. Analyze Crimean Tatars community who considered themselves as the indigenous people of Crimea, experienced deportation during 1944, were repatriated after the collapse of the Soviet Union on their homeland and struggled for social and economic rights.

Third chapter explains the causes of the Euromaidan protests which consequently escalated to the Ukrainian political crises. The second section of this chapter will consider the motivation of Russian Federation to send troops into the Crimea, the act of annexation of Black Sea peninsula, which influenced on the Ukrainian-Russian relations. Lastly, I will study the life affected on Crimean people's life after the annexation by Russia and imposition of economic sanctions by Western powers.

## CHAPTER ONE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Crimean peninsula has very rich history, which is shaped by its geographical location together with good conditions for living, where time goes through different historical events. Factually, “the Black Sea and its coastal areas have played an important role in the history of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.”<sup>32</sup> It was a crossroad for different cultures, religions, and peoples with different levels of socioeconomic development. During different periods of history there was a clash of interests of different ethnic people, great empires and current states.

Current time, *de jure*, according to the Constitution of Ukraine and international law, the Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine and one of the administrative-territorial units of the Ukrainian state. At the same time *de-facto* it is a part of the Russian Federation, which wasn't recognized by the overwhelming majority of international community.

The total area of the republic is 26,100 sq. km.<sup>33</sup> The capital of Crimea is the city of Simferopol/Akmescit, administrative, economic and cultural center, where all branches of the republic's power are placed.<sup>34</sup> The city of Sevastopol, a home for the Russian Black Sea Fleet and Ukrainian Navy, is located within the Crimean peninsula.

The first historical mention of the "pearl of the Black Sea"<sup>35</sup> dated back to the ancient Greek time, thereafter it became important economic zone, later, the founders of Kievan Rus, the Mongols, the Ottoman Turks, Lithuanians, Polish, Russians, and, finally, the Soviets tried to gain control over these territories in order to achieve their political, economic, and military purposes throughout different stages of history.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Russian annexation of the Crimea, 1772-1783*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. xi.

<sup>33</sup> "Autonomous Republic of Crimea". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine* <http://mfa.gov.ua/en/about-ukraine/info/regions/1-crimea> (accessed December 05, 2014)

<sup>34</sup> State Statistic Committee of Ukraine, *All-Ukrainian population census, 2001* [http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/regions/reg\\_crym/](http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/regions/reg_crym/) (accessed December 05, 2014)

<sup>35</sup> As Crimea was called by Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia (1762-1796)

<sup>36</sup> Igor Davydov, *The Crimean Tatars and Their Influence on the 'Triangle of Conflict' — Russia-Crimea-Ukraine*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Naval Postgraduate School: Monterey, CA, 2008

### 1.1. Crimea before the Russian Rule

Crimean peninsula has a very rich historical background which began from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, when a number of Greek colonies were settled along the coast. Crimea since that time has been a homeland for different people, as the Cimmerians, Scythians, Greeks, Tatars, and Ottomans.<sup>37</sup>

First information which was mentioned in the literary sources about people inhabited in the northern shore of the Black Sea was the Cimmerians from 12<sup>th</sup> century BC by Homer in his famous epic poem *Odyssey*. There are two views on the settlement of the Cimmerians on the territory of Crimea, first group of scholars' claim that Cimmerians came to Ukraine from their original homeland on the lower Volga by way of the Caucasian lowlands. Other group of scholars argues that the Cimmerians were native to Ukraine. Nevertheless, up to 7<sup>th</sup> BC, the Cimmerian people inhabited the land until the other nomads withdrew them to Asia Minor.<sup>38</sup>

Later in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Scythians settled in the Ukrainian steppe and as Herodotus described them as Indo-Europeans, Iranian-speaking nomads of several types. Under Scythian rule, Ukraine became a significant, albeit distant, part of classical Mediterranean civilization, for through the intermediary of the Greek colonies on the Black Sea, the Scythians came into contact with Greek civilization and learned to value it.<sup>39</sup> Later, they were replaced by the Sarmatians, another powerful nomadic people from the East, who has endure a long series of the conquest and invaded Ukraine, only remnant of the Scythians found shelter in Crimea and stayed there until 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

In the medieval period, the region was obtained partially by Kievan Rus and partially by Byzantium, but later fell to the Mongol invasions as part of the Golden Horde. Later, after the destruction of the Mongolian Golden Horde army by Timur (1395), the Crimean Tatars founded an independent Crimean Khanate under the leadership of Khan Haci Giray, a descendant of Chingis Khan, in

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<sup>37</sup> Doris Wydra, "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 10: Amsterdam 2004, p. 112.

<sup>38</sup> Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: a history* Third edition Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Orest, *Ibid*, p. 11.

1441.<sup>40</sup> At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in order to establish an independent state in Crimea, Haci tried to gain as many allies as he could. Further, the newly established Crimean Khanate required outside support and assistance for its survival. During his rule, Haci Giray and later his son Mengli Giray balanced friendship and alliance with Poland-Lithuania and the Muscovite Russia, especially when major threat came from Golden Horne.<sup>41</sup>

The Crimean Tatars controlled the steppes that stretched from the Kuban and to the Dniester River; however, they were not able to take control over Genoese towns. Later in 1454, when Crimean Tatars asked for help from the Ottomans, Haci Giray made an agreement with Ottoman leader Mehmed II to invade and siege Keffe town from Genoese. Meanwhile, this join attack was first step in the development of Ottoman-Crimean political and military relations.<sup>42</sup>

Soon, the death of Haci Giray in 1466 raised serious question about the inheritance of the throne and existence of the dynasty. For the next twelve years there was a struggle between three power centers as Golden Horde, the clan leaders under the bey of Şirin clan, who have migrated to the Crimea during Haci time and the Ottoman sultans. After Haci's death, there were only two of the heirs to the throne (sons of Haci Giray): Nurdevlet and Mengli Giray. The situation was only solved in 1478, when Mengli Giray became a khan of the Crimean Khanate and a vassal of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>43</sup> He was very ambitious ruler, who was able to deal with the internal problems which were caused by clan leaders and his ability to take advantage of his new established relations with sultan for Khanate. In addition, Mengli Giray tried to build strong khanate which will be based on economic and political structure, cultural life and religious.<sup>44</sup>

An Ottoman attack of 1475 on the Genoese towns led by Gedik Ahmed Pasha brought Kefe and the other trading towns along the shore under their control. From that period of time Crimean Khanate accepted the suzerainty of the Ottomans in

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<sup>40</sup> The Tatar Khanate of Crimea, *All Empires, TJK 2004*. <http://www.all Empires.com/article/index.php?q=The Crimean Khanate> (accessed December 10, 2014)

<sup>41</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: a history*, Third edition Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, p. 78

<sup>43</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, pp. 8-12.

<sup>44</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, p. 16.

Crimea. The Crimean Tatars and Ottoman sultans' relations were based on two key foundations as similar political ideology which is based on historical and legendary traditions, and geopolitical necessity.<sup>45</sup>

The Crimean Tatars as an ethnic group emerge as the population of the Crimean Khanate during the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are descended from a complicated mixture of Turkic peoples which settled in Crimea since the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>46</sup>

Crimean Khanate's economy was primarily based on raids on neighboring peoples, agriculture and livestock. They were committed to the Ukrainian, Hungarian, Circassian, Polish, Lithuanian, Russian and other lands. The most important element in Khanate's economy from middle 15<sup>th</sup> until 18<sup>th</sup> century was slaves, who were captured during raids, and sold to slave merchants to export them to countries of Asia, Africa and Europe.<sup>47</sup>

Another element of Crimean Khanate' economy was trade sphere, which could be easily seen in the location of towns. Capital of Khans was Bahçesaray with large and varied population. Besides this city, there were also other large towns as port city Gozleve (Evpatoria), Kefe, Akmescit (current Simferopol), Karasu Bazaar.

During the existence of the Crimean Khanate, it has played a significant role in Ottoman Empire, Poland-Lithuanian, Muscovy policy. For the Ottomans, Crimean Tatars served as suppliers of soldiers and defense of northern flank of empire against enemy's attacks. Also, agricultural commodities as grain and meat made up a significant contribution to the economy of Ottomans. According to the Muscovy interests, Crimean Khanate also played an important role in the aspect of foreign trade with Europe, because two of the three large rivers as Don and Dnieper were laid down within the Khanate territory.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout the history of the Crimean Khanate it made *ad hoc* alliances with Poland-Lithuania and Moscow in pursuit of political and economic goals: with Poland-Lithuania to counter Muscovy and with Muscovy to fight Kazan. The alliance with the Ottomans was more or less constant and, for substantial

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<sup>45</sup> Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: a history*, Third edition Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, p.78.

<sup>46</sup> Hakan Kirimli, "Turko-Ukrainian relations and the Crimean Tatars" *International Committee for Crimea* <http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/tuarel-hakan.html> (accessed December 10, 2014)

<sup>47</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, p. 38.

compensation, the Tatars participated in Ottoman military campaigns against its neighbors and more distant adversaries.<sup>49</sup>

In the beginning of its existence, the Crimean Khanate was very mighty. Though, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Khans began to lose their power due to domestic instability. The leaders of local clans, the *beys*, possessed certain wealth, political and military power, and become less dependent on the khans, acting on their own without the Khan's consent.<sup>50</sup>

During 18<sup>th</sup> century there were several Russo-Turkish wars. One of the main aims of Russian side in these wars was to achieve access to the Black Sea, which was very important in the future economic development of the country.

As soon as the Ottomans lost strength in Europe, Russia gained power and became dominant one. While there was internal instability and weakness of Crimean region, Russia took advantage of the situation and invaded peninsula in 1774 and forced Khans to be under Russian influence.<sup>51</sup>

Since the time of Ivan the Terrible, Russia's rulers dreamed about liquidation of the Crimean Khanate and its annexation to Russian Empire. Moscow was aware that it is impossible to implement this idea without the military defeat of Ottomans. By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman state was weakened, at the same time Russia created a powerful army and navy, arranged on the European model under the rule of energetic Catherine II. Under the rule of Catherine II, M.L. Vorontsov, close advisor on political affairs, has prepared memorandum on foreign policy, where much attention was paid to the Crimean peninsula. In October 1768, the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russian Empire. During Russo - Turkish war four khans ruled Crimean Khanate: Kirim Giray, Devlet Giray, Kaplan Giray and Selim Giray. When the Ottomans could no longer protect Crimean Tatars against Russian attacks, Kaplan Giray decided to break with Ottoman Empire and cooperate with Russian government. When sultan has heard about Kaplan's plan, he immediately replaced him by Selim Giray.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Igor Davydov, *The Crimean Tatars and Their Influence on the 'Triangle of Conflict' — Russia-Crimea-Ukraine*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Naval Postgraduate School: Monterey, CA, 2008, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Igor Davydov, *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Igor Davydov, *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>52</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, pp. 49-54.

When Russian General Dolgorukii with his big army came to the Crimea in spring 1771 through Perekop, he in the name of Catherine announced manifesto that spread throughout the Crimea and promised to provide them with former independence. Later, general Dolgorukii with his powerful army took such cities as Gozleve, Bahçesaray, Perekop together with Kefe. New elected khan Sahin Giray II with Russian financial aid began to rule the new Crimean independent state that was formally appeared in 1774.<sup>53</sup> At the end of Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774, Russian army began to march to the Crimea and as a result the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji was signed, which made the Crimean Khanate independent from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>54</sup>

### 1.2. Crimea as a Part of Russian Empire 1783-1917

Crimean independence which lasted for nine years (1774-1783) could be also called as transitional period between Ottoman and Russian suzerainties. During that period of time with the support of Catherine II, Sahin Giray became the Khan of Crimea. During his reign as khan, he carried out political and economic reforms in Crimean government along Western lines and destroyed many Crimean traditional institutions which caused rebels and created antipathy of local Crimean Tatars towards Sahin Giray. The revolts against Sahin Giray's modernization programs spread throughout whole Crimean region. In order to save Crimean peninsula under Russian influence, General Grigorii Potemkin persuaded Catherine II to annex Crimea in 1783 in order to "put an end to the great expense of maintaining an unpopular puppet ruler",<sup>55</sup> Sahin Giray.

Catherine II who in 1787 named the Crimea as "the best pearl in the crown of Russia" understood economic and military importance of this land and in order to protect this region established a naval base – Sevastopol.<sup>56</sup> During that period of time

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<sup>53</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, pp. 54-55.

<sup>54</sup> Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: a history*, Third edition Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, p.78

<sup>55</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, pp. 58-69.

<sup>56</sup> E. Mochalov, L. Shershnev, I. Kasatonov, S. Korolev, *Krym-Sevastopol-Rossiya. Istoriya. Geopolitika. Perspektivy*, Moscow: OOO "IPK Otis-Media", 2007, p. 41.

this region from one point of view was the homeland of the Crimean Tatars and from the other it became a symbol of the power of the Russian Empire.<sup>57</sup>

Later, another war between Russia and Turkey started in 1853. Crimean region was a scene of fighting between the Russians and an alliance consisting of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France, and Sardinia-Piedmont. It arose from the conflict of great powers in the Middle East and was more directly caused by Russian demands to exercise protection over the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman sultan.<sup>58</sup> Initially, it was a fight between Russia and Turkey to get control over the Black Sea straits and influence in the Balkans, where the Russian army was successful. In November 1853, with the efforts of Admiral Nakhimov, the Russian fleet defeated the Turks in the Battle of Sinop. This event gave occasion to France and England to interfere to the war under the pretext of protecting Turkish interests. The war was managed and commanded poorly by both sides and was ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856, which demanded Russia to return back lands which had been taken from the Ottoman Empire. The treaty also abolished the Russian naval and military presence in the Black Sea region.<sup>59</sup>

During the years of Russian Empire rule, Crimean peninsula enjoyed the same duties and privileges as other parts of Russia. At the same time, Empress allowed for those who did not want to have Russian citizenship to leave for the Ottoman Empire, which later led to the decreasing of demographics and a vast amounts of land was vacant.<sup>60</sup>

In the 19 century the initiator of the new society level of Tatar intelligentsia was the founder of the journal "Tercuman" - Ismail Bey Gaspirali. In the early edition of the journal he called for the modernization of Russian Islam, the equality of women in the Muslim world and creation of a single Turkic language to be used in press.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Doris Wydra, "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 10: Amsterdam: 2004, p. 112.

<sup>58</sup> *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2008, p. 484. (accessed May 5, 2015)

<sup>59</sup> David M Goldfrank, "Crimean War." *Encyclopedia of Russian History*. 2004. *Encyclopedia.com*. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404100319.html> (accessed May 5, 2015)

<sup>60</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, pp. 78-79.

<sup>61</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, pp. 101-102.

With a time, 3 different groups of intelligentsia were emerged in Crimean region such as Gaspirali's followers, the Young Tatars and the Tatar nationalists.

First group was Gaspirali's followers, as the name of group speaks for itself, these people accepted Gaspirali's ideas and were in favor of cooperation between Muslim and Russian. Thanks to group's efforts over 350 national schools were opened within Crimea, where education was taught in Russian as well as Turkic of Tercuman. Crimean Tatars of this group was ready to cooperate with Russia and participate in political institutions alongside of Russian system.<sup>62</sup>

Another group of Crimean intelligentsia, which called themselves "The Young Tatars", was a group with revolutionary tendencies between 1905-1909. Generally, they enthusiastically collaborate together with Russian revolutionaries during the revolution turmoil of 1905 for the common aim of overthrowing of tsarist regime.<sup>63</sup> The leader of Young Turks, who gained great popularity among local population, was Abdürreşid Mehdi. Later, Mehdi was elected as mayor of Karasu Bazaar and served in this position from 1907 until his death of 1912. During his mayoralty, Mehdi contributed a lot in municipality of Karasu Bazaar by building electric station to provide electricity for the town, improved irrigation system, and opened housings in the town for landless and poor Crimean Tatar peasantry who had been forced out by their landlords after uprisings.<sup>64</sup> Besides this, the Young Turks under the Mehdi published a newspaper *Vatan Hadimi*, which contained principal ideas of Young Turks, who were in favor of new reforms and modernization of Crimea in educational aspects and emphasizes much about national identity.<sup>65</sup>

Another group "Tatar nationalists" which was formed after 1907 consisted of students who moved to the Istanbul to continue their study after Russian-Tatar schools. Later, they organized legal organization of Crimean Student Society with Çelebi Cihan as its president, which existed until 1917. At the same time another illegal organization Vatan was emerged in Crimean region, where the main

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<sup>62</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, p. 104.

<sup>63</sup> Hakan Kirimli, "The "Young Tatar" Movement in the Crimea, 1905-1909", *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* Vol. 34, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1993), pp. 529-534.

<sup>64</sup> Hakan Kirimli, *Ibid*, p. 537.

<sup>65</sup> Hakan Kirimli, *Ibid*, p. 539-540.

principles were to proclaim the tyranny of tsardom and create Crimean independent state.<sup>66</sup>

By analyzing all these three groups of Tatar intelligentsia, it was clear that the Crimean Tatar national movement had started to form into important political force in the beginning of XX century.

### **1.3. Crimean People's Republic 1917-1918**

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, the political and military situation in Crimea was chaotic as in much of Russia. The World War I caused a crisis in the identity and loyalty of the Crimean Tatars with regard to Russia. The Crimean Tatars were ready to support any movement in order to abolish the tsarist government, and to remove from the Crimea Russian institutions.

As a result, after secret election by direct universal suffrage of Crimean Tatars the Crimean Tatar National Parliament, so-called *Kurultay*, was opened in December 1917 with Çelebi Cihan at the head. The main principles of the Kurultay were to gain territorial autonomy and take state property under their control. Later, local Tatars under the Kurultay Parliament accepted a constitution of the Crimean state and proclaimed an independent Crimean Democratic Republic, which lasted for few months up to the time when the Bolsheviks gained influence on the peninsula and proclaimed this territory as Republic of Tauride because of the fear of Crimean secession. During Bolsheviks' regime from January 1917 until April 1918, leaders of the Sevastopol had no knowledge of the customs of local people and couldn't govern effectively. Thousands of local people were died.<sup>67</sup>

Republic of Tauride was under control of Bolsheviks only for three months until Ukrainian forces together with German army forced out them from Crimean region during World War I. Moreover, Crimean Tatar forces started helping Germans to fight with Bolsheviks and dreaming about getting autonomy. During the German

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<sup>66</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, pp. 106-108.

<sup>67</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, pp. 120-121.

administration of Crimea, region was chaired by General Suleiman Sulkewicz. The members of cabinet, who were assigned by Sulkewicz were multinational.<sup>68</sup>

During the Russian Civil War of 1918-1921, Crimea was the arena of the struggle between different interest groups: the Germans who occupied Crimean area for a while, the Bolsheviks and White Russians.

Later despite the fact that Ukraine-Crimean relations were friendly and Crimean Tatar Executive Committee recognized Ukrainian People's Republic, their relations began to worsen when Ukraine tried to assign Crimea as their part and take Black Sea Fleet under their control and declared the creation of Ukrainian state fleet. Skoropadskiy, the head of the Ukrainian Hetmanate, knew how important was Crimea for Ukraine, tried to lead negotiations with Berlin about unification of all lands populated by Ukrainians including Crimea, the Kuban and Bessarabia, whereas Sulkewicz insisted on full Crimean independence.<sup>69</sup>

After a while in November 1918, Germany's army was defeated on the western front and started to withdraw their forces back to Berlin as a result Sulkewicz's government immediately fell down.

Sulkewicz government was replaced with new interim one controlled by Solomon Krym, who was Kadet Deputy to the First State Duma, which didn't last for long period of time. The Red Army took over Crimea and made Solomon Krym and his officials to flee from peninsula. Later, the White Army under General Anton Denikin, who already controlled most of the Southern Russia, moved into Crimea and established a government there but during his reign General made several strategic mistakes which led to the defeat of his army. In April 1919 together with Bolshevik victory the Soviet Socialist Republic of Crimea was established under Bolshevik control.<sup>70</sup>

After the Civil War, Crimea was in a very difficult situation, economy of the peninsula was destroyed. Industrial production in comparison with pre-war 1913 decreased in three times. Dramatically reduce the number of livestock. The

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<sup>68</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, pp. 122-123.

<sup>69</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, pp. 122-126.

<sup>70</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, p. 88-90.

population in dire need of bread, clothes, fuel, matches, etc. All this has led to serious social and political consequences.<sup>71</sup>

As a result in October 18, 1921 administrative and revising body of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, All-Russian Central Executive Committee, considering all the proposals received from Crimean region adopted a resolution forming the Crimean Autonomous Socialist Republic. New established government was primarily concentrated on the famine fight. In spring 1922 around 500 thousand people were starving, that is 70 % of the peninsula.<sup>72</sup>

#### 1.4. Crimea under Soviet Union 1922-1990

In the Soviet Union, Crimea received a status of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and it was a part of the Russian Socialist Federative Republic (RSFSR). For that period of time, the Crimean Tatars constituted about one-fourth of the Crimean ASSR population. Moscow continued to supervise the most of the Crimean activities, with the probable exception of issues of justice, education, and healthcare. Two important port cities, Sevastopol and Evpatoria, were excluded from the Crimean jurisdiction and were subordinated directly to Moscow.<sup>73</sup>

Crimea, along with many other areas of the Soviet Union, experienced two famines, one during 1921-22 and the other during 1932-33. It was primarily caused by the disastrous effects of the Soviet rule.<sup>74</sup>

During the Second World War Crimean peninsula was a scene of fierce battles of the Soviet Army and the German fascist troops which costs Crimea hundreds of thousands of victims of civilian population. This region was under occupation of Nazis from 1941 until 1944 and like in other occupied by Germans territories a policy of national division and incitement of ethnic conflicts was also applied. The

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<sup>71</sup> N. Dement'ev, A. Zarubin, "Istoriya Kryma. Chast' II". *RITS Atlas*, 6. 03. 1993 г. [http://crimea-tour.ru/istor\\_xx.html](http://crimea-tour.ru/istor_xx.html) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>72</sup> E.Mochalov, L.Shershnev, I.Kasatonov, S. Korolev, *Krym-Sevastopol-Rossiya. Istoriya. Geopolitika. Perspektivy*. OOO "IPK Otis-Media" Moscow: 2007, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> Igor Davydov, *The Crimean Tatars and Their Influence on the 'Triangle of Conflict' — Russia-Crimea-Ukraine*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Naval Postgraduate School: Monterey, CA, 2008, p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> E.Mochalov, L.Shershnev, I.Kasatonov, S. Korolev, *Ibid*, p. 53.

Crimean Tatars wasn't an exception, one totalitarian regime accused the Tatars in cooperation with another totalitarian regime.<sup>75</sup>

The operation to liberate the Crimea from Germans began on April 8 in the area of Lake Siwash and ended May 12, 1944 at Cape Chersonese. Total it lasted 36 days and ended with the victory of the Soviet troops.<sup>76</sup> Immediately after Crimea came back under the Soviet control in early 1944, Stalin ordered a deportation of the Crimean Tatars and other smaller minorities as collective punishment for their collaboration with the Nazis. The ethnic group of the Crimean Tatars were subjected to mass deportation at the end of the Second World War, to leave their homeland and moved to the Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan as well as various other locations in the Soviet Union.<sup>77</sup> In June 1944 besides of Crimean Tatars, the same fate befell Greeks, Armenians, and Bulgarians who resided in peninsula.<sup>78</sup>

According to the archives in 1944 the number of people who were deported from the Crimea during the Second World War - 50 thousand Germans (August 1941) 188 thousand Tatars (May 1944), 14 thousand Greeks (1944) 12 thousand Bulgarians (1944), and 11 thousand Armenians (1944).<sup>79</sup> During the deportation process from 1945-1950 according to the NKVD around 32107 people died<sup>80</sup>. Later, in order to fill the vacant places on the peninsula government tried to compensate the lack of people by resettlement people from Russia and Ukraine to Crimean peninsula. The Crimean ASSR was abolished in June 1945 and was transformed into the Crimean *Oblast'* of the RSFSR.

Meanwhile, there was a new dramatic turn in the history of Crimea in 1954. The transfer of Crimea in 19 of February 1954 from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR under the jurisdiction of Ukrainian SSR due to close geographic, economic, and

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<sup>75</sup> Andrey Malgin, *Krymskiy uzel* 2000 p. 76 [http://bookz.ru/authors/mal\\_gin-andrei/malginandr01.html](http://bookz.ru/authors/mal_gin-andrei/malginandr01.html) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>76</sup> E.Mochalov, L.Shershnev, I.Kasatonov, S. Korolev, *Krym-Sevastopol-Rossiya. Istoriya. Geopolitika. Perspektivy*. Moscow: OOO "IPK Otis-Media" 2007, p.55.

<sup>77</sup> Elena Mizrokhi, "Russian 'separatism' in Crimea and NATO: Ukraine's big hope, Russia's grand gamble" in *Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les conflits identitaires et le terrorisme and for the Programme Paix et sécurité internationales, Institut québécois des hautes études internationales*. August 2009, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Andrey Malgin, *Ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>79</sup> E.Mochalov, L.Shershnev, I.Kasatonov, S. Korolev, *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>80</sup> Andrey Malgin, *Ibid*, p. 159.

cultural ties to Ukraine, and as a friendly gesture symbolizing the 300th anniversary of the treaty which unified Russia and Ukraine.<sup>81</sup>

This idea of transferring Crimea to Ukraine came to Khrushchev when he paid a visit to the northern part of Crimean region. Scholars assume several reasons of this step: one of these reasons is close economic ties between Ukraine and Crimea which could positively effect on the region, another reason is Khrushchev's desire to get support from the Ukrainian party members. According to Paul R. Magocsi, the transfer was, in fact, part of destalinization and to his mind by giving this region to Ukraine they epitomize dual approach: closely integrating Ukraine into the Soviet system, while loosening the center's political control as part of destalinization.<sup>82</sup>

Other researchers see this action as an act to mark the 300 anniversary of the Pereiaslav Treaty between the Cossack hetman Bohdan Khmel'nytskyi and Muscovy. Although Crimea was in formal administratively part of the Ukrainian SSR, which in turn is part of the USSR, however, concern about its development remained in the central government in Moscow. Many people didn't realize the seriousness of this issue which would affect the fate of Crimea in future.<sup>83</sup>

During 1960 -80s years due to the natural resources which Crimean region has, this peninsula became a favorite place of soviet people and a symbol of prosperity. According to the census of 1989, population of Crimea at that time was 2.430.495 people.<sup>84</sup>

In the late 80's - early 90-ies of XX century there was a massive return of deported peoples in Crimea from the places of forced settlement in the Central Asian republics. This mass repatriation significantly changed the ethnic face of the peninsula and required extraordinary actions and decisions from local authorities. This difficult process, exacerbated by the collapse of the USSR had influenced on the Crimean region. The fate of the Crimea has changed dramatically with the destruction of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>81</sup> Roman Solchanyk, "Crimea: Between Ukraine and Russia," *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges, and Prospects*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995, p. 5 quoted from Davydov, Igor "The Crimean Tatars and their influence on the 'Triangle Of Conflict' —Russia-Crimea-Ukraine" Unpublished M. A. thesis. Naval Postgraduate School: Monterey, CA, 2008, p.20.

<sup>82</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, p. 97.

<sup>83</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *Ibid*, p. 97.

<sup>84</sup> Andrey Malgin, *Krymskiy uzel* 2000, p. 76 [http://bookz.ru/authors/mal\\_gin-andrei/malginandr01.html](http://bookz.ru/authors/mal_gin-andrei/malginandr01.html) (accessed May 25, 2015)

The key dispute over Crimea's region and its status was occurred as a consequence of two main historical events which were happened during 20<sup>th</sup> century: collapse of the tsarist regime in the revolutions of 1917 and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. In spite of the two different periods of time and long interval between them, there is one thing in common in the policy of Crimea which stresses same options: Crimean independence, Autonomy of Crimea within a Ukrainian state and joining Russia.<sup>85</sup>

### **1.5. Autonomous Republic of Crimea Within Ukraine 1991-2014**

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has tried to build their own way apart from Russia; however the common historical background as well as the common source of the identity still remains. Ukraine finds itself in different position, from one point of view these two countries as Russia and Ukraine sharing the same problems and being therefore a possible partner in finding solutions. But from another point of scholars' view, Russia is considered as former oppressor state, which still trying to prevent Ukraine from becoming self-independent European State.<sup>86</sup>

By analyzing the situation after the breakup of Soviet Union, according to the scholars despite the fact that Russia and Ukraine has same strategic aim which is to enter into Western civilization (by recognizing the political system of the West with the visible expression of democracy in the form of voting, multi-party system and free media), still there were some tensions between them. Obviously, Russia wasn't obliged to prove their statehood because it has already been an important player in international affairs for centuries. But Ukraine as a new independent country and new subject of international relations tried to determine their own political way and their own place in international arena with Western help. The main panacea for

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<sup>85</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, p. 83.

<sup>86</sup> Doris Wydra, "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 10: Netherlands, 2004, p. 114.

establishment of Ukraine state as government thought at that time was in isolation of Ukraine from Russia.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, it should be noted that since gaining independence, the value of Ukraine was sharply increased. Former United States National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, wrote in his book *The Grand Chessboard* about the role of Ukraine in American Foreign Policy Strategy. Brzezinski claims that Ukraine is an important geopolitical pivot in Eurasia and for Russia it would be very difficult to gain the position of predominant European empire without Ukraine with its 52 million people and major resources as well as its access to the Black Sea.<sup>88</sup>

The status of Crimea after the disintegration of Soviet Union was changed several times. In February 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a law on the restoration of the Crimean ASSR as a part of the Ukrainian SSR.

The atmosphere in Crimea after the collapse of USSR was complicated, many Pro-Russian and separatists movements arose and started propagating Crimean independence or integration with Russia. According to the percentage of the population of Crimea during presidential election and whether citizens supported the Ukrainian independent statehood in 1991, only 67.5 % of the Crimean residents voted in the referendum day, whereas 54.2% supported for Ukraine's declaration of independence, 42 % of them were against. The Crimean Tatar votes were crucial in election. Leonid Kravchuk was elected as President of Ukraine. When government adopted the Act of Declaration of Ukraine in August 1991, the Russian political figures together with the head of Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin have raised the issue of reviewing its borders between these countries.<sup>89</sup>

The first real tension between Moscow and Kiev occurred only in 1992 because of the unresolved issues of Black Sea Fleet (BSF from here on) and simultaneously emerged movement for changing of status of peninsula in Crimea. A number of Russian politicians called for the revision of transfer Act from Russia to Ukraine in 1954. The reason which determined Russian President Policy in "Crimean issue"

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<sup>87</sup>E.Mochalov, L.Shershnev, I.Kasatonov, S. Korolev, *Krym-Sevastopol-Rossiya. Istoriya.Geopolitika.Perspektivy*, Moscow: OOO "IPK Otis-Media", 2007.

<sup>88</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York: Basic Books. 1997, p. 46.

<sup>89</sup> Roman Solchanyk, "The Politics of State building: Centre-periphery relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, № 1, 1994, p. 47.

from 1992-1995 was the fear of disintegration of Ukraine and emergence of unfriendly regime towards Russia if Moscow will insist on territorial claims to Ukraine. On the bases of the report which was published in “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” newspaper by Vladimir Razuvev, he mentioned about the dangerous of the Ukrainian disintegration processes for Russian Federation. As a result Russian government started to actively support officials in Ukraine which will create stability in the country. This approach was quite widespread in Moscow and lead to the idea that Ukraine is more important than Crimea, which means that friendly relations with Ukraine is more advantageous rather than possession of Crimean region.<sup>90</sup>

Main issue which led to the Russian-Ukrainian negotiations between Yeltsin and Kravchuk was the Black Sea Fleet. Several meetings were held between the heads of two states. The compromise which was reached during the summit was to divide the fleet between Russia and Ukraine. The agreement for joint control of fleet during three years was signed in Yalta, October 1992.<sup>91</sup>

Another important aspect which Ukrainian government faced with was Crimean Tatars who started to arrive to the historical motherland in 1989-1990. According to the census of 1987, only 17.400 Crimean Tatars resided on the peninsula out of the more than 2 000.000 population. When Crimean Tatars granted the right to return to their historic homeland from exile, the populations of Crimean Tatars increased to 135.000 people.<sup>92</sup> The Ukrainian policy was in favor of returning Crimean Tatars, but government couldn't properly managed problems which emerged since Crimean Tatars had difficulties with settlement in their ancestral lands, difficulties with finding jobs and their economic situation at that moment was so bad. Despite all these issues Kiev had very good relations with Crimean Tatars and considered them as allies which opposed pro-Russian movements.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Andrey Malgin, *Krymskiy uzel* 2000 p.17 [http://bookz.ru/authors/mal\\_gin-andrei/malginandr01.html](http://bookz.ru/authors/mal_gin-andrei/malginandr01.html) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>91</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, pp. 225-227.

<sup>92</sup> Igor Davydov, *The Crimean Tatars and Their Influence on the 'Triangle of Conflict' — Russia-Crimea-Ukraine*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Naval Postgraduate School: Monterey, CA, 2008, p. 33-34.

<sup>93</sup> Doris Wydra, “The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination,” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 10: Netherlands, 2004, pp. 120-121.

Another aspect as Chechen war of 1994-1996 let Ukraine successfully deal with its own separatist movement because Moscow was busy with its own troubles. After a while, when Chechen war was ended and Moscow understood that it would be difficult to control strong separatist movement in Crimea, two agreements were signed between Russian Federation and Ukraine in May 1997.<sup>94</sup> First one concerned the division of Black Sea Fleet and Sevastopol being leased to Russia until 2017, another one on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership.

A turning point in Ukrainian-Russian relations was the Orange Revolution that took place in Ukraine in 2004. Orange color was the symbol of the Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko's opposition movement.<sup>95</sup>

The start of the Orange Revolution is considered as protests after the announcement of the Central Election Commission (CEC) preliminary results, according to which the premier-minister Viktor Yanukovich won the elections. In the fight for the presidency in 2004, there were two main candidates as Viktor Yushchenko, who was eager to join the EU and NATO, and pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich. The announcement of Yanukovich's victory in presidential election in November 2004 led to the public protests in capital and other regions of Ukraine known as the Orange revolution.<sup>96</sup>

The main arena of popular protests was the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), where people showed their disagreement with regard to the results of election and refused to recognize the legitimacy of the official results. Ukrainian citizens were sure that victory had been achieved by fraudulent means. While protestors continued to protest in Maidan according to various estimates, from 100 to 500 thousands of people from around the country, the Supreme Court of Ukraine reversed the decision of the CEC on the election results and ordered to rerun second round of voting again.<sup>97</sup> The main ideology of revolution was based on "anti-

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<sup>94</sup> Elena Mizrokhi, "Russian 'separatism' in Crimea and NATO: Ukraine's big hope, Russia's grand gamble" in *Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les conflits identitaires et le terrorisme: Programme Paix et sécurité internationales, Institut québécois des hautes études internationales*. August 2009 p.12

<sup>95</sup> Daniel C. Villanueva, "Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature" Review of *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* by Andrew Wilson Vol. 61. № 1, Spring 2007, pp. 153-156.

<sup>96</sup> D. Lane, "The Orange Revolution: "people's revolution" or revolutionary coup?" *BJPIR: 2008 VOL 10*, pp. 525-549.

<sup>97</sup> Bohdan Harasymiw, "Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" and Why its Fizzled" *Canadian Political Science Association, at the 76th Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1 June 2007, pp. 1-22.

corruption, anti-Kuchma, and vaguely pro-democracy, pro-rule of law, and pro-market”.<sup>98</sup>

After the Orange Revolution 2004 the governing body of Ukraine under Viktor Yushchenko took a course of a rapprochement with the European Union and NATO. The international observers during the events of 2004 claimed that Ukraine geopolitical future is either in line with Russia or the West. Nonetheless, the significant problem is that the percentage of Ukraine population who is in favor of being NATO member is lower than it was in other Eastern European countries. Thus, according to the survey in 2006 only 17% of the population of Ukraine supported the membership of NATO, whereas 50% would vote against of NATO accession. Majority of Ukrainians who were against NATO has resided in Eastern and Southern areas of Ukraine, especially Crimea and Sevastopol.<sup>99</sup> As a result Russia under Vladimir Putin didn't hide its displeasure about NATO's Eastern Enlargement. Ukraine membership in military allies would be viewed by “Russia as a great encroachment into its Near Abroad Space”.<sup>100</sup> Thus, in order to prevent it, Russian Federation started to fund different Russian separatist movements in Crimea.

However, the events of 2004 didn't bring any changes in Crimean politics and in life of Crimean Tatars. Mustafa Jemilev, chairman of the Crimean Tatar National Assembly together with *Kurultai* (Congress) decided to be on Yushchenko side because of their unfavorable memories towards Russia.

While Crimean Tatar leadership provided support for Yushchenko during 2004 election, they were expected for mutual support from Ukrainian government in settling their problems such as land disputes, housing issues and recognition of the Crimean Tatars as indigenous people, which still remain as a complex problem. Besides this, Crimean Tatar leadership wanted Crimean Tatar language to have official status in Crimea along with the proportional representations of the

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<sup>98</sup> Bohdan Harasymiw, 2007. “Ukraine's Orange Revolution and Why It Fizzled”. Paper prepared for presentation to the annual meeting of *the Canadian Political Science Association, at the 76th Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1 June 2007, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Elena Mizrokhi, “Russian ‘separatism’ in Crimea and NATO: Ukraine's big hope, Russia's grand gamble” in *Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les conflits identitaires et le terrorisme and for the Programme Paix et sécurité internationales, Institut québécois des hautes études internationales*. August 2009, p. 13.

<sup>100</sup> Elena Mizrokhi, *Ibid*, p. 14.

Tatars in the local branches of power.<sup>101</sup> Eventually, even after the meeting of Jemilev with Yushchenko in 2005 didn't lead to any reforms and results.

Summarizing the policy of Ukraine towards Crimea during independence time, we could say that for almost the entire period of independent existence, Ukrainian authorities recalled the problems of the Crimean Tatars exclusively during the election campaign. Basically it came down to political bargaining: support for the right candidate for president or party in exchange for the provision of land on the southern coast of Crimea, whereas mostly they have got in the steppe areas of peninsula.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, we see, that the specificity of the conflict situation in the Crimea after the independence of Ukraine clearly identifies in three sides of conflict: Russians, who emphasize their identity and majority, their rights and cultural domination; Ukrainians, which exert political pressure from Kiev and West; Crimean Tatars claiming their historic rights to peninsula.<sup>103</sup> In the political field, Crimea practically has no political programs and instruments aimed at improving the quality of international climate in the region. Moreover, the majority of Crimeans are keen to see the authority of Ukraine, which would have properly and on time reacted to the problems in order to escape conflict situations in Crimea.

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<sup>101</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, pp. 204-205.

<sup>102</sup> D.A. Belashchenko, I.V. Ryzhov "Crimean Tatar Issue: Genesis, History Of Settlement Efforts And Prospects For The Future" *Mejdunarodnye otnosheniya. Politologiya. Vestnik Nijnegorodskogo Universiteta im. N.I. Lobacevskogo*, 2012, № 4 (1), pp. 361–367.

<sup>103</sup> E.V Zherebtsova "Spetsifika konfliktnoy situatsii v Krymskom regione postsovetskiy period" *Nauchnyy potentsial: raboty molodyh uchenyh* №1, 2008, pp. 225-233.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DEBATES ON THE STATUS OF CRIMEA

The Crimean region became an arena of debates between Ukraine and Russia on political, economic and territorial issues. All these years the Crimean question was in the spotlight of scholars of Russia, Ukraine, and western countries because of a potential for conflict. There are several regional key characteristics which should be taken into account by scholars: geographical location, multiethnicity of region, institutional legacies, political, economic and social conditions in order to understand the complexity of the Crimean question.<sup>104</sup> In addition, peninsula's location effects on the Black Sea regions security and stability through triangle relations of Ukraine, Russia and Turkey. Thus, the issue of Crimean security has to be analyzed in the context of not only Ukrainian, but also regional affairs.

#### 2.1. The Russian Perspective on Crimean Peninsula

This part of thesis we will take a look at the Russian perspective on Crimean peninsula and will analyze in details such issues as the Russian attitude on Crimean status after the collapse of Soviet Union, presence of Crimean myth and Sevastopol as the symbol of Russian glory in Russian literature and geostrategic importance and division of the Black Sea Fleet.

##### 2.1.1. Autonomous republic of Crimea perspective

Russo-Ukrainian relations occupy a special place in the foreign policy of Russia. Among all problematic issues which determine the Russo-Ukrainian relations in the first post-soviet decade, the dominant ones were marked by confrontation on a range of critical policy issues as the status of Crimean peninsula and the division of the Black Sea Fleet. The number of statements about the Crimea, fleet and Sevastopol were the main obstacles which impede the improvement of Russo-Ukrainian relations and integration of two states.

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<sup>104</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, p. 4.

Both of these states are guided by different priorities. The main priority of Russia lies in the recognition by Ukraine and other geopolitical players the space of Russian privileged interests in Ukraine, while as the main priority of Ukraine focus on the economic aspect: access to the Russian market and ensuring the availability of the necessary volumes of fuel and raw materials.<sup>105</sup>

Economically, socially and politically, Russia and Ukraine through a common historical heritage is closely related to each other, besides this, security issues are closely linked to each other as well. Ukraine is afraid of the violation of its territorial integrity, whereas Russia – expansion of NATO to its borders.

In the first half of the 1990s, Ukraine faced the problems of division of powers between the Ukrainian and Crimean authorities. The status between two authorities became more serious when Russian Federation interfered in this situation. As a result, Ukraine was worried about sovereignty and territorial integrity because of Russia's claims on Sevastopol and the Crimea, as a consequence prompting Ukraine to expand relations with NATO. Above all, the question of the legitimacy of "donation" of Crimea in 1954 was on the agenda of the Russian Duma, thus both states insisting on the supremacy over Crimean peninsula.<sup>106</sup>

All these events stimulated for the emergence of Crimean separatist movements such as the Republican Movement of Crimea in 1992 (RDK). The members of these movements were politician and activists, who were united by the general idea of Crimean separatism and integration with Russia. The RDK wanted to hold the referendum in 1992 in order to secede from Ukraine and be independent Republic of Crimea. According to the new elected Law of 1992, which was adopted by Crimean Supreme Soviet, referendum could be organize in case if 10% of population or 180.000 citizens will support and vote for it. In order to achieve this idea, RDK immediately started their campaign of collecting signatures and could collect around 246000 signatures.<sup>107</sup> The central government has no doubts about the eventual outcome of the referendum that is why the impending ballot for independence

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<sup>105</sup> Leonid Vardomsky, *Russia and Ukraine: issues of social and economic development in the context of the mutual relations*. Research report , Moscow: RAS Institute of Economy, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> Doris Wydra, "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination". *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* Vol. 10, Issue 2, Amsterdam: 2004, pp. 114-115.

<sup>107</sup> Pål Kolstø, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*. London: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 192-194.

created tensions in Kiev. As a result, President Kravchuk accused separatist forces in an attempt to destabilize the situation in Crimea and Ukrainian Parliament declared this referendum unconstitutional. Meanwhile, Russian politicians put under question the legality of the 1954 decision.<sup>108</sup>

The confrontation moment between Kiev and Simferopol/Akmescit was raised again when in 1994 along with Ukraine presidential elections, also there were elections to the Crimean presidency and the Crimean Supreme Soviet. Pro-Russian candidate Meshkov prevailed in the Crimean elections, his policy was directed on rapprochement with Russia, entering the ruble zone, provide local people with Russian citizenship and conclude military-political alliance with Russia. However, due to the response from the Ukrainian authorities and the opposition, Meshkov couldn't realize his plans. At that period of time, the Ukrainian government was against to the Constitution of Crimea, which was issued in 1992. According to the articles of this Constitution, Crimea was a constitutional state, which could be allowed to have dual citizenship, where the highest office was belonged to the President of Crimea, who regulated relations with Ukraine.<sup>109</sup> After the expiration of the ultimatum which Verkhovna Rada set to the Crimean government in regard with Crimean laws, Kiev suspended all legal acts of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, abolished the Crimean presidency which were in contradiction with Ukrainian legislation and deprived Meshkov of all rights by issuing the new law "On the government of Crimea" where the Prime Minister will be the head of the government.<sup>110</sup>

The Ukrainian-Russian relations were in tension until 1997, when both states came to compromise and signed Russian-Ukrainian Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation. Meanwhile, in Russian-Crimean relations, Russia is considered as a major trade partner and an investor. One of ambitious plan was a project to build a bridge across the Kerch strait, which will unite the shores of Russia and Crimea.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine-Crimea-Russia: Triangle of Conflict*, Stuttgart: IbidemVerlag, 2007, pp. 125-128.

<sup>109</sup> Doris Wydra, "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination". *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* Vol. 10, Issue 2, Amsterdam: 2004, pp. 126-127.

<sup>110</sup> Doris Wydra, *Ibid*, pp. 115-120.

<sup>111</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, pp. 235-236.

The events which took place in 2004 in Ukraine had a great influence on the subsequent economic and political developments between Ukraine and Russia. These events together with poverty, corruption and inefficient governance contributed to the chaotic situation and demonstrations in Ukraine in 2004 called as Orange Revolution. As a result, Yushchenko won presidential election and together with new president political and foreign policy of Ukraine has also changed. In 2005, the new leadership of Ukraine has made a sharp turn in the direction of cooperation with EU and NATO. Subsequently, this fact has led to the changes in the course of the Russian policy towards Ukraine primarily in the field of energy policies.<sup>112</sup> During the years of Yushchenko' presidency, he made modest achievements in regard to the membership of EU, all problematic issues which were before 2004 still remained.

In spite of the fact that Ukraine is rejected to be in the role of "little brother" and Russian influence has drastically decreased, still energy dependence on Russia along with Black Sea Fleet make the Russian factor still remained.<sup>113</sup>

In 2010 the newly elected president Viktor Yanukovich together with government make it clear that Ukraine priorities in policy doesn't pursue NATO membership and in 19 of January 2009 signed an agreement in Kharkiv to extend the lease of Russia's Black Sea Fleet (BSF from here) until 2042 in exchange for 30 % of discount on Ukrainian imports of Russian gas.

### **2.1.2. Crimea in Russian history**

In order to understand the essence of the conflict and its potential, the identities which rooted in territory also should be analyzed. So, the best things which effectively interpret historical and cultural memories of that place and its people are formed of symbols, memories and myths of that time.<sup>114</sup> According to the myths about Crimean landscape including images is mostly started from the annexation

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<sup>112</sup> Leonid Vardomsky, *Russia and Ukraine: issues of social and economic development in the context of the mutual relations*. Research report. RAS Institute of Economy, Moscow: 2013, pp. 10-12.

<sup>113</sup> Arkady Moshes, "Ukraine: domestic changes and foreign policy reconfiguration" *Political trends in the New Eastern Europe: Ukraine and Belarus*, Strategic Studies Institute, June 2007. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB781.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>114</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, pp. 35-36.

time of Crimea by Russian Empire in 1783. For example, the Crimean Tatars memory is particularly shaped by the landscape of Crimean region and its beauties of mountain, steppe and coastal areas, each of them is related to the subgroups of Tatars settled in various parts of peninsula.<sup>115</sup>

The role and importance of Crimean region was described in many Russian literary works which tells about the military-strategic importance, the heroic defense during Crimean war (1853-1856) and special status of Sevastopol (1948). The myth of Crimea in Russian imagination has started from the trip of Catherine the Great in 1787 to newly conquered territories of the Russian Empire. The Empress was impressed by the beauty of the region and its climate, and evaluated its geopolitical importance and trade potential in future.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, peninsula was favorite place for Russian nobility, which gave rise to some vivid images of Crimea. During the Soviet time, the Crimean peninsula had an image of number-one health resort for the working class society.

Crimea firmly became a part of the novels in the Russian literature, and the images of the peninsula in the pages of the classics sometimes charm no less than Crimean landscapes. Many great writers have visited Crimean peninsula, and became fascinated by the nature of this region which later have shared their impressions in their works, as in case with A. Pushkin, L.Tolstoy, A.Chekhov, I. Bunin and so on.

The Great Russian writer Alexander Pushkin, who stayed in Crimea for couple weeks, was so inspired by the beauty of Crimea that he produced several of his works based on this experience. In one of his work named as *Tavrida*, he described strong emotions which he experienced at that moment, and wrote about the beautiful landscape, flora and sea.<sup>116</sup> By analyzing Pushkin's poems, we can say that for him Crimea is Russian land. This view and image on Crimea mostly presented in the Russian literature. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Crimea considered as the fashionable resort place for the upper-class society which was described in another literary figure

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<sup>115</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute ,2007, p. 40.

<sup>116</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin. *Tavrida* 1822 <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/news/97723/> (accessed February 03, 2015)

book “*Dama s sobachkoy*”(The Lady with the dog). Anton Chekhov’s story was written under the impression of his trip to Yalta. <sup>117</sup>

Thus, the works and lives of many major Russian writers, poets and artists were connected with Crimea; reinforce the region’s place in Russian cultural heritage. One of the books which were financed by the Fond Moskva-Krym from 1996 under the name of *Krymskiy al'bom* (Crimean Album) still provides the idea of how Russian identification with Crimea is still alive. Every year different texts, historical fragments, essays are publishing in books which aimed at rapprochement of Crimea and Moscow. <sup>118</sup>

The city of Sevastopol can be translated from the Greek as a descent, dignified, the city of glory, greatness. The city was founded by the decree of Russian Empress Catherine II. More than two hundred years history of Sevastopol which is rich in significant events fully confirms the meaning of its name. This city located on southwestern region of Crimean peninsula. Many centuries ago people settled in this place and remains of ancient settlements of Tauri tribes, Scythians, Sarmatians, the Greeks and so on were discovered by the archeologists. On this territory with a rich ethnic history, the city of Sevastopol was built, future guardian of the Southern borders of the Russian state. Long and difficult struggle for access to the Black Sea was successfully completed with the conclusion of Kuchuk-Kainarji agreement in 1774. First constructions in the west bank of the South Bay were founded in June 1783, at that moment it was under the name of Akyar. Fortress city on the Black Sea coast was renamed as Sevastopol on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1784, which later officially turned into a naval port.

The defense of Sevastopol during the Crimean war(1853-1856) and the Great Siege(1854-1855) which was lasted for 349 days brought international fame to the city. The courage of defenders and heroism were highly appreciated by writers of that time. The Great Russian novelist, Lev Tolstoy was impressed by the highest morale and heroism of ordinary defenders and population of Sevastopol, which was later presented in *Sevastopol Sketches*.

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<sup>117</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007, pp. 55-56.

<sup>118</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, *Ibid*, pp. 68-70.

Sevastopol became a symbol of courage and rightly called the city of Russian glory. It remains in Russians' memory the names of commanders and defenders as admirals G. Kornilov, A. Nahimov, A. Istomin, talented military engineers who took part in battles. Soon after the Crimean war, the city for many years lay in ruins, which was described in the letter of great playwright A.N. Ostrovskiy. During the reign of Alexander II (1855-1881) the restoration of Sevastopol as the main naval port of Russia on Black Sea started. Later this city got an imperial status as a fortress, town and port with its own coat of arms.<sup>119</sup>

From October 29, 1948 the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council was assigned a special political and legal status of Sevastopol and selected as an independent administrative and economic center with its special budget and assigned to the category of cities of Republican Subordination.<sup>120</sup> When in April 26, 1954 the Crimean Republic was transferred to Ukraine SSR, the status of Sevastopol in the relevant decision was not determined. In fact, the city remained linked with Moscow on the line fleet management and with Simferopol/Akmescit in addressing the plight of civilians.

Another work title of which is *The City of Russian Glory: Sevastopol in 1854-55*, was written by Soviet historian Evgenii Tarle and published in 1954. He described "about Russian glory and Russian heroism in a context in which 'Russian' was viewed exclusively as Great Russian."<sup>121</sup>

The main issue which was claimed by Russian side from 1990s was claims in regard to Sevastopol as particularly Russian city with its Russian past and the symbol of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.<sup>122</sup> For the courage and perseverance in the fight against the enemies during World War II, Sevastopol was awarded title *gorod geroi* (heroic city) in May 1965.

The post-Soviet political situation which was occurred between Ukraine and Russia in regard to the Sevastopol status and the division of the Black Sea Fleet haven't only demonstrated the importance of the historical memories, but also

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<sup>119</sup> E Mochalov, L. Shershnev, I. Kasatonov, S Korolev, *Krym-Sevastopol-Rossiya. Istoriya. Geopolitika. Perspektivy* Moscow: OOO "IPK Otis-Media", 2007, pp. 87-95.

<sup>120</sup> E Mochalov, L. Shershnev, I. Kasatonov, S Korolev, *Ibid*, p. 157.

<sup>121</sup> Serhii Plokyh, "The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology." *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Jul., 2000, pp. 379-380.

<sup>122</sup> Serhii Plokyh, *Ibid*, p. 372.

reinforced the Sevastopol myth in Russian consciousness. After the disintegration of the USSR, Sevastopol appeared in a series of new political realities, where Ukraine and its nationalism tried to integrate Crimean peninsula into its own historiography, while Russian Federation endorsed a blend of the Russian myth of Sevastopol in order to assert the Russianness of Crimea.

### **2.1.3. Crimea as a strategic post**

The roots of the fate of BSF in Russian history started from the imperial time of 18<sup>th</sup> century when Russian Empire began to possess this part of the region. The Black Sea Fleet was established in 1783 as a part of Russian Navy, which protects its southern borders throughout the history. As we know that the dominance over the sea determines the superiority in the region. The military and strategic importance of Crimea, Sevastopol and BSF were discussed repeatedly, whereas many Russian sources were claimed that fleet on Black Sea coast has the “significant task to protect the southern flank of Russia and Ukraine against possible threats from Turkey and NATO.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, the Black Sea region is a significant geopolitical area, where each of the key actors as Russia, EU, USA, and Turkey try to dominate or expand their influence in this region.<sup>124</sup>

After a rich history and numerous battles, the BSF got into difficult situation after the disintegration of USSR. The process of solving the status of the BSF after Soviet collapse lasted till 1997. The disputes over the BSF issue started from 1992, when Ukrainian Ministers Antonov and Morozov said at one of the conference that fleet was and will be the possess of Ukraine, while Russian Federation claimed that they have full rights over the BSF and Sevastopol. This entire situation leads to the multiple meeting between representatives of both states. Both of sides couldn't come to compromise, negotiations periodically were interrupted because of the nationalists' statements from both states. Finally in May 1997, two states came to a

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<sup>123</sup> John Jarowsky, “Crimea’s importance to Ukraine and its future security.” *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges and Prospects* edited by Maria Drohobycky, Washington, D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995, pp. 135-136.

<sup>124</sup> “The Crimea, Ukraine, and Black Sea region: Security and development” Razumkov Centre’s analytical report *National Security & Defence* Ukraine: Ukrainian Centre for Economic & political studies named after Olexander Razumko, № 4-5 (121-123) 2011, pp. 2-20.

decision and signed a bilateral agreement, which states that fleet was divided to equal 50/50, which gives right to Russia and Ukraine to have their military bases in the region. Subsequently, Ukraine gave most of its portion of the fleet to Russia, which means that it got 82 percent of the total BSF assets.<sup>125</sup> According to the agreement Ukraine had sovereign rights over Sevastopol city and its facilities, but it allowed Russia to lease the fleet with facilities for 20 years at the same time Russia should pay annual rental fee of 97.75 million dollars per year.<sup>126</sup> Meanwhile, the payment would go to reduce Ukraine debt of 3 billion dollars to Russia.

By analyzing this situation in regard with BSF, we could say that both states had an interest in resolving the fleet issue. For Ukraine, it meant to get an independence from Russia and got their sovereignty over Crimea and Sevastopol. But at the same time, we should understand that Ukraine as itself didn't plant to acquire an entire new fleet because its budget couldn't afford the costs for even the fraction of the ships. For Russia, the issue was to get access to the Black Sea and acquire the ships and the right to base them.<sup>127</sup>

After Orange revolution of 2004 the policy of Ukraine totally changed and new leadership of Ukraine has made a sharp turn in the direction of cooperation with EU and NATO. As a result Viktor Yushchenko said that the status of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol needs to be revised.<sup>128</sup> The Georgian crisis of August 2008 was a time when Russian government decided to use ships of Black Sea fleet in order to send forces to the Abkhazia, misused Ukrainian territory and abused Ukraine's neutrality.<sup>129</sup> Thereby, this act pushed Ukrainian government to reconsider 1997 agreement and signed two decrees more which state that "battleships and aircraft of the Black Sea Fleet may cross the Ukrainian border only after submitting a notice to the Ukrainian military chief of staff, but no later than 72 hours before the anticipated

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<sup>125</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, "The Future of the Sevastopol Russian Navy Base." *Russian analytical digest* <http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/RAD-75-11-13.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>126</sup> Jakob Hedenskog, and Robert L. Larsson, *Russian Leverage on the CIS and Baltic States*, FOI-R-2280-SE, June 2007, p. 93.

<sup>127</sup> Tyler Felgenhauer, "Ukraine, Russia and the Black Sea Fleet Accords." Princeton, NJ: *Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs*, Princeton University, 1999.

<sup>128</sup> Jeffrey Simon, "Ukraine against herself: to be Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian, or Neutral?" *Strategic Forum Institute for National Strategic Studies National defence University* № 238, February 2009.

<sup>129</sup> Jakob Hedenskog, and Robert L. Larsson, *Crimea after the Georgian Crisis* Defence analysis FOI Swedish Defence Research Agency, November 2008, p. 19.

crossing of the border.”<sup>130</sup> In addition, Ukraine preserved friendly relations with Georgia and rejected to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia at the same time together with Georgia signed the Charter of Strategic Partnership with the USA.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, in April 2008 at the NATO summit in Bucharest, NATO has raised the issue of admitting Georgia and Ukraine. During this summit, according to the speech of Russian President Vladimir Putin Moscow perceives the approach of NATO to Russia's borders as a real threat to the interests of the state and promised to take adequate measures.<sup>132</sup>

Nevertheless, the situation and Ukrainian policy in regard with BSF has changed under V. Yanukovich, who in April 2010 extended the lease agreement for 25 years more until 2042 in exchange for natural gas which would be purchased from Russia at discounted rates.<sup>133</sup>

During the post-Cold war period, the Black Sea region became as one of the most strategic regions in the Europe due to its geopolitical and economic significance. Therefore, major international actors primarily pay attention on the region, including Russia. There are several factors which indicate the reasons of Russian interests in this region. First of all, Russia would like to retain as main player among other actors or at least to increase their influence in Black Sea region. Besides this, given the fact that such movements as terrorism, separatism and extremism gain popularity and creates problems in the North Caucasus makes this region possibly even more significant to Russia, which is interested in security and stability of this region. Another reason is the location of the Black Sea region which indicates the geostrategic importance, that is why Russia wants to be sure in constant and “secure energy, trade, civil and military communications within and throughout the Black Sea.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Yushchenko decrees restrict Russian fleet”, *Ukrainian Journal*, August 13, 2008, p. 1.

<sup>131</sup> Alla Yaz’kova, “Black Sea region: Evolution of geopolitical change” *Ukraine’s place and role in the Black Sea region: Expert Opinions* Rezumkov Center, National Security and Defence № 4-5, 2011, p. 52.

<sup>132</sup> John Mearsheimer, “ Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s fault” *Foreign Affairs* September/October 2014 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault> (accessed March 22, 2015)

<sup>133</sup> Ben Smith, Daniel Harari, *Ukraine, Crimea and Russia* Research paper 14/16 House of Commons. Library, issuing body Great Britain 2014, p. 20.

<sup>134</sup> Nadia Alexandrova-Arbatova, “Regional cooperation in the Black Sea area in the context of EU-Russia Relations”. *Athens: The International Centre for Black Sea studies*, April 2008, p. 26.

## 2.2. The Ukrainian Perspective on Crimean Peninsula

This part of the chapter concentrates on Ukrainian point of view on peninsula which is perceived as the integral territorial part of Ukraine, exploring the geopolitical interests and the role of Crimean Tatars in the maintenance of partnership between Turkey and Ukraine. Moreover, focus on the experience of Crimean Tatar community and its relations with Central authority during the Soviet and post-soviet time.

### 2.2.1. Crimea as a part of Ukrainian unitary state

Compared with other regions, specific features of Crimean region make it different from others in many aspects such as special administrative status of peninsula or being the only region in Ukraine that hosts a foreign military base. Another distinctive feature of this region is the ethnic diversity with the large ethnic group of Crimean Tatars. The significance of Crimea to Ukraine concluded not only in the terms of traditional security concerns, but also indicates how Ukrainian government could deal with some challenges which Ukrainian state faced since independence, particularly in case of Crimean region.<sup>135</sup> Despite the fact that Ukraine government didn't have a clear and consistent policy towards the interethnic matters, paradoxically Kiev authorities were able to preserve peace in Crimean region. The key reason was that neither the Crimean Tatar community nor local Crimean government was confident to gain a full support of Kiev. Therefore none of the sides could make claim to the opposite side that Center favors its interests.<sup>136</sup> A successful settlement of Crimean question would increase the prestige of country and show its functional independence.

After the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine's economic and political situation has deteriorated, besides there was a strong secessionist movement in Crimea until the mid-1990s. Because of several reasons such as the lack of a fixed position of Russia

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<sup>135</sup> John(Ivan) Jarowsky, "Crimea's importance to Ukraine and its future security". *Crimea: Dynamics, Challenges, and Prospect*. Washington, D.C.: Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1995, p. 135.

<sup>136</sup> Oxana Shevel, "Crimean Tatars in Ukraine: The politics of inclusion and exclusion" *Analysis of Current Events* Vol.12 №1-2 January/February 2000, p. 9.

towards Crimea, ability of President of Ukraine to deal with this problem and the start of the first Chechen war, which distracted Moscow's attention from Crimea, the problem of secessionism was successfully resolved.

Ukraine's policy has changed from Orange Revolution of 2004. Central government's decisions were not always supported by Simferopol/Akmescit authority. As an example, Ukraine's policy towards NATO during Yushchenko presidency (2004-2010), whereas Crimean residents believed that NATO poses a threat to Ukraine and were against this idea. Another event which determined Ukraine's policy was the conflict of Russia with Georgia. Ukraine's elite didn't want to extend 1997 agreement of BSF mainly because of perceived threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Crimea is the focal point of the geopolitical interests of not only Ukraine and Russia, but also Turkey, the United States and the European Union. Ukraine has geopolitical interests in the Crimea, mainly due to the actual ownership of the peninsula. The fact that geostrategic location of Crimea together with its convenient ports in Sevastopol (Akyar), Feodosia (Kefe) and Kerch (Kerç) means that ownership of it have the control of the Northern Black Sea and Azov Sea region. Ukraine, particularly Crimea is located in the "potential nexus of main links of transportation and communications ties from North to South and East to West."<sup>137</sup> The possession of Crimea positively contributing to the economic growth in Ukraine because of tourism, maritime transportation, potential oil and gas resources in this region, controlling Black Sea shipping and those transit oil and gas pipelines, passing through the bottom of the sea.<sup>138</sup> Besides this, Ukraine signed lease which allows Russia to station Black Sea Fleet, which brings Ukraine certain income.

### 2.2.2. Crimean Tatar perspective

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<sup>137</sup> Jakob Hedenskog, "Black Sea region constitutes a forward stronghold of the European and Global fight against "new" threats" *Ukraine's place and role in the Black Sea region: Expert Opinions* Rezumkov Center, National Security and Defence № 4-5, 2011, p. 51.

<sup>138</sup> Igor Davydov, *The Crimean Tatars and Their Influence on the 'Triangle of Conflict' — Russia-Crimea-Ukraine*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Naval Postgraduate School: Monterey, CA, 2008, pp. 30-32.

Modern problems in multiethnic relations in Crimea are largely determined by the past. Different ethnic groups living on the peninsula have different interpretations of the same historical events. Indigenous people of the peninsula, the Crimean Tatars claim stick with Kiev in their political position about the status of peninsula. Ethnic Greeks believe that first settlers on the peninsula belong to them. In turn, Russians, which currently represent around 60% of the population, argue that the main economic and cultural potential formed on the peninsula during the Russian and later Soviet Crimea.<sup>139</sup>

The Crimean Tatars are the Turkic people, descendants of the Golden Horde and the Crimean Khanate. When Mongols arrived to peninsula in 1222 and captured the city of Sudak at that time, there were already Kipchaks (a Turkic semi-nomadic people) and Goths, who gradually turkified. While Mongols settled there, Kipchak tribes decided to move to the south part of peninsula and started living together with Genoese, Greeks and Venetians living in the coastal region of the peninsula. Later this territory was a part of Golden Horde, a powerful empire, which included several already-existing states. Mass migration of Kipchaks, then soldiers of different tribes of the Mongol khans contributed to widespread Kipchak (Turkic) language among the local population, Islamization of the increasing number of population of the peninsula laid the foundations of the Crimean Tatar community.<sup>140</sup>

The formation of the Crimean Khanate in 1443 and defeat of the Genoese colony by Ottomans caused the growth of Turkic-Muslim impact on the entire population of the peninsula. Over the years, the Crimean Khanate gradually turned into a major international slave market. The main source of income of the state was selling white slaves, to kidnap and release the nobility for ransom and raids on the territory of Poland (*Rzeczpospolita*) and Muscovy. In 15<sup>th</sup> century with the rising power of Moscow, the power of Crimean Khanate started to decline, in order to protect their Khanate, Crimean Tatars got under Turkish suzerainty. However, Crimean sources point out that even if they relied on the Ottomans, the Crimean Khanate possessed all the characteristics of a fully developed, premodern state and emphasized on

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<sup>139</sup> D. Belashenko, I. Ryjov, "Krymsko-tatarskiy vopros: Genezis, istoriya uregulirovaniya I perspektivy resheniya" *Mejdunarodnye otnosheniya.Politologiya.Regionovedenie. Vestnik Nijnegorodskogo universiteta im.N.I.Lobachevskogo*,2012, №4(1), pp. 361-362.

<sup>140</sup> D. Belashenko, I. Ryzhov, *Ibid*, p. 362.

independence, whereas Russian sources name Crimean Khanate as “vassal” of Ottoman Empire for 299 years.<sup>141</sup>

So, in 1783 Empress of Russia Catherine II decisively reduced influence of Turks over Crimea by signing the Kuchuk-Kainarji Treaty, which ended up the suzerainty of Ottomans and made Crimean Khanate independent. After years, Russians annexed the Crimea to the Russian Empire. During the reign of Empress, Crimean lands were distributed to Russian nobles and favorites. Due to the deteriorating economic and living conditions, Crimean Tatars, which constituted about 80 % of inhabitants on peninsula, started emigrating from peninsula to Ottoman lands.<sup>142</sup>

Due to the fact that Crimean Tatars and Turks are descendants of the same roots and they are culturally similar, they could get along easier even when Crimean Khanate was under Ottoman suzerainty. But with the loss of sovereignty to Russian Empire, Crimean Tatars negatively reacted on this, due to historical fights, different way of lives.

During the October Revolution of 1917, Crimean peninsula was a scene of fighting between the Bolsheviks, White Army, and nationalist Tatars. Eventually, the White Russian Army was defeated by the Red Army and Bolsheviks took control of the Crimean region in 1920. The following year, peninsula became a part of USSR and renamed as Crimean Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of the Russian SFSR with official Tatar and Russian languages in 1921. With the victory of Bolsheviks and creation of Crimean ASSR in 1921 after the Bela Kun (Hungarian revolutionary) terror, Crimean Tatars promised full support of Soviet government in response of fulfillment of the Crimean Tatars’ requirements. By analyzing Alan Fisher’s work, we could say that despite that promises which were issued in proclamations by Soviets, virtually government didn’t reflect Tatars’ interests.<sup>143</sup>

By 1920, USSR’s territory was struck by famine. The famine didn’t bypass Crimea as well, even more; peninsula suffered from starvation more because Soviet

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<sup>141</sup> D. Belashenko, I. Ryjov, “Krymsko-tatarskiy vopros: Genezis, istoriya uregulirovaniya I perspektivy resheniya” *Mejdunarodnye otnosheniya.Politologiya.Regionovedenie. Vestnik Nijnegorodskogo universiteta im.N.I.Lobachevskogo*,2012, №4(1), p. 362.

<sup>142</sup> D. Belashenko, I. Ryzhov, *Ibid*, pp. 361-363.

<sup>143</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, p.136 quoted from Borys Lewytzkij *The uses of terror. The Soviet secret police 1917—1970*. New York, pp. 42-43.

government shipped Crimean foodstuffs “to the “more important” central regions to ease the effect of famine.”<sup>144</sup>

Peninsula’s population decreased by more than 21 % because of the famine, part of them moved to other states, part of them died of starvation and diseases. Many industrial manufacturers were closed because of lack of fuel and raw materials. The prices for food were bumped up. According to the report of Kalinin in newspaper *Izvestia* which was mentioned in Alan Fisher’s book, by February 1922 the number of starving people extended to 302.000 people, whereas 14.413 of them has died. In March this amount of starving people has increased to 379.000, where 19.902 died.<sup>145</sup> In order to recover from the famine and prevent economic deterioration, the Bolshevik government under Lenin adopted a new course New Economic Policy (N.E.P) which was implemented by Lenin. The main objectives of this policy was to overcome the devastation of the country, create a foundation of socialism through free market, tax for food called *prodnalog* and so on. Veli Ibrahimov (Crimean Tatar Bolshevik) was in charge of the reconstruction and implementing of NEP policy in Crimea. Thanks to him Crimean Tatars participated in all levels of government of Crimean ASSR, lands were returned back to the former landowners, all Crimean Tatars who fled from country granted amnesty, also pursued Tatarization policy in Crimea by reopening national schools, museums, which later led to the creation of Crimean Tatar national intelligentsia.<sup>146</sup> With Stalin as the new leader of Party in 1924, NEP policy has started to change. Veli Ibrahimov was accused as a bourgeois nationalist and executed in May 1928. Stalin’s policy was directed for the Sovietization of peoples in cultural area, in case with Crimean Tatars - Latin alphabet was replaced with the Cyrillic, decreasing of publishing editorials in Tatar language.<sup>147</sup>

The root of the problem which Crimean Tatars are facing now and still have repercussion goes back to May 1944. During the World War II when German Army attacked the Crimean region and occupied peninsula for three years, Crimean Tatars

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<sup>144</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, p.136 quoted from Borys Lewytkyj *The uses of terror. The Soviet secret police 1917—1970*. New York, p. 43.

<sup>145</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, pp. 137-138.

<sup>146</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, pp. 138-140.

<sup>147</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, pp. 140-142.

were under Nazis. There were two reasons which make Germans to control the Crimean peninsula. One of them was to guarantee the control over Ukraine from the south. Second one was to prevent Soviets' attack to Romanian oil fields because they had aircrafts on Crimean territory.<sup>148</sup>

On 18 of May 1944 by Stalin's order all Crimean Tatars were deported with the accusation of the collaboration with Nazis during World War II. The whole nation was declared as traitors, despite the fact that there were many Crimean Tatars who were on Soviet side and fought against of Nazi regime and were awarded with orders and medals of the USSR. 18 the of May 1944, in early morning, NKVD officers came to Crimean Tatars' homes and gave them 15 minutes to pack their belongings. Hundreds of thousands of Tatar families were loaded into freight wagons and deported to Ural and Soviet Central Asia, particularly to Uzbekistan. During one night around 191.000 people including women, children and elder left their home.<sup>149</sup>

The conditions while riding on cattle trains was very severe, people were hungry, lack of water as a result people were ill and died. According to NKVD estimates, 22 percent of deported Crimean Tatars died *en route* and in the first months, whereas Tatar figures claim 46 percent of the deported population had lost their lives.<sup>150</sup>

The condition of living for new settlers was very poor, people were hungry, lack of food and water caused illnesses, because of these reasons many Crimean Tatars died, corpses were not allowed to be buried, they were tossed out to be eaten by wolves and vultures.<sup>151</sup>

According to scholars Wimbush and Wixman the main reasons why Turkic nations including Crimean Tatars were deported in 1940s lay in the fact that foreign policy of Stalin and his strong claims about establishing military and naval base on the Turkish Straits and interest in the northeastern Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan. Thus, Wimbush and Wixman believed that by doing this act "Stalin would

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<sup>148</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, pp. 151-153.

<sup>149</sup> Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, p. 170.

<sup>151</sup> Greta Lynn Uehling, *Ibid*, pp. 82-83.

be sure that no fifth column of Turkic nations would stand in the way of such pressure".<sup>152</sup>

During the repression times, Crimean Tatars were not allowed to leave isolated villages so called special settlements in Central Asia. They were obliged to register in local NKVD office every two weeks. The Soviet government prohibited to issue the publications on Crimean Tatar language from 1944 until 1957.<sup>153</sup>

Only during N. Khrushchev period, right after Stalin's death, Crimean Tatars started to fight for their national and civil rights. By April 1956 restrictions which were applied towards Crimean Tatars were partially lifted. This decree wasn't published anywhere, but as scholars assume that this decree allowed Crimean Tatars at least in theory to move freely in Soviet Union. However some parts of 1944 decree were still exist as "property of the Crimean Tatars confiscated at the time of their deportation will not be returned, and they do not have the right to return to the Crimea".<sup>154</sup>

With the rights to publish their own newspaper in their own language, Crimean Tatars got chance to start organizational activities directed on gaining both the right to return back to homeland and national rehabilitation. The first attempt was happened in June 1957, when Crimean Tatars sent a petition with 6.000 signatures to the Supreme Soviet asked for rehabilitation. Besides this petition, during next four years there were many more with over 25.000 signatures. In response, Soviet government conducted several trials for anti-Soviet propaganda and giving long jail sentences.<sup>155</sup>

Since the early 1960s Crimean Tatar families were trying to settle back in Crimea but they were expelled back. People's appeals to the central and local authorities on returning back to Crimea and restoration of justice remained unanswered. As a consequence, Organization of the Crimean Tatar National

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<sup>152</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications 1978 p. 169 quoted from Wimbush Ender and Ronald Wixman. "The Meskhetian Turks: A New Voice in Soviet Central Asia", *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* Vol. 17, No. 2/3, Russian and Soviet Central Asia, Summer and Fall, 1975, pp. 320-340.

<sup>153</sup> Otto J Pohl, *The Deportation and Fate of the Crimean Tatars*, International Committee for Crimea [http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/jopohl.html#\\_ftn26](http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/jopohl.html#_ftn26) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>154</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars: Studies of Nationalities in the USSR*, Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1978, p. 174.

<sup>155</sup> Alan W. Fisher, *Ibid*, p. 176.

Movement was established in 1989, the purpose of which is to secure the return of Crimean Tatars to their historic homeland and rebuild national statehood.<sup>156</sup>

But the right to return back to their motherland, Crimean Tatars obtained only on 1989 when Supreme Soviet adopted an act regarding the repatriation of the Crimean Tatars. The repatriation of Crimean Tatars to their homeland caused political, economic and social changes. According to the 1995 census, the Crimean Tatar population of peninsula increased from 38 thousand to 260 thousand during the period of 1989 to 1995.<sup>157</sup> The significant challenges which the Crimean Tatars faced after repatriation were mass unemployment; many immigrants have experienced great financial difficulties, problems with allocating lands for building housing. Finally, the general deterioration of the economic situation in the country at the end of 1980s should also be remembered. Still scholars pay a lot of attention on these above listed challenges as deterioration of the social-economic situation and inter-ethnic relations, redistribution of land which are still exist and being the sources of potential conflict.

It should be noted that the position of the Crimean Tatar diaspora in relation to Ukraine every time was very supportive and friendly, especially during the pro-Russian Crimean separatism in 1990s. In the collective memory which has been preserved there were not anything hostile against Ukraine and Ukrainians, and even Crimean Tatar publications indicate quite warm approaches to the Ukrainians who have experienced the same sufferings in their history *vis-a-vis* Russians.

Besides this, Crimean Tatar community was one of the factor which brought Turkey and Ukraine closer. The common history of the Crimean Tatar-Turkish relations last for about 600 years. Over the next centuries Crimeans stayed with the Turks in uninterrupted military-political and religious-cultural alliance. Therefore, Turkish culture has had a significant impact on the Crimean Tatars. The Crimean peninsula, have strategically important position, that is why this region have been a matter of contention between the Ottoman and Russian Empires. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Empire caused mass emigration of Crimean Tatars to the Ottoman Empire. Currently the largest Crimean Tatar diaspora lives in Turkey.

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<sup>156</sup> Venera Yakupova , *Krymskie Tatary, ili privet ot Stalina*, Kazan: Tatpoligraf, 2001, p. 70.

<sup>157</sup> İsmail Aydingün, and Ayşegül Aydingün “Crimean Tatars Return Home: Identity and Cultural Revival” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 33 (2007), 1, p. 113-128.

Representatives of the Crimean Tatar diaspora live in almost all parts of Turkey from Edirne in the west by ending at Diyarbakir in the east.<sup>158</sup>

The Republic of Turkey was one of the largest trading partners of the Crimea. Thus, according to the Consul General of the Republic of Turkey in Odessa, Huseyin Ergani “Crimea plays a significant role in the relations between Ukraine and Turkey due to its investment potential, the presence of a well-developed road infrastructure, geographic location. We also consider Crimea as a bridge of friendship between Turkey and Ukraine.”<sup>159</sup>

Given the important role of Ukraine in the maintenance of stability in the Black Sea region, Turkey attaches great importance to its relations with this country and has the desire to develop cooperation in all areas. Strengthening bilateral cooperation and deepening the relations between Turkey and Ukraine has a positive effect on the economic growth of these countries. Since both countries are in need of new markets, it became obvious that Turkey and Ukraine are more significant on the strategic partnership level. For Turkey, Ukraine, with its market size, convenient geographical location, open economy and the labor market - an attractive country in terms of investment and improvement of regional relations.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Habibe Ozdal, and Viktoriia Demydova. “Turkey-Ukrainian Relations: high potential, low voltage” *International Strategic Research Organization USAK Policy Brief No: 3*. Ankara: December 2011, pp. 36-37.

<sup>159</sup> Aliye Bekir, “Crimea a priority region for Turkish business” *QHA Crimean News Agency*, 5 September 2012 <http://qha.com.ua/crimea-a-priority-region-for-turkish-business-116324en.html> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>160</sup> Togrul Ismail, “Politika po otnosheniyu k Krymu: most drujby mejdu Turtsiesy I Ukrainoy” (1991-2011g) *Analiticheskiy doklad Crimea policy dialogue* Ankara: 2011, [http://cpd.crimea.ua/pdf/1.%20Togrul\\_rus\\_final\\_CA.pdf](http://cpd.crimea.ua/pdf/1.%20Togrul_rus_final_CA.pdf) (accessed May 25, 2015)

## CHAPTER THREE

### ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

#### 3.1. “Revolution” 2014 in Ukraine and Events Leading to the Referendum

This chapter will analyze the roots of Euromaidan Revolution 2013 and the consequences of the Ukrainian political crises. In addition, will focus on the political diversity of Ukraine and discuss how the Ukrainian crises affected on Crimean peninsula and relations with Russian Federation. This section will also study the situation and life of Crimean people after the annexation by Russia and consider what measures international community took in response to the Russia’s actions.

##### 3.1.1. The origins of the Ukraine political crisis

Ukrainian crisis was predated by the competition between the European Union and Russia for the geo-economic orientation of Ukraine. From one side, after the breakup of the bipolar system, the EU started to enlarge their borders by accepting new states into their organization. Thus, such countries as Bulgaria and Romania, who were not totally ready for being accepted, became a part of European Union. Later, EU developed the program “Eastern Partnership” in 2009 aimed on political and economic association with Ukraine and other five post-soviet countries. From another side, Russia tried to attract Ukraine into their project of Customs Union, which would give Russia certain economic benefits. Therefore both actors saw Ukraine as a significant actor in their projects.<sup>161</sup>

However, Russian side was trying to find a possibility for Ukraine to associate in both organizations, whereas the EU was totally against and rejected the idea of negotiations regarding the association of Ukraine with other third countries. Ukraine itself, which was ruled by pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich was maneuvering between Russia and EU by finding better conditions and deal.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Dmitriy Trenin, “Ukrainskiy krizis I vozobnovlenie velikoderzhavnogo sopernichestva” *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 15 October 2014, <http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=56935> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>162</sup> Dmitriy Trenin, “The Ukraine Crisis and the resumption of Great-power rivalry” *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 9 July 2014, <http://carnegie.ru/2014/07/09/ukraine-crisis-and-resumption-of-great-power-rivalry/hglh#> (accessed May 25, 2015)

During his presidency, he raised big hopes for the EU link in people's mind, on which he was ostensibly working. Meantime, Yanukovich had to take into account the pressure from Russia.

In November 2013, Ukraine was plunged into a political crisis that quickly escalated into an armed conflict within the country of supporters and opponents of the Association Agreement with the EU and occupied the world's attention to Ukraine. The agreement is aimed mainly at changing the terms of trade - its full liberalization between the EU and Ukraine. But in order to achieve this agreement first Ukraine should change its system to European standards through investments of around 160 billion euros.<sup>163</sup> According to the agreement the EU doesn't provide such financial assistance.

Moreover, in the context of economic stagnation, high standard of living and poverty, which force people to go abroad in search of work inevitably created violent and increasingly desperate discontent of citizens. Under Yanukovich, as noted by Ukrainian researchers, corruption became rampant. Buying bureaucratic posts and parliamentary seats has become a common practice. Moreover, the president and his family began rapidly hold office in the most profitable areas of economic activity, as well as law enforcement agencies, tax services and judicial system. Ukrainians only desperately hoped on EU agreements, that it would somehow help Ukraine to solve its problems.<sup>164</sup>

In general, the credibility of the government, its people and institutions were at the low level in the beginning of 2014: 81 % of the population didn't trust to the Parliament, 75% to the government, 77% to the police, courts – 80%, Yanukovich – 66%.<sup>165</sup>

As key catalyst, which transformed the civil discontent into the active political protest, has played the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. Obviously, majority of Ukrainian citizens supported this idea of integration

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<sup>163</sup> "Ukraine dlya perehoda k standartam ES nujno 160 mlrd euro- Azarov", *Gazeta.ua* 09.11.2013 [http://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/economics/\\_ukraine-dlya-perehoda-k-standartam-es-nuzhno-160-mlrd-evrozarov/525292](http://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/economics/_ukraine-dlya-perehoda-k-standartam-es-nuzhno-160-mlrd-evrozarov/525292) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>164</sup> Tatyana Vorojeikina, "Ukraina:neutrachennye illyuzii", *Pro et Contra* Vol.18 №3-4 Moscow: May-August 2014, pp. 8-9.

<sup>165</sup> Ekaterina Lysenko, "Paniotto V. "Vlast' I seychas imeet vozmojnost' prekratit' nastuplenie I prodolzhit' peregovory" Interv'yu gazeta *Ekonomicheskie izvestiya*, 20.02.2014. <http://politika.eizvestia.com/full/835-vladimir-paniotto-vlast-i-sejchas-imeet-vozmozhnost-prekratit-nastuplenie-i-prodolzhit-peregovory> (accessed May 25, 2015)

with EU, because rapprochement with the EU for these people was the only way of gradual establishment of transparent political and economic institutions in Ukraine that are accountable to the public interest, not oligarchic clans. At the same time, for the inhabitants of Central and especially the Western regions of Ukraine, association agreement with the EU and, in particular, the simplification of visa regime for Ukrainians would be the opportunity to improve their current economic situation. On the contrary, for the population of the industrial regions of the South, and especially Eastern Ukraine were against of this idea of curtailment of economic ties with Russia.<sup>166</sup>

It is necessary to take into account the fact of the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of Ukrainian society. The identity and political attitudes of citizens of Ukraine were mainly different based on the region of residence. The Western and Central part of Ukraine has historically focused on the West, while the Eastern and Southern regions for ages have been associated themselves with Russia and maintain the orientation towards Russia.<sup>167</sup> As evidence, political border between East and West was clearly manifested during the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2010, where Western region voted for Yulia Tymoshenko, Eastern part of Ukraine voted for Viktor Yanukovich.<sup>168</sup>

On November 21, 2013, President of Ukraine announced that Ukraine suspends the process leading to the signing of an association agreement with the EU, turning to the Russia instead. In response, he received generous economic and financial aid of 15 billion dollars from President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. This decision was the trigger for the start of the mass protest movement that three months later led to the overthrow of the regime of Yanukovich.

The decision of November 2013 led to massive protests in the city center, where most of the demonstrators were ordinary people who suffered from poverty and

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<sup>166</sup> Tatyana Vorozheikina, "Ukraina: neutrachennye illyuzii" *Pro et Contra* Vol.18 №3-4 Moscow: May-August 2014, pp. 9-10.

<sup>167</sup> Vladimir Fesenko, "Krizis v Ukraine v vospriyatii Ukraintsev" *Pro et Contra* Vol.18 №3-4 Moscow: May-August 2014, p. 26.

<sup>168</sup> *Ukraina: predposylki krizisa I stsenarii budushego*, Mezhdunarodnyy diskussionny klub "Valday" Moscow" September 2014 [http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/ukraine\\_rus.pdf](http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/ukraine_rus.pdf) (accessed May 25, 2015)

extremely exasperated by corruption in the government.<sup>169</sup> Tens of thousands of supporters of European integration, mainly young people, students, middle class citizens came to rally in *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square), hoping that President will change his mind and sign the EU agreement.

But in the night of November 30<sup>th</sup>, several hundred Special Forces soldiers of *Berkut* attacked protesters on Independence Square. They not only drove out them from the area, but protesters were beaten with batons. The massacre of students, video which was shown by television channels and distributed on the Internet caused widespread outrage. On the next day half a million protesters with the leaders of the opposition parties - Yatsenyuk from *Batkivshchyna* party, Vitali Klitschko - *Udar*, Oleg Tyagnibok - *Svoboda* gathered in Maidan. People demanded to end the repression, to punish those responsible for the beatings and release the arrested.<sup>170</sup>

According to the survey of participants of Maidan on 7-8 December 2013 by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, the main reasons which made people to participate in demonstration on Maidan were: a) Severe beating of students on the night of November 30 – 69.6%, b) the refusal of Yanukovich to sign an association with the EU -53.5%, c) The desire to change life in Ukraine -49.9% d) The desire to change the power in Ukraine -39.1% .<sup>171</sup>

Later, another indiscriminate shooting of the protestors by snipers on the Independence Square on February 20, 2014 killed at least 88 people.<sup>172</sup> The opposition and the government signed an agreement intended to immediately stop the violence. Therefore, on February 21, the agreement "On the settlement of the political crisis in Ukraine" was signed between Yanukovich and the leaders of

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<sup>169</sup> Dmitri Trenin “ The Ukraine Crisis and the resumption of the Great-power rivalry” *Carnegie Moscow Center* Moscow: 30 July 2014 [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ukraine\\_great\\_power\\_rivalry2014.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ukraine_great_power_rivalry2014.pdf) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>170</sup> Tatyana Vorobeikina, “Ukraina: neutrachennye illyuzii” *Pro et Contra* Vol.18 №3-4 Moscow: May-August 2014, pp. 10-11.

<sup>171</sup> Survey of Maidan participants (7th (Saturday) and 8th (Sunday) of December) by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 1037 respondents <http://www.dif.org.ua/en/events/gvkrigkaeths.htm> (accessed May 8, 2015)

<sup>172</sup> “Timeline: Ukraine's political crisis”, *Aljazeera News*, 20.09.2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/03/timeline-ukraine-political-crisis-201431143722854652.html> (accessed May 25, 2015)

opposition under the mediation of the Foreign Ministers of three European countries – Poland, Germany, France and Russia.<sup>173</sup>

The agreement signified Yanukovich's acceptance of the demands of anti-government protestors as restoration of the 2004 Constitution of Ukraine which strictly limited the presidential powers. It also included: conducting of early presidential elections before the end of 2014; the withdrawal of Ministry of Internal Affairs' troops and special police from the center of Kiev and the disarmament of the opposition; release of Yulia Tymoshenko from prison; amnesty for all the detained protestors.<sup>174</sup>

However, although Yanukovich agreed on all conditions and signed this agreement, the opposition forces didn't stop protests. Next day, Yanukovich secretly left Ukraine. Meanwhile, *Verkhovna Rada* has voted to oust Viktor Yanukovich from office, changed Constitution, appointed Alexander Turchynov from *Batkivschina* party to fulfill the duties of head of state and scheduled new election for May 25, 2014.<sup>175</sup>

As a result of the political crisis of the winter and spring of 2014, triggered by the incompetent policy of Viktor Yanukovich, ended with *coup d'état*. The EU and the US immediately recognized the new government in Kiev as a legitimate one. Russian President V. Putin didn't recognize the new Ukrainian government and called the events in Kiev on February 22 as an "anti-constitutional coup and the armed seizure of power."<sup>176</sup>

However, at the conference in Rostov-on-Don on February 28<sup>th</sup>, Viktor Yanukovich said that he was forced to leave Ukraine because of the threat of physical violence to his live and lives of his family and remains as legitimate head of state, elected by the free will of Ukrainian citizens.<sup>177</sup> The international community was divided into two: some supported the opposition, the so-called "conductors of

<sup>173</sup> Sergey Salushev, "Annexation of Crimea: Causes, Analysis and Global Implications" *Global Societies Journal*, Vol. 2(0), 2014 pp. 41-42 <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5vb3n9tc> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>174</sup> Sergey Salushev, *Ibid*, p. 42 <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5vb3n9tc> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>175</sup> Marina Vyskub, "Ukrainskiy politicheskiy krizis: mejdu Zapadom I Rossiey", *Informatsionno-analiticheskoe izdanie Geopolitika Ukraina. Coup d'état Vypusk XXIII*, Moscow :2014, pp. 84-85.

<sup>176</sup> "Putin: Na Ukraine proizoshel antikonstitutsionnyy perevorot i voorujenny zahvat vlasti", 4 March 2014, *Informtsionnoe Agenstvo Rossii Tass* <http://tass.ru/politika/1019864> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>177</sup> White book on violations of human rights and the rule of law in Ukraine (November 2013-March 2014) *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, Moscow: April 2014 p. 15 [http://www.turkey.mid.ru/White\\_book.pdf](http://www.turkey.mid.ru/White_book.pdf) (accessed May 25, 2015)

democracy"; some others called them Nazis, guided and sponsored by the "West". There was a threat of a split in Ukraine on pro-European West and pro-Russian East.

Later, the *Verkhovna Rada* has abolished the 2012 law "On State Language Policy", which was providing Russian language the status of regional language in some areas of the country.<sup>178</sup> In response to the international and domestic criticism, acting President of Ukraine Aleksandr Turchinov didn't approve it and ordered the Ukrainian parliament to urgently draft a new language bill. When Ukrainian Parliament ousted V. Yanukovych from power on February 23, 2014, Russia started concerning about its own interests in this region and intervened into Ukrainian affairs via Crimea.<sup>179</sup>

On February 2014, pro-Russian inhabitants of Crimea began the protest in front of the Supreme Council. Protesters demanded not to recognize the new leadership of the country, as well as to restore the constitution of the Crimea of 1992; according to which the republic has its own president and an independent foreign policy. In response, Crimean Tatars also held the demonstrations in front of the Parliament supporting the change of power in Kyiv.<sup>180</sup>

On February 23, a demonstration of few thousand people, organized by Pro-Russian radical organization *Russian Front* gathered in Sevastopol city and ousted the mayor of city and appointed a Russian citizen Aleksei Chaly, as the new mayor. The demonstrators demanded to separate from Ukraine and be a part of Russia.<sup>181</sup>

Meanwhile, on February 26 two groups of demonstrators gathered in the square in front of the Supreme Council of Crimea: the pro-Ukrainian Crimean Tatars and the pro-Russian activists under the head of *Russian Unity* Sergei Aksenov.<sup>182</sup> According to the member of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people and the former head of Bakhchisaray district Ilmi Umer "We came to defend our country. The session of the Supreme Council, according to our information, was going to take

<sup>178</sup> Canceled language law in Ukraine sparks concern among Russian and EU diplomat, *Russia Today News* 27.02.2014 <http://rt.com/news/minority-language-law-ukraine-035/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>179</sup> Muhammed Kocak "Crimea and the Crimean Tatars after annexation by Russia" *SETA Perspective* № 9, June 2014.

<sup>180</sup> "Facts you need to know about Crimea and why it is in turmoil" *RT News* 09.03.2014 <http://rt.com/news/crimea-facts-protests-politics-945/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>181</sup> Wojciech Konończuk, "Russia's real aims in Crimea", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 13.03.2014 <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/13/russia-s-real-aims-in-crimea> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>182</sup> Natalya Galimova, "My idem v Rossiyu. Kak-ne znayu" *Gazeta.ru* [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/03/11\\_a\\_6503589.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/03/11_a_6503589.shtml) (accessed May 25, 2015)

separatist solution: an appeal to Putin to accept Crimea into Russian Federation and held the referendum."<sup>183</sup> As a result, the session of Supreme Soviet was impeded by mass protests of Crimean Tatars and everyone returned back home. Refat Chubarov, the newly elected head of the Mejlis, stated that "Today Crimea won"; but he obviously couldn't predict what the coming night was going to bring.<sup>184</sup>

On the next day in the early morning of February 27<sup>th</sup>, the Crimean Parliament in Simferopol/Akmescit together with the building of Council of Ministers were occupied by armed men in masks with Kalashnikov and bags of ammunition.<sup>185</sup> At that time, President of Russian Federation claimed that these troops didn't belong to Russian military forces, but were organized by only "local self-defense forces". However, in April 2014 Putin admitted the presence of Russian Special Forces in Crimea in order to protect local people and create conditions for a referendum.<sup>186</sup>

The "unidentified" gunmen, who were wearing orange and black ribbon as a symbol of anti-Maidan protests, prevented anybody from entering the buildings. In the meantime, Crimean legislature again held extraordinary session, where the chairman of the Crimean Council of Ministers Anatoly Mogilev was dismissed from his post and replaced by head of the party Russian Unity Sergei Aksenov, who was later appointed as new Prime Minister of Crimea. Besides, the parliament decided to organize a referendum for the peninsula's sovereignty of Crimea on May, 25.<sup>187</sup>

On March 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, Crimean Prime Minister Sergei Aksenov appealed to the President of Russian Federation with a request for assistance in ensuring peace and stability in the peninsula. On the same day, Russian President Vladimir Putin

<sup>183</sup>Natalya Galimova, "My idem v Rossiyu. Kak -ne znayu" *Gazeta.ru* [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/03/11\\_a\\_6503589.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/03/11_a_6503589.shtml) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>184</sup> Idil P. Izmirlı, "Overnight Crimean Crisis Hits Stalemate" *The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 11 Issue: 39, 28 February 2014.

<sup>185</sup> "V zahvachennoe zdanie parlamenta Kryma vnesli avtomaty Kalashnikova, snayperskie vintovki i granatomy-ochevidets" *Korrespondent.net* 27 February 2014. <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3312031-v-zakhvachennoe-zdanye-parlamenta-kryma-vnesly-avtomaty-kalashnykova-snaiperskye-vyntovky-y-hranatomy-ochevydets> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>186</sup> "Pryamaya liniya s Prezidentom 17 aprelya. Putin: "zelenye chelovechki" v Krymu-eto rossiyskie voenye." *Piter.TV* 17 April 2014 <http://piter.tv/event/Pryamaya liniya s Putinim Krim/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>187</sup> Idil P. Izmirlı, "Overnight Crimean Crisis Hits Stalemate" *The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 11 Issue: 39, 28 February 2014 [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5Bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5D=crimea&tx\\_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=26&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=42028&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=a55213695018f2ae0a277c1dea066414#.V\\_RB\\_W\\_msWos](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=crimea&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=26&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42028&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=a55213695018f2ae0a277c1dea066414#.V_RB_W_msWos) (accessed May 25, 2015)

“submitted an appeal to the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation to use the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine until the social and political situation in that country is normalized”<sup>188</sup>. In response, President Putin got Federation Council’s permission to use force across Ukraine in order to protect Russian interests and Russian speakers in Ukraine.<sup>189</sup>

At that time, according to the *Blackseanews*, the total number of troops Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Crimea, particularly in Sevastopol was about 14 thousand men.<sup>190</sup>

Apart from it, on the night of February 28, the main airport of Simferopol/Akmescit was seized by the very same men in uniform “without any markings”. Deputy Chairman of the party *Russian Unity* Dmitry Polonsky told Ukrainian service of BBC that it was "self-defense militias", formed in Crimea on 23 February. However, Kiev politicians saw that Russia is directly involved in this activity in the Crimea.<sup>191</sup> Despite the presence of Russian troops in Crimean territory, from both Russian bases in peninsula and elsewhere, no armed clashes have been reported. Russian soldiers have sieged Ukrainian military bases in Crimea, and controlled the land border with the rest of Ukraine.<sup>192</sup> This led to tensions between the Western countries and the Russian Federation.

On March 6, the Supreme Council of Crimea appealed to the President of Russia to assist in ensuring peace and stability in the peninsula and enable the integration of Crimean republic into the Russian Federation as its subject and re-scheduled the referendum on March 16. On the same day the Council of Sevastopol city passed a resolution to participate in the Crimean referendum. The Russian-controlled Supreme Council of Crimea has formed its own Ministries and the Prosecutor's Office,

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<sup>188</sup> “Vladimir Putin submitted appeal to the Federation Council” *Prezident Rossii* 01 March 2014 <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6751> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>189</sup> “Sovet Federatsii razreshil Putinu vvesti voyska na Ukrainu” , *Lenta.ru* 1 March 2014 <http://lenta.ru/news/2014/03/01/sovfed/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>190</sup> “Korabli CHF RF privezli v Sevastopol 11 tysyach desantnikov” *Krymskaya Slujba Novostey Novosti Kryma*, 26 February 2014, <http://news.allcrimea.net/news/2014/2/26/korabli-chf-rf-privezli-v-sevastopol-11-tysyach-desantnikov-5856/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>191</sup> Marina Vyskub, “Ukrainskiy politicheskiy krizis: mejdu Zapadom I Rossiey”, *Informatsionno-analiticheskoe izdanie Geopolitika Ukraina. Coup d’état* Vypusk XXIII, Moscow: 2014, p.85.

<sup>192</sup> John Drennan “Crisis in Ukraine” *International Institute for Strategic Studies* 03.03.2014 <http://www.iiss.org/en/regions/ukraine/ukraine-russias-reversal-0aee> (accessed May 25, 2015)

Security, Protection Departments, Customs and other agencies.<sup>193</sup> Crimean Tatars immediately refused to accept this resolution.

The Russian-controlled Supreme Council of Crimea and Sevastopol city announced a joint resolution on the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Crimea, which was adopted on 11th of March. This document specified that Crimea will be an independent state if its citizens vote in favor of joining Russia in the referendum on Sunday.<sup>194</sup>

### 3.1.2. Referendum

On March 16, 2014 Autonomous Republic of Crimea held a referendum on the status of Crimea. There were two questions on the ballot list. First choice was "Are you in favor of Crimea being united with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation?" The second choice was about Crimea which will remain as a part of Ukraine with a minor change to its status: "Are you in favor of reinstating the 1992 version of the Crimean Republic's constitution and of Crimea's status as a part of Ukraine?"<sup>195</sup> Second question was referring to the Constitution which granted Crimean peninsula a broadly autonomous status. Thus, voters could mark only one option, but there wasn't any option to vote for the *status quo*, which would be supported by the majority of native Crimean Tatars.

The referendum took place in the absence of observers from the UN, OSCE, EU and even CIS. According to the official figures, with a turnout of 83.1% of the voters of the ARC, about 96.77% of them voted for annexation of Crimea by Russia, whereas in Sevastopol, respectively, 89.5% and 95.6%.<sup>196</sup> Such high numbers of voters aroused suspicion, especially among journalists and experts. Most of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians boycotted referendum and didn't go to vote, which is according to the 2001 census year - 36.4% of the population of Crimea. Thus, the

<sup>193</sup> "Istoriya vossoedineniya Kryma s Rossiey", *Informatsionnoe Agenstvo Rossii Tass*, 11 March 2015 <http://tass.ru/info/1818590> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>194</sup> "Crimea's parliament pushes for independence", *Mail Online*, 11 March 2014 <http://dailym.ai/1i9uV6f> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>195</sup> Andreas Brenner "Referendum day in Crimea's Simferopol" *Deutsche Welle* 16.03.2014 <http://www.dw.com/en/referendum-day-in-crimeas-simferopol/a-17500378> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>196</sup> Kirill Mihaylov "Hozhdenie v Tavridu" №8 (359) *Moscow The News Time*, 16 March 2015, p. 12. <http://www.newtimes.ru/upload/pdf/FreePDF.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2015)

experts of Committee of Voters of Ukraine argue that even mathematically they cannot get a turnout of 83.1%. Besides it, in early February 2014 the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology measured sentiment mood in Crimea. Results have shown that only 41% of respondents supported the idea of association between Ukraine and Russia into one state.<sup>197</sup>

The next day, March 17, the Supreme Council of Crimea adopted a resolution declaring Crimea as an independent sovereign state. In the same document, there was contained an appeal to the Russian Federation for the adoption of Crimea into the Russian Federation as a new entity with the status of the republic. In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree “recognizing the Republic of Crimea as a sovereign and independent state”.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, Crimea’s accession into Russian Federation would bring to Russians two distinct territorial units. First one was the Crimean Autonomous Republic and second was the municipality of Sevastopol, which was during the Ukrainian rule directly under Kiev, not under the peninsula’s government. Therefore, when the Council of Sevastopol city petitioned Putin for Sevastopol’s admission on March 17, it asked to admit Sevastopol into Russian Federation with the status of a federal city.<sup>199</sup>

However, the annexation of Crimea showed a sharp change in the course of Moscow's policy from non-interference to the active intervention that challenged and contained the entire international community. This particularly happened, because the Russian leadership was ensured that the failure of the agreements dated February 21, 2014, was backed by the West in order to establish a loyal government in Kiev with extreme right-wing political views. This would cancel the agreement on the deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, quickly provide membership to Ukraine at the EU and NATO, to suppress the Russian-speaking population and to legitimize the change of power.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Kirill Mihaylov “Hozhdenie v Tavridu,” №8 (359) Moscow *The News Time*, 16 March 2015, p. 12. <http://www.newtimes.ru/upload/pdf/FreePDF.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>198</sup> “Istoriya vossoedineniya Kryma s Rossiey,” 11 March 2015 *Informatsionnoe agentstvo Rossii TASS* <http://tass.ru/info/1818590> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>199</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Russia completes the annexation of Crimea,” *The Jamestown foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 11 Issue: 52; 19 March 2014 (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>200</sup> Samuel Charap and Keith Darden, “Russia’s unclear motives in Ukraine” 03.03.2014, *International Institute for Strategic Studies* <http://www.iiss.org/en/politics%20and%20strategy/blogsections/2014-d2de/february-1d08/ukraine-russia-088f> (accessed March 22, 2015)

The referendum of 16<sup>th</sup> of March was contrary to the norms of referenda and Constitution of Ukraine in several points: first, the lack of time for the possibility for free public discussion of the ramifications of a vote to secede; second absence of the option to vote for the *status quo*. Moreover, referendum was held in the presence of the watchful eyes of Russian troops, instead of internationally recognized agencies. According to the Idil P. Izmirli and other scholars, who are stated in their open letter signed by 239 scholars throughout the world, the referendum in Crimea was null and void because of above mentioned reasons.<sup>201 202</sup>

On March 18, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Crimea Sergey Aksenov, chairman of the State Council of Crimea Vladimir Konstantinov and Chairman of the Coordinating Council for the establishment of the Sevastopol municipal administration Alexey Chaly signed an agreement on the accession of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation. The “Treaty on the Admission of the Republic of Crimea and the Formation of New Constituent Units within the Russian Federation” (18 March, 2014) established the Crimean Republic and the city of Sevastopol as federal units within Russia.<sup>203</sup> This was signed right after Putin’s speech in Parliament. Ukraine, the United States, the European Union did not recognize the independence of the Crimea and its joining to Russia. In addition, the Western countries applied sanctions against Russia. These include restrictions of access for Russian banks to EU and US financial markets, bans on military and “dual use” goods as well as travel restrictions for individuals close to the Russian government.<sup>204</sup>

### 3.1.3. Crimea: one year after annexation

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<sup>201</sup> Idil P. Izmirli, Victor Ostapchuk, András Riedlmayer and Maria Sonevytsky, “Statement of Concerned Scholars Regarding the Current Predicament of the Crimean Tatars” <http://scholarsforqirim.com/in-english/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>202</sup> Filiz Tutku Aydin, “Crimean Tatars and Russia’s annexation of Crimea” *Turkish policy Quarterly* Vol. 13, № 3, Fall 2014, p. 86.

<sup>203</sup> Vladimir Socor “ Russia Completes the Annexation of Crimea” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 11, Issue: 52, 19 March 2014. [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=42111&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=756&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42111&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=756&no_cache=1) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>204</sup> David C. Saha, “Blog review: The economics of sanctions between Russia and the West” *Bruegel* 17 September 2014 <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/blog/detail/article/1435-blogs-review-the-economics-of-sanctions-between-russia-and-the-west/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

After referendum, part of the garrisons of the armed forces of Ukraine, located in the Crimea, agreed to join Russian Federation, the rest peacefully evacuated to mainland Ukraine. The new authorities announced the nationalization of Ukrainian state-owned companies in the Crimea, and the Russian authorities announced the denunciations of agreements on the Black Sea Fleet in the Crimea, which gave the Ukrainian side a substantial discount on Russian gas.<sup>205</sup> With the annexation of Crimea, Ukraine has lost key energy facilities of peninsula, which estimated at 300 billion dollars.<sup>206</sup> The self-proclaimed Crimean government has nationalized two major energy companies, Chernomornaftogaz, a subsidiary of a Ukrainian state-owned oil and gas company, and Naftogaz, which was involved in the development of hydrocarbons in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.<sup>207</sup>

In March 2014, local Crimean government held the referendum on the status of Crimea, the majority of Crimean Tatars boycotted the vote. Their main preference was to remain Crimea as part of Ukraine. Consequently, the pro-Russian authority banned the leaders of Crimean Tatars Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov from entering Crimea for five years until 2019.<sup>208</sup>

From March 2014 until September 2014 around 3,000 Crimean Tatars have left the peninsula for mainland Ukraine.<sup>209</sup> In addition, from annexation time, Russia has been granting its citizenship to the Crimean population in replacement of Ukrainian. Crimeans got one month for deciding whether to take Russian citizenship or retain their Ukrainian one.<sup>210</sup> Many Crimean Tatars rejected Russian citizenship and kept their Ukrainian passports, which means that people, who wouldn't acquire Russian

<sup>205</sup> S. Javoronkov, "Politiko-ekonomicheskie itogi Marta 2014" *Ekonomicheskoe razvitie Rossii* № 4, 2014 <http://www.iep.ru/files/RePEc/gai/ruserr/177Zhavoronkov.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>206</sup> "Ukraina otsenila uron ot poteri energoob'ektov Kryma v \$ 300 mlrd" *Neftegaz.Ru* 29.07.2014 <http://neftegaz.ru/news/view/127797> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>207</sup> Ivanna Bilych, Alexander Gudko, Kateryna Kuntsevich, Matheus Sena, Malvika Seth, and Olena Sharvan *The Crisis in Ukraine: Its legal Dimensions*. Razom, a Ukrainian-American human rights organization 14 April 2014, p.22 <http://www.usukraine.org/pdf/The-Crisis-in-Ukraine-Its-Legal-Dimensions.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>208</sup> "Lideru krymskotatarskogo naroda Mustafe Dzhemilevu zapretili v'ezhat' v Krym do 2019 goda" *Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people* website 22 April 2014 <http://qtmm.org/en> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>209</sup> "PM Aksyonov says Crimean Tatar Mejlis 'does not exist'," *World Bulletin*, 22 September 2014 <http://www.worldbulletin.net/europe/144908/pm-aksyonov-says-crimean-tatar-mejlis-does-not-exist> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>210</sup> Crimea: Human Rights in Decline, *Human Rights Watch*, 17 November 2014 <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/17/crimea-human-rights-decline> (accessed May 25, 2015)

citizenship, would be considered as foreigners on the peninsula and should go through the process of obtaining residence permit.

Later, the Crimean Parliament adopted new Constitution in April 11, 2014, which proclaims the Crimea as a legal state within the Russian Federation. According to the new Constitution, Crimea has granted with three official languages: Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar.<sup>211</sup> On April 21, 2014, President of Russian Federation signed a decree on rehabilitation and restoration of historic rights of Crimean Tatars and other repressed nationalities residing on peninsula, who suffered from Stalin's repressions.<sup>212</sup>

On September 16, 2014, Russian security service agents and police raided the representative body of Crimean Tatars, Mejlis and confiscated documents, computers, and, books. Additionally, Crimean Fund charity, headed by Rize Shevkiev, which works for the Tatar community and owned the Mejlis building and other properties, was banned from leasing or selling its properties, and got 24-hour eviction notice.<sup>213</sup> Moreover the Fund's assets and bank accounts were frozen too. In addition, businesses, schools, and mosques have been raided.<sup>214</sup> Later, as reported by *Interfax*, Sergey Aksyonov, Crimea's pro-Russian prime minister, justified this raid by saying that the authorities had received signals about "banned literature."<sup>215</sup> Local authorities have even gone further and closed Mejlis on September 22 declaring that self-governing body of Crimean Tatars, Mejlis "doesn't exist because it has never been properly registered".<sup>216</sup> Thus, Sergei Aksenov said that the Mejlis

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<sup>211</sup> "Crimean Tatar becomes state language along with Russian and Ukrainian" *QHA Crimean News Agency* 11 April 2014 <http://qha.com.ua/crimean-tatar-becomes-state-language-along-with-russian-and-ukrainian-131151en.html> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>212</sup> "Putin signs decree on rehabilitation of Crimean Tatars", *ITAR-TASS*, 21.04.2014 <http://tass.ru/en/russia/728923> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>213</sup> Idil P. Izmirlı, "The Tale of the First Local Elections in Occupied Crimea and the End of the Mejlis Era," *The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.11, Issue 167, 23 September 2014 [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=42860&cHash=c0ee9669eded556618fdc921608286a2#.VR149vmsWot](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42860&cHash=c0ee9669eded556618fdc921608286a2#.VR149vmsWot) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>214</sup> Judy Dempsey, "Russia is (Again) persecuting the Crimean Tatars". *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe Carnegie Europe* 25 September 2014 <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=56754> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>215</sup> "Simferopolskiy ofis Mejlisa obyskali iz-za zapreshennoy literatury", *Gazeta.ru*, 17.09.2014 [http://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2014/09/17/n\\_6486545.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2014/09/17/n_6486545.shtml) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>216</sup> "Crimean Leader Says Mejlis Does Not Exist", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 22 September 2014 <http://www.rferl.org/content/aksyonov-crimea-rights-mejlis-tatars-russia-ukraine/26599565.html>

need to register in accordance with Russian legislation; otherwise it will not be recognized by local authorities.<sup>217</sup>

According to the *Amnesty International* report of March 18, 2015, Crimea's Russian backed leaders "creating a climate of fear in Crimea, using intimidation and restrictive laws to silence the media and NGOs."<sup>218</sup> In April 2015, the Crimean Tatar channels as *ATR*, *Lale*, radio *Meydan*, Crimean news agency *QHA* stopped broadcasting. Federal executive body responsible for overseeing the media, *Roskomnadzor*, denied to re-registering Crimean mass media for various reasons.<sup>219</sup>

The Crimean Tatars had many problems as an indigenous minority in Ukraine; however they largely remained as loyal Ukrainian citizens. Ukraine's partly-free political system and its prospects for democracy and membership in the EU gave the Tatars hope and strength to fight. Therefore, Tatars strongly supported the Orange and Euromaidan Revolutions in Ukraine. Now the second Russian annexation of Crimea has provided them with an even bigger challenge.<sup>220</sup>

### 3.2. International Community's Response on Russian Annexation

The annexation of Crimea caused a wave of Western sanctions towards Russia. Moreover, on March 27, 2014 UN General Assembly adopted the "Resolution Calling upon States not to recognize any change in the Status of Crimea Region." (GA11493) According to the resolution, "the UN General Assembly reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in its internationally recognized borders and does not recognize any alteration of the status of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol" , which is based on the results of the Crimean

<sup>217</sup> "Krymskie tatart nahodyatsya pod riskom presledovaniy i pritesneniy v "novom" Krymu, - otchet Amnesty International" *iPress. UA* , 23.05.2014

[http://ipress.ua/ru/mainmedia/krimskye\\_tatari\\_nahodyatsya\\_pod\\_ryskom\\_presledovanyy\\_y\\_prytesnenyy\\_v\\_novom\\_krymu\\_otchet\\_amnesty\\_international\\_67034.html](http://ipress.ua/ru/mainmedia/krimskye_tatari_nahodyatsya_pod_ryskom_presledovanyy_y_prytesnenyy_v_novom_krymu_otchet_amnesty_international_67034.html) (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>218</sup> "Crimea: One year on from annexation; critics harassed, attacked and silenced", *Amnesty International*, 18 March 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2015/03/crimea-annexation-critics-attacked-and-silenced/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>219</sup> "Iz 12 krymskotatarskih SMI v Krymu registratsiyu proshlo tolko odno", *Agenstvo Krymskie Novosti QHA*, 3 April 2015, <http://qha.com.ua/iz-12-krimskotatarskih-smi-v-krymu-registratsiyu-proshlo-tolko-odno-144044.html> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>220</sup> Filiz Tutku Aydin, "Crimean Tatars and Russia's annexation of Crimea" *Turkish policy Quarterly* Vol. 13, № 3, Fall 2014, p. 85.

referendum.<sup>221</sup> During the vote, 100 countries out of 193 were in favor of the resolution, 11 countries were against the resolution, 58- abstentions, and 24 representatives of the states were absent during the vote.<sup>222</sup> On the basis of it, the USA and the EU, which are committed to the Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, imposed sanctions against Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea. The sanction list concludes individuals, who are Russian politicians, government officials, private counselors of President Putin, as well as those who involved in the annexation of the Crimea. The applied sanctions reflect in freezing of bank accounts, seizure of property and denial of visa. Some sanctions were imposed on the companies operating in key sectors of the Russian economy. The list includes such enterprises as Bank Rossiya, Rosneft, Novatek, Gazprombank and others.<sup>223</sup> In response to the US and the EU sanctions, Russia also announced reciprocal sanctions against a similar number of US officials.<sup>224</sup> Moreover, Russia's membership has been suspended from the G8 because of Moscow's annexation of Crimea and interference in Ukraine.<sup>225</sup>

The position of Turkey regarding the Ukrainian crises was in favor of maintaining the territorial integrity of Ukraine and against of Russian interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine. Moreover, Turkey has declared that Crimean referendum was illegal. However, Ankara didn't follow the USA and the EU in imposing economic sanctions on Russia in order to support this action.<sup>226</sup>

Changes in Russian Foreign policy became more obvious from the Georgian conflict of August 2008. This conflict was a first signal which shows that the policy

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<sup>221</sup> *Resolution of United Nation General Assembly* "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" A/RES/68/262, 27 March 2014,

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/455/17/PDF/N1345517.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>222</sup> "Backing Ukraine's territorial integrity, UN Assembly declares Crimea referendum invalid" *United Nations News Centre*, 27 March 2014.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47443&Cr=ukraine&Cr1=#.VR2tvfmsWou> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>223</sup> "Ukraine crisis: Russia and sanctions", *BBC News*, 19 December 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26672800> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>224</sup> Sanctions tit-for-tat: Moscow strikes back against US officials, *RT News*, 20 March 2014 <http://rt.com/news/foreign-ministry-russia-sanctions-133/> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>225</sup> "Russia Suspended From G8 Over Crimea Annexation", *The Moscow Times* 26 March 2014 <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-suspended-from-g8-over-crimea-annexation/496790.html> (accessed May 25, 2015)

<sup>226</sup> Levent Basturk, "Turkey's policy towards Ukraine: Crimean crisis" *World Bulletin* 02 April 2014 <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news-analysis/132095/turkeys-policy-towards-ukraine-crimean-crisis> (accessed May 25, 2015)

line of Russian Federation is willing to use military power in order to protect its spheres of interests. The sphere of influence is included the so called “near abroad”, which explains Russia’s reluctance to accept any legitimate role for the EU or NATO in this region.<sup>227</sup> From Moscow point of view, the NATO enlargement and Eastern Partnership initiative has been seen as a threat for Russia’s core strategic interests. Thus, such acts as invading to Georgia’s conflict and annexing Crimea have dispelled any remaining doubts about Putin’s determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO alliance.<sup>228</sup>

The Crimean annexation by Russian Federation has breached many treaties and fundamental principles of international law, particularly the principle of territorial integrity of states, non-intervention into the domestic affairs of another state. In addition the diplomatic document of “Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances” of 1994 which was signed between Ukraine, Russia, USA and UK about Ukraine’s territorial integrity was also violated. According to this memorandum, Ukraine promised to remove all Soviet-era nuclear weapons from its territory and signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In return, Russia, USA and UK promised that none of them would ever threaten or use force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. All sides of diplomatic document came to the conclusion that no such occupation or acquisition will be recognized as legal.<sup>229</sup>

The events of November 2013- February 2014 when Ukraine started turning into the state supported and led by pro-Westerns elites and anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalists, from Kremlin perspective, which has viewed Ukraine as a part of its sphere of influence, it saw the Ukrainian government’s pro-Western policy as a major threat to Russian core interests and security. Russian actions were prompted by “realist” geo-strategic motives, but these were supplemented by “ethno-national” concerns based on the idea of the “Russian World”, a sphere of Russophone interests.

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<sup>227</sup> Andrey Makarychev, “Russia, Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership: from common neighborhood to spheres of influence” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 16, No. 3, Summer 2014, pp. 181-199.

<sup>228</sup> John Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault” *Foreign Affairs*, September / October 2014 <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearsheimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-wests-fault> (accessed March 22, 2015)

<sup>229</sup> Ron Synovitz, “Explainer: The Budapest Memorandum And Its Relevance To Crimea” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, February 28, 2014 <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-explainer-budapest-memorandum/25280502.html> (accessed April 13, 2015)

This reflecting a long-term trend towards couching Russian concerns about the imbalances in global power and the asymmetrical end of the Cold war in culturally conservative term.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. I.B.Tauris, 2014 p. 108.

## CONCLUSION

By writing this thesis, I evaluated and analyzed the disputes over Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet issue and annexation of peninsula by the Russian Federation which consequently effected Russo-Ukrainian relations. The understanding of the root of dispute which currently occurred required studying the historical background of the inhabitants of peninsula. The main objective of thesis was to analyze the perspectives of Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar sides and their main interests over Crimean peninsula.

Since the collapse of Soviet Union, peninsula became a subject of internal and external instabilities. The Crimean question attracts attention of many scholars of Russia, Ukraine and Western countries. As we know, Crimea is the most distinct region of Ukraine, which displays certain characteristics such as geographical location, ethnic composition of region, institutional legacies, political, economic and social conditions which were taken into account during the writing process.

It is obvious that Crimean peninsula has a very strategic geopolitical importance, which has been proved by the clashes between foreign powers in order to possess this region. In the past, peninsula was a home for many tribes started from Cimmerians, later Scythians, Sarmatians, the Kievan Rus, Mongols, Crimean Tatars, Ottomans Turks, Russians and Ukrainians. From the middle 15<sup>th</sup> century and on, the Crimean Khanate became the full owner of the Crimean region, which later fell under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. After 1783, the Russian Empire under Catherine the Great took control over Crimean territory and established the Black Sea Fleet on its territory in order to protect its security interests in the region.

After the October Revolution of 1917, the political and economic situation in Russia was chaotic, including the Crimean region. Crimean Tatars community gained the territorial autonomy and proclaimed the Crimean People's Republic, which existed for less than two months. Then, Crimean People's Republic fell and Crimea was joined to the Soviet Union.

During Soviet times, the central apparatus located in Moscow was in charge of all orders and Crimean activities. During the Second World War, Crimean peninsula was one of the main battle grounds between Nazis and Soviets. Region was under Nazi occupation for three years. After the victory of Red Army and liberation of

peninsula in 1944 from Germany, Stalin ordered a genocidal deportation of the whole Crimean Tatar population under the pretext of collaboration with the Nazis. Meanwhile, the transfer of Crimea in 1954 from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR was another important turn in the history of Crimea. During the 1960-80s peninsula, because of its natural resources and natural beauty became a favorite place of soviet people and a symbol of prosperity. With the disintegration of USSR, the atmosphere in Crimean peninsula was complicated.

The Black Sea peninsula became an arena of debate between Russia and Ukraine after the breakup of Soviet Union. From the Russian perspective, this region has linked with many historical events of Russia. Thus, from the annexation time of 1783, Crimean landscape was described in many Russian literary works. Many Russian writers were fascinated by the beauty, flora and sea, which were subsequently described in their poems and novels. Moreover, many writers published stories of the highest morale and heroism of Russian people during the Crimean war. Thus, the Crimean region was associated in Russian consciousness as an integral part of Russian history. Russian sources have repeatedly stressed about the importance of the Black Sea Fleet, its task to protect the southern flank and secure energy, trade and military links throughout Black Sea. Even up to the present time, one of the strategic priorities in Russian foreign policy is to have an access and ensure security in Black Sea via Crimea.

In the Ukrainian view, the Crimean peninsula is an integral part Ukraine, which is different from other regions of Ukraine due to its autonomous status, majority of Russian population and the presence of Russian Black Sea fleet. With the breakup of the USSR, Ukraine has faced a lot of problems such as economic deterioration, the rise of separatism in Crimea, repatriation of Crimean Tatar community and issue of the Black Sea Fleet. In time Ukrainian governments were able to resolve most of these problems while preserving friendly relations with Russia and get along with the Crimean population. However, changes in foreign policy after the Orange Revolution again deteriorated the relations between Kiev and Simferopol/Akmescit, not with Crimean Tatars though. The possession of Crimea positively contributed to the economic growth in Ukraine due to such spheres as tourism, maritime transportation, energy and goods transit corridor.

From the Crimean Tatar point of view, they are the indigenous people of the Crimean peninsula. The annexation of the Crimean Khanate by Russians in the 18th century marked the beginning of the colonization of Crimea and the migration of large groups of the Tatar population from the Crimea to Turkey. The fate of this nation was dramatically changed during the World War II, when Crimean Tatars were deported from their homeland to Central Asia by the Soviets. This deportation changed the whole demographic map of the peninsula. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Crimean Tatars were able to return to their historical motherland. However, this return has caused many political, economic and social problems which Ukrainian governments were unable to solve. Despite all the difficulties, Kiev has always had the support from the Crimean Tatars, who have negative memories of the Soviet Russian rule and perceived Ukraine as a possible guarantor of their rights.

The situation in Ukraine has drastically changed with president Yanukovich's decision to cooperate with Russia by suspending the Association and Free Trade Agreement with the European Union in 2013. This act stimulated the peaceful mass demonstrations of Ukrainian citizens, which later have escalated into the violated conflict. The Crimean region was not involved into a violent conflict until the February 2014 when President of Ukraine V. Yanukovich was overthrown by demonstrators, which caused a wave of separatism in Crimea. However, one should underline the fact that there were no violent clashes at the peninsula at all during this transition time. A month later in March 2014, the government of Russia annexed the Crimea and justified it under the pretext of protecting the ethnic Russian population from the Ukrainian nationalists in Kiev.

Crimea has played a central role in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which could obviously be seen after Ukraine's latest "revolution". Ukraine consider Crimean peninsula as an integral part of its sovereign territory. With the support of Crimean Tatar community, who unequivocally chose to stay under Ukraine authority, and support of the majority of the international actors by not recognizing the legality of the Russian organized referendum. Russian side declares the Crimean referendum as legitimate and continues to defend the annexation of Crimea by using a number of historical arguments and legal precedent. From Kremlin perspective, the Ukrainian crisis is perceived as a potential security threat. Russian actions were prompted by

“realist” geostrategic motives to protect national security interests by preserving the main Black Sea naval base and its falling under the control of NATO.

In the current situation, the Crimean crisis was a last flashpoint, which strained Russo-Ukrainian relations, as well as the relations with the international actors such as the US and the EU. Thus, the day of annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation became a symbol of fall of the post-Cold War order and undermined the security environment of the EU and other Western countries. By analyzing the outcome of the Crimean crises and positions of both sides, it seems that relations between both are unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future.

In order to prevent any recurrence of such an action, the international community demonstrated to the Russian Federation that such an act towards Crimea is unacceptable and will have long-term consequences. The main task was to continue using economic power by imposing long term sanctions on Russia as long as Crimea is under Russian Federation’s control. Besides this, Europe is in search for alternative ways of energy supply for reducing its gas dependence on Russia and to impose tougher sanctions.

The implications of the Ukrainian crisis and Russia’s annexation of Crimea go well beyond Ukraine and bring to the fore the Russian assertive foreign policy and ambitions, which are based on restoration of its historical sphere of influence and acknowledgment of its status as a regional hegemon. Moreover, Ukraine’s successful Europeanization could question the continuing stability of authoritarian form of government in Russia.

This situation represents security alerts in at least three other regions where Russian speaking minorities/ majorities exists. Moldova (Transdnister), Kazakhstan (Northern part) and Baltic states might in the medium term develop a rather “suspicious approach” to their Russian speaking citizens.

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