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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES

Analysis

# Crimea – The Achilles' Heel of Ukraine

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November 2008

**www.icds.ee**

# Executive Summary

Since Russia's aggression against Georgia in August, a number of Ukrainian and foreign politicians, diplomats and security policy analysts have warned that Ukraine and Crimea could become Russia's next target. Indeed, Moscow has persistently intimidated Ukraine ever since the Orange Revolution for its preferences to associate itself with the West and to uphold western political and economic values. Ukraine has angered Moscow by offering to discuss the integration of its early-warning missile systems with the West; by being persistent in its efforts to integrate with NATO and the EU; and by stridently supporting Georgia since Russia's incursion into it. Judging from the war in Georgia, Moscow's aim is to expand its sphere of influence by gaining control over the domestic, economic and foreign policy orientations of the former Soviet republics. Kremlin regularly provokes and exacerbates conflicts between Crimea and the central government in Kyiv in order to increase its own influence in Crimea and to strengthen its position in the Black Sea region.

**Key Components of the Conflict**

There has been much speculation about tensions in Crimea, so it is particularly important to look at the situation on the ground in Crimea, to analyse the key components of the conflict and to discuss what can be done to reduce Russia's leverage there. This paper claims that the main threats and challenges to the security of Crimea are: the debated status of the peninsula; the presence of a foreign military base in Sevastopol; Russia's active information campaign, which is partly led by its security services; ethnic and inter-religious tensions related to the Crimean Tatars; and the ineffective central government in Kyiv that is unable to control most processes on the peninsula.

**The Issue of Status**

Moscow seems to be interested in generating some kind of a bilateral or international debate about the status of Crimea and Sevastopol. The status of Crimea is exceptional, because this area with its large ethnic Russian population, resorts and a naval base was handed over to Ukraine in 1954 by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both Ukraine and Russia wanted to claim control over Crimea. In December 1991, the people in Crimea voted in favour of Ukraine's independence. In 1992, local pro-Russian politicians launched a campaign to have the peninsula transferred back to Russia. As a result of the ratification of the 1997 Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership, Moscow finally recognised Ukraine's borders and territorial integrity and, in a way, accepted Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea and Sevastopol. But since the spring of 2008, Russian politicians have again started to question the territorial *status quo* in Crimea.

**Russia's Black Sea Fleet**

As a purely military entity with a legally binding status under the forces agreement, the deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet might not cause much controversy. However, the Black Sea Fleet is not a purely military entity. It is also a commercial structure (a source of employment for about 40,000 people in Sevastopol) that is the owner of numerous vaguely-defined properties and facilities; it has a powerful and potentially malign intelligence service; and it has been used as an instrument of economic and political leverage. In this context, the Black Sea Fleet remains a source of tension for Ukraine.

### Russia's Information Campaign

Crimea has a special place in the hearts of Russians. This is where the Tsarist empire fought against Britain in the Crimean War in 1854 and where the Red Army fought against Hitler in the Second World War. During the Soviet era, Crimea grew as a naval base. The peninsula also became a popular place of retirement for top communist politicians, officials and high-ranking military. This created a fertile ground for Moscow's information campaign that stimulates Russian nationalism and Soviet nostalgia among the local population. Russia finances a wide network of various non-governmental organisations in Crimea. In return, these organisations see their role largely in serving the political interests of different powerful groups in Russia.

### Ethnic and Inter-religious Tensions

After having been deported by Stalin in 1944, the Crimean Tatars started to return to their historic homeland in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, the Tatars have not integrated well into the social and political life in Crimea. Local authorities dominated by ethnic Russians are hostile to the returnees. Many Tatars have remained unsettled. They have limited access to housing, education, health care and other social services. When people live in poor conditions as the Tatars do in Crimea, they become susceptible to political speculation and the influence of extremists. Although the Tatars have traditionally upheld President Yushchenko's policies, their support is weakening, as the power relations with Kyiv have become complicated.

### Kyiv's Ambivalence

The Ukrainian government lacks a strategically defined regional policy for Crimea. First, Kyiv should set clear development and problem-solving goals for Crimea. Second, it should formulate a purposeful national policy for Crimea and it should also build an effective state apparatus to implement the policy. Clearly, the political turbulence in Kyiv created by the President, the Prime Minister and the Parliament does not contribute to the quick adoption of a joint governmental approach to the security challenges in Crimea. It is important that the Ukrainian government acted calmly but firmly and in a consolidated manner in order not to let Moscow dominate the issue.

## Suggestions

### *The Government of Ukraine*

Effective institutions

- Set up a high-level inter-agency working group that would provide information about Crimea for political decision-makers. The goal should be to formulate a comprehensive strategy for the future of Crimea. Consider using the National Security and Defence Council as a secretariat for the working group.

Information campaign

- Start a target-minded formation of a common civic identity in Crimea together with a comprehensive PR campaign with the aim of 'Ukrainasation' of Crimea, as well as sharing information about the goals and objectives of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.
- Generate high quality Russian language information channels in Crimea spreading Ukrainian news.
- Consider building information campaign on the assumption that Ukraine is not socially divided due to the opposition between Russian and Ukrainian ethnic nationalism, but the opposition between an emerging European-Ukrainian identity and the Soviet mentality. A common European identity could provide new opportunities for Crimea. The sense of belonging to Europe could be useful in overcoming the rift between different ethnic communities. In this respect, some clear signs of progress and an invitation to join the EU could help Ukraine.

Russia's Black Sea Fleet

- The government of Ukraine should be persistent in pushing for an infrastructure inventory of the Black Sea Fleet, as this would enable to raise the rent to the market level. Demand that the Russians pay a market-level rent between 2009 and 2017.
- Sell the land occupied by the Black Sea Fleet to some western country after 2017 and let it deal with Russia.

Crimean Muslims

- Provide solutions for socio-economic problems of Crimean Tatars.
- Facilitate dialogue with the Crimean Tatar community by providing a platform for discussion and resources to develop inter-religious understanding in Crimea.
- Increase the capacity of security services in working with the radical Moslem youth. If need be, consider using international assistance for determining best practices in this field.

### *The EU and NATO*

- Finance infrastructure projects to turn Sevastopol into a commercial hub after the Black Sea Fleet leaves. If the local population has no alternative income other than that provided by the Russian Fleet, they will be easy prey for Russian propaganda. The vacuum in Sevastopol created by the future withdrawal of the Black Sea Fleet could be filled with tourism.

- Organise allied training workshops on base closing and on relations between bases and local administrations according to the principles of good practice in the West.

- Provide real-time help when natural disasters occur.

- Increase the role of private businesses in the stabilisation process of Crimea. Improve business culture and introduce western business practices.

- Provide targeted scholarships, educational exchange programmes and study visits abroad for residents of Crimea. Target local groups such as youngsters, local elite, the military, local government officials, local teachers etc. People from Crimea have rarely travelled abroad and introducing them to Western value systems could promote a more conscious geopolitical choice.

## Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol

Russia-Ukraine 1997 Agreements and Disagreements

In 1997, after five years of heated discussions between Kyiv and Moscow, the issues of the control of Sevastopol, Crimea and the division of the Black Sea Fleet were finally resolved with the signing of relevant documents on the Black Sea Fleet in May and with the signing of the Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and Russia in June. [1] According to these documents, the two countries split the fleet ships and Russia leased the ports in and around Sevastopol for 20 years, paying USD 97.75 million per year until the end of 2007. From 2008 onwards, Russia would have to pay rent directly. The payments were designated to go towards reducing Ukraine's USD 3 billion debt to Russia (Gazprom).[2] Finally, the agreements stipulated that Crimea and the City of Sevastopol constituted legally and territorially a sovereign part of Ukraine. The fleet rental agreement was valid for a 20-year period and it could be extended automatically unless either party terminated it, giving one year's notice in advance.


*For long, Moscow led most of its propaganda campaigns in Crimea from the Black Sea Fleet Press Centre. The Press Centre was headed by a former graduate of the Moscow State Institute of Foreign Relations. After the Orange Revolution in 2004, the Press Centre cut back on its overt propaganda activities and has since channelled resources for propaganda through NGOs, mainly the Russian Community of Crimea. As a result of this changed tactics, there can no longer be direct pretensions of anti-Ukrainian activities to the Black Sea Fleet.*

The Black Sea Fleet negotiations revolved around two principal issues: Russia's naval basing rights in and around Sevastopol and a more general question of having ultimate control over Crimea. There was also the problem of housing the Russian sailors, officers and their families. The number of sailors varied from 47,000 to 70,000.[3] As some issues remained unsolved during the 1997 negotiations, problems have emerged every now and then. In 2006, Ukraine and Russia clashed over the right to control lighthouses along the Black Sea coast. Also, other property disputes have broken out periodically.

In August 2008, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko signed a decree imposing new restrictions on the movement of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. The restrictions included a requirement that the Black Sea Fleet secure the permission of Ukraine's armed forces at least 72 hours in advance to cross the Ukrainian border with its ships or aircraft. If Russia does not

[1] Agreements between Ukraine and the Russian Federation: "On Mutual Settlements with the Division of the Black Sea Fleet and Stationing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet on Ukraine's Territory"; "On the Status and Terms of Russia's Black Sea Fleet Stationing on Ukraine's Territory"; "On the Parameters of Division of the Black Sea Fleet", *National Security and Defence,* Razumkov Centre, no.4, 2001.
[2] Ilona Bilan, "Ukrainian-Russian Fleet Controversies", UCIPR Research Update, vol. 14, no. 20/538, 04.06.2008.
[3] Tyler Felgenhauer, "Ukraine, Russia and the Black Sea Fleet Accords", WWS Case Study 2/99, available at http://wws.princeton.edu/research/cases/ukraine.pdf.

fulfil the new requirements, Ukraine may demand that the naval ships and aircraft of the Black Sea Fleet leave Ukraine's territory immediately.[4]

Ukraine's and Russia's Political Positions Concerning the Year 2017

Currently, most political forces in Ukraine more or less agree that the rent agreement of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Navy will last only until 2017. President Yushchenko has repeatedly underlined that 2017 marked the end of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. "The start of negotiations on the removal of Russia's Black Sea Fleet from Ukrainian territory should be included in the agenda for our relationship," said the President of Ukraine at a press conference in July 2008.[5] Recently, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko also emphasised 2017 as the final deadline for the Black Sea Fleet, saying that "the government has not received any proposals concerning prolongation of stay of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine after 2017."[6] Even the head of the Party of Regions, Viktor Yanukovych, has claimed that Ukraine would never let Russia dominate in Crimea. In short, Western-leaning Ukraine, which wants to join NATO and the European Union, says it will not renew the lease agreement. Yet, Moscow is determined to stay. On 22 October 2008, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov announced that Russia would request Ukraine to prolong the stationing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol beyond 2017, when the basing agreement is due to expire.[7]

All Ukraine-Russia negotiations on the Russian Black Sea Fleet are conducted in a sub-commission of the bilateral state commission chaired by the two presidents. The sub-commission deals with the Russian Fleet's claims to land plots and property, competencies of the police and counterintelligence, hydrographical equipment, lighthouses, on-shore communications stations, and navigational safety.[8] The Ukrainian chief negotiator, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, Volodymyr Ohryzko, has repeatedly pointed out that relocation of the Russian Fleet's 14,000-strong personnel and the vast stockpiles of equipment as well as the handover of property to the Ukrainian side would require a long time. Yet Moscow insists on limiting the discussion only to the Fleet's "presence and functioning".[9]

It seems that Moscow is preparing a strategy for retaining its naval presence in Ukraine in the future. The strategy includes potentially coercive measures and incentives.[10] On the coercive side, Russian officials have publicly placed Ukraine's territorial integrity under question. On the inducement side, the Russian government proposes to increase the rent, to invest in the development of civil infrastructure in Sevastopol and Crimea, and to place orders with Ukrainian military and industrial manufacturers. Russian Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov has recently made two offers concerning this incentive package. At the same time, Russia claims that it has a right to "rotate" armaments onboard its Sevastopol-based ships, i.e. to replace old weapons systems with newer ones.[11] Ukraine rejects all this, insisting that the 1997 agreements do not allow for the modernisation of the combat equipment of the Russian Fleet.[12]

[4] Reuters, 14.08.2008.
[5] ITAR-TASS, 24.07.2008.
[6] http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article?art_id=160304251&cat_id=2297108.
[7] Interfax, 22.10.2008.
[8] Vladimir Socor, "Russia's Black Sea Fleet Clinging to Sevastopol While It Can", EDM, 06.08.2007.
[9] Socor, ibid.
[10] Socor, EDM, 23.10.2008.
[11] Interfax, 23.09.2008; *Vremya Novostei*, 21.10.2008, quoted in Vladimir Socor, "Moscow Seeks More Excuses for Prolonging Naval Presence in Sevastopol", EDM, 23.10.2008.
[12] Socor, EDM, 06.08.2007.

Infrastructure Inventory and a Rent Rise

Infrastructure inventory, i.e. the attachment of a price tag to various inventories used by the Black Sea Fleet, is an important milestone in the process of taking Russian-Ukrainian rent-lease relations to a more market-oriented level. The main party responsible for this process on the Ukrainian side is the State Real Estate Fund headed by Valentyna Semenyuk from the Socialist Party. Other parties include the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.[13] Lately, the Russian side has also expressed an interest in starting the process of inventory, because the Russian MOD would like to know on what all the money in Crimea is being spent. Moscow wants to take stock of what is going on in Crimea. This change of attitude by Russia can be linked with the recent radical changes in the personnel policy of the Russian MOD that Defence Minister Serdyukov has been implementing since the early spring of 2008.

In addition, the Ukrainians have lately been discussing the raising of the rent to a market level. Currently, under the 1997 agreements, Russia pays a trivial sum of USD 98 million annually for renting 30,000 hectares of land and some 4,500 buildings and facilities in and around Sevastopol. According to the 1997 agreements, these payments are used for the settlement of Ukraine's national debt to Russia for supplying Ukraine with energy, which amounted to USD 2,347,491,000 in 1997.[14] In general, mechanisms for the calculation and the settlement of the debt are non-transparent.

Anatoly Grytsenko, former Minister of Defence of Ukraine, has proposed that the rented facilities should be appraised and that Russia should pay a market price for them. Experts have estimated that the rent ought to be around USD 1 billion per year. Claiming that Ukraine's current gas debt to Russia is USD 1.3 billion, Grytsenko has suggested that the government of Ukraine should earmark a sum to pay the gas debt to Russia when making the new amendments to the 2008 budget law in September and then it could charge a market price for the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea.[15]

## Russia's Information Campaign in Crimea

A number of prominent Russian officials and semi-officials have never accepted the notion of an independent Ukraine or a Ukrainian Crimea. "Moscow has laid the foundation for the occupation of Crimea with years of careful propaganda," says Vasyl Ovcharuk, a Ukrainian Crimean political activist.[16] According to an expert opinion, up to 80% of the Crimean population could be mobilised to support the Russian cause.[17]

Since the Orange Revolution, Russia's information campaign in Crimea has become especially proficient and systematic. The information campaign has been particularly intense in 2006-2008. The voice of propaganda gets louder and angrier every time Moscow needs to put pressure on Ukraine. When Ukraine reaches a milestone on the road towards Euro-Atlantic integration, Moscow always intensifies its counter-propaganda efforts. Statesmen and officials, political parties, civic organisations, youth movements, the Cossacks, the Orthodox Church and

[13] ICDS interview with Viktor Chumak, ICPS, in Kyiv in September 2008.
[14] Bilan, *op.cit.*
[15] Tatiana Silina, "Interview with Anatoliy Gritsenko", *Zerkalo Nedeli*, 16-22 August 2008.
[16] http://www.rferl.org/Content/Crimea_Flashpoint_For_Conflict_With_Russia/1193380.html.
[17] ICDS interview with Sergey Kulyk and Michael Gonchar, Center NOMOS, in Kyiv and in Sevastopol in September 2008.

universities – all these pro-Russian entities have become instruments in Russia's propaganda war with the general aim of controlling the minds of ordinary people in Crimea. People are mobilised using pro-Russian Black Sea Fleet and pro-Russian language slogans as well as anti-NATO, anti-US and anti-Tatar campaigns.

The Issue of Status of Crimea Raised by Russian Politicians

The status of Crimea is exceptional, because this area was handed over to Ukraine in 1954 by the Soviet leader Khrushchev. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both Ukraine and Russia wanted to claim control over Crimea. In December 1991, the people in Crimea voted in favour of Ukraine's independence. In 1992, local pro-Russian politicians launched a campaign to have the peninsula transferred back to Russia. As a result of the ratification of the 1997 Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership, Moscow finally recognised Ukraine's borders and territorial integrity.

Since this spring, Moscow has asserted its claims on the Crimean peninsula more frequently. Various Moscow officials have made claims to the Crimean peninsula according to a line of argument that Sevastopol received a status of separate administrative entity since 1948 as the city was subordinated directly to central authorities in Moscow. According to this belief, Sevastopol's status of direct subordination to Moscow did not change when Crimea was transferred to Ukraine.[18] These claims plainly ignore international recognition of Ukraine's sovereignty in Crimea and in Sevastopol, Russia's recognition of Ukraine's sovereignty over the area with the 1997 interstate agreement, as well as the 2004 Russian-Ukraine treaty on mutual borders. In June 2008, the Russian State Duma voted to seek the abrogation of the 1997 agreement if Ukraine got a NATO Membership Action Plan.[19]

During a visit to Crimea on the anniversary of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in May 2008, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov called for the "return" of Sevastopol to Russia. The Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry implicitly backed him in a follow-up statement.[20] During the commemorations of the 225th anniversary of Sevastopol in June 2008, the President of Russia made his contribution to the Crimean debate. In a message to the residents of Sevastopol, Dmitry Medvedev said: "Sevastopol, a heroic city, a city of workers, has really witnessed landmark events. It is the cradle of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, with which it has always shared both the bitterness of losses and the greatness of victories."[21] A harder line was taken by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, who said at a meeting in Sevastopol: "It is our city. From the moment it [Sevastopol] was founded, its fate was irrevocably linked to the Russian empire and to the Soviet Union."[22]

[18] Vladimir Socor, „Moscow Questions Territorial Status Quo in the Crimea", EDM 14.05.2008
[19] Roman Kupchinsky, "New Twists in the Russian-Ukrainian Dispute", EDM, 17.06.2008.
[20] Socor, EDM 14.05.2008
[21] Interfax, 14.06.2008, quoted in Kupchinsky, EDM, 17.06.2008.
[22] *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 14.06.2008, quoted in Kupchinsky, EDM, 17.06.2008.

Political Parties

Life in Crimea is highly politicised and therefore, it is easy for political parties to gain popularity through provocative and populist declarations, rather than focusing on serious issues and improving life in Crimea in real terms. Matters such as improving public traffic system or infrastructure, building ring-roads around major cities or reconstruction of water and canalisation systems are not considered important for gaining votes.[23]

The first major "accomplishment" of the political forces in Crimea in the field of propaganda was a statement declaring that Crimea was a "NATO-free area", which was adopted by a parliamentary majority in June 2006. The declaration was preceded by massive anti-NATO protests in Feodosiya in May and June 2006, which were staged to disrupt the preparations for a NATO/Partnership for Peace exercise "Sea Breeze-2006". The US-led Sea Breeze-2006, involving personnel from 17 NATO member states and partners, was a major annual naval and ground-force exercise, which was to be held mostly in Crimea. Led by the Party of Regions, the Natalia Vitrenko Bloc, the Communists and pro-Russian NGOs, protesters claimed that the preparations were unlawful due to the absence of parliamentary approval for the exercise. By June, the rally had swelled, as delegations from eastern and southern cities of Ukraine and Communist veterans joined the Crimean organisations.[24] As a result, the Crimean political forces in power

**Political Parties of the Verkhovna Rada of Crimea After the Elections in 2006**
*100 seats*

**The Political Bloc "For Yanukovych!"** *44 mandates, in coalition* – includes the Party of Regions of Ukraine and the Crimean pro-Russian political forces: the Russian Bloc and the Russian Community of Crimea. In its election campaign in Crimea, the Party of Regions promised to defend and uphold the rights of ethnic Russians and speakers of the Russian language in Ukraine, to pursue a pro-Russian foreign policy and to increase social spending, while counteracting to NATO integration.

**Soyuz** *10 mandates, in coalition* – is in favour of Ukraine joining the Union of Belarus and Russia; it wants Russian to become the second official language in Ukraine; and it would like the Russians to be recognised, alongside the Ukrainians, as Ukraine's second "state-building nation". Financially, Soyuz is supported by a businessman/ parliamentarian Lev Mirimsky, the head of the Imperia corporation and one of the most powerful men in Crimea.

**Kunitsyn's Electoral Bloc** *10 mandates, in opposition* – centrist forces.

**The Communist Party** *9 mandates, in coalition* – once the largest party in Ukraine that traditionally supports Marxist-Leninist ideology. Its electorate, which is made up of pensioners and the unemployed, is constantly growing, as the population is getting poorer.

**The People's Movement of Ukraine** *8 mandates, in opposition* – is a right-wing political party in Ukraine.

**The Yulia Tymoshenko Electoral Bloc** *8 mandates, in opposition* – is the name of the bloc of political parties in Ukraine led by Yulia Tymoshenko. The alliance includes a number of liberal and nationalist parties.

**The People's Opposition Bloc of Natalia Vitrenko** *7 mandates, in coalition* – is a political alliance formed by the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine and the party "Rus-Ukrainian Union". Led by Natalia Vitrenko, the flamboyant leader of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, the bloc supports integration with Russia and Belarus as an alternative to the EU. It traditionally campaigns on anti-NATO, anti-IMF and pro-Russian issues.

**The Opposition Bloc "Ne Tak"** *4 mandates, in coalition* – is a political alliance that is opposed to the Orange Forces.

[23] ICDS interview with Volodimir Prytula, RL-RFE correspondent in Crimea, in Simferopol in October 2008.
[24] Vladimir Socor, "Weak Authority Emboldens Anti-NATO Protests in Ukraine", EDM, 02.06.2006; Vladimir Socor, "Kyiv's Political Stalemate Complicates Relations with NATO", EDM, 05.06.2006.

managed to establish a direct cognitive link between NATO and Russia, and to send a signal to the public, claiming that NATO would mean serious problems with Russia.[25]

In September 2008, the Crimean Parliament urged the Parliament of Ukraine to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.[26] The decision was pushed through for the most part by the leaders of the Russian Bloc, who had been brought to the parliament by the Party of Regions. The decision also had a clearly propagandist meaning.

Pro-Russian Non-governmental Organisations

The Orange Revolution demonstrated the potential of pro-Western civic activism. Anti-democratic Russian forces were quick to realise this. Since the 2004 presidential election campaign, a number of Russian-sponsored civic groups have been formed in Crimea. These organisations oppose NATO and support Russian nationalism, Russian language and Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

**The Russian Community of Crimea**[27] (*Russkaya Obchina Kryma*) remains the most influential pro-Russian organisation in Crimea. Founded in 1993, it has cells in all cities and regions of the peninsula and its approximate membership reaches 15,000. The leader, Sergey Tsekov, is the First Deputy Speaker of the Crimean Parliament. Two once-powerful pro-Russian organisations that actively operated in Crimea in the early 1990s – the Crimean Republican Movement and the Republican Party of Crimea – form the backbone of the RCC. The RCC fights fiercely against the "*Ukrainasation*" of Crimea, using pro-Russian attitudes of the Crimean people for political purposes. It aims to integrate Ukraine with Russia.

Since the mid-1990s, the RCC has been financed by Moscow Mayor Luzhkov and his then adviser and now a Member of the Russian Duma, Konstantin Zatulin, as well as by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Administration. Since 2000, the RCC has referred to itself as "the organisation of Russian compatriots" in order to gain some additional financial support from Russia, where "compatriots" became a key foreign policy priority under Putin. The head of the RCC Tsekov is a member of the Presidium of the International Council of Russian Compatriots established in 2002 by the Moscow administration. He is also a member of the Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots established in 2006 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. The RCC collaborates closely with the Institute of the CIS States (also known as the Zatulin institute).

Most RCC members are associated with the Russian Bloc, the Party of Regions of Ukraine, the Communist Party and the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine. This helps the RCC to find places for its members in various Crimean representative bodies, using the party lists of different political forces. For example, thirteen of the 76 deputies of the Simferopol City Council are members of the RCC.

[25] Alexander Bogomolov, "Ukraine's Strategic Security on a Crossroads Between Democracy and Neutrality", *European Security Forum Working Paper*, no. 24 (2007).
[26] Valentyna Samar, "A Clever Tongue Will Take You to Moscow", *Zerkalo Nedely*, 20-26 September 2008.
[27] Michael Kapustin, "Activity of Russian Public and Socio-political Organizations and Movements in the ARC", in Yulia Tychenko (ed.), *Socio-Political Processes in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea: Major Trends,* Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research, Kyiv, 2008.

In recent years, the RCC has diversified its activities, creating a network of organisations. "In my humble opinion the Russian Community of Crimea owns more facilities than any public organisation or any active party in Crimea," Tsekov has said. For example, the Russian Crimean Youth Centre works with young people, while the Scout Squad "Krym" works with children. The Russian Cultural and Educational Centre, also affiliated with the RCC, provides assistance to residents of Crimea in obtaining higher education in the Russian Federation; it manages training courses and internships in Russia for Crimean teachers of Russian language, literature and history; it organises competitions for schoolchildren and rewards winners with tours to Russia. In addition, the RCC runs a charity, providing assistance to local Second World War veterans, donating books to schools and libraries in Crimea and assisting the Crimean Russian-speaking artistic communities.

In December 2007, the RCC organised a conference for Russian compatriots in Yalta. As a result of the conference, the National Council of Russian Compatriots was established. As an umbrella organisation for all Russian organisations in Ukraine, the National Council unites 25 organisations from all over Ukraine, including the all-Ukrainian association of Russian culture "Rus", the all-Ukrainian national cultural association "Russian Assembly", the Russian Council of Ukraine, the Russian Movement of Ukraine, the all-Ukrainian union "Russian Community", the Union of Orthodox Citizens of Ukraine, the Party "Rus", the Russian Community of Sevastopol, etc. Currently, the National Council of Russian Compatriots is seeking to consolidate all the pro-Russian organisations in Ukraine and perhaps to establish a political party.

**The People's Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" and the National Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia".**[28] The People's Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" was established in August 2005. It promotes the Russian cause by using various radical methods. For example, in October 2006, the People's Front rallied in Yevpatoria, demanding that the Crimean authorities hold a referendum on the accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation. In addition, it urged all the pro-Russian forces in Crimea to unite their efforts to restore the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of 6 May 1992 and to terminate the 1997 Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine. In 2008, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) brought criminal charges against the People's Front, accusing it of promoting a forced reunification of Crimea with Russia.

The National Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" was established in November 2006. It unites 16 organisations, including the Congress of Russian Communities of Crimea, the movement "Russian Front of Sergei Shuvaynykov", the Crimean Association of Russian Compatriots, a human rights organisation "Vira" (*Faith*), the Union of Orthodox Citizens of Crimea, etc. The leader of the National Front, Sergei Shuvaynykov, is a well-known Crimean pro-Russian politician and a former Member of the Crimean Parliament. The National Front wants Russian to become an official language in Ukraine and it also supports the idea that Crimea and Sevastopol would return under Russia's jurisdiction. The National Front's goals are to enhance Russian national identity and to "fight against Russophobia" in Crimea.

[28] Michael Kapustin, "Activity of Russian Public and Socio-political Organizations and Movements in the ARC", in Yulia Tychenko (ed.), *Socio-Political Processes in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea: Major Trends,* Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research, Kyiv, 2008.

According to some Crimean experts, the People's Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" and the National Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" may be play-acting. They might be creating a radical background for some more serious pro-Russian organisations in Crimea in order to help them to maintain the "status of more respectable politicians".

**The Institute of the CIS States** (also known as the Zatulin Institute) is a Moscow based think tank, which was founded in 1996 and which is led by Konstantin Zatulin, a Member of the Russian Duma.[29] The main goal of the think tank is to study and promote Russian interests in the former Soviet Union. The Crimean office of the "Zatulin Institute" was opened in 2006. It is located in the very centre of the City of Sevastopol in the Moscow House at Nakhimov Square. The Crimean office of the Institute is led by Admiral Vladimir Illyich Solovyov, a former Head of the Intelligence Division of the Black Sea Fleet.[30]

**The Moscow House** in Sevastopol serves as a cultural and business centre for the Russians. It is also the place where pro-Russian conferences are held occasionally and where local vocal pro-Russian opinion leaders, such as Natalia Vitrenko or Tsekov, the First Deputy Speaker of the Crimean Parliament, present their views. The Moscow House frequently hosts roundtables and conferences for Russian nationalists, such as Zatulin, Dugin, Luzhkov and Rogozin, who travel to Crimea to fly the flag and to support the Crimean pro-Russian movements.[31]

Youth movements[32]

By and large, the youth movements supporting the Russian cause are managed by adults. The list of Russian-affiliated youth organisations in Crimea is still growing. The SBU has interfered in the activity of some of them, while others continue to exist.

The first pro-Russian youth organisation, which became popular all over Ukraine, was the Crimean branch of the International Youth Front called **"Proryv"** (*Breakthrough*). Founded in August 2005 with an original membership of about 1,000, Proryv in Sevastopol was originally managed by a Russian citizen Aleksey Dobychin.[33] Since the summer of 2006, Proryv has been led by Nadezhda Polyakova, a journalist from Yevpatoriya. Acting as the Crimean reporter for the Russian information agency "Regnum", she is also the Head of the Russian Community of Yevpatoriya.[34] Currently, the membership of Proryv has dropped to about 300. According to its current leader, the aim of Proryv is to "create a bulwark against the anti-Russian initiatives that are being developed by the West and the USA in the former Soviet republics."

Proryv has organised a number of campaigns. In January 2006, it openly called for Crimea's secession from Ukraine. In March 2006, members of Proryv in Kherson protested against the plans to return to Ukraine the lighthouses used by the Russian Black Sea Fleet. In May 2006,

[29] For more, see http://www.zatulin.ru/index.php?section=institute.
[30] ICDS interview with Kulyk and Gonchar.
[31] ICDS interview with Sergey Kulyk and Michael Gonchar, Center NOMOS, in Kyiv and in Sevastopol in September 2008.
[32] Yulia Tychenko (ed.), *Socio-Political Processes in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea: Major Trends,* Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research, Kyiv, 2008.
[33] After the protests in Feodosiya in spring 2006, Dobychin was declared a *persona non grata* and sent to Russia. He settled in Moscow, where he declared that Proryv planned to expand its activities in the post-Soviet space, especially in Georgia. Indeed, branches of Proryv have been established in the unrecognised republics of the Caucasus – Abkhazia and South Ossetia – and in Transnistria. (From Tychenko (ed.), *op.cit*).
[34] The Russian Community of Yevpatoriya is a subdivision of the Russian Community of Crimea. As the leader of the community, Polyakova is also a member of the Working Group of the All-Ukrainian Council of Russian Compatriots, an organisation founded on the initiative of the Russian Community of Crimea. (From Tychenko (ed.), *op.cit*).

Proryv together with the People's Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" organised a picket in Simferopol under the slogan "Let's abolish the Ukrainian language because it is useless!" In March 2007, Proryv together with the National Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" protested against the "*Ukrainisation*" of the media. In May 2007, Proryv initiated a campaign "A Russian flag on every window!" by calling residents of Crimea to hang out Russian flags on their windows and balconies. In February 2008, members of Proryv in Simferopol protested against the dubbing of movies into Ukrainian.

**The History of Cossacks**

The Cossacks were a historic group of martial people living in the southern steppe regions of Eastern Europe and Asian Russia. In the 15th c., the Cossack society was described as a loose federation of independent communities. By the 16th c., these Cossack societies merged into two independent territorial organisations: first, the Cossacks of Zaporozhia who centred around the lower bends of the Dnieper River, with the capital of Zaporozhian Sich; and second, the Don Cossack State on the River Donwith the capital in Cherkassk. The Polish Cossacks and the Tatar Cossacks are less well known. The name "Cossacks" was also given to a kind of light cavalry in the army of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Since the end of 2004, branches of the pan-Slavic extremist nationalist organisation **Eurasian Youth Union** (*Euraziizki Soyuz Molody*) have emerged in Ukraine, while its centres have already been established in Russia, Bulgaria, Moldova and Belarus. The Crimean branch of the ESM is a subdivision of the International Eurasian Movement founded by Alexander Dugin, a political scientist and one of the most influential ideologists of Russian expansionism and nationalism, who has close ties with the Kremlin and the Russian military intelligence services. The "Eurasians" in Ukraine actively cooperate with the Bratstvo (*Brotherhood*) movement led by Dmitro Korchynsky, with the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine chaired by Natalia Vitrenko and with the Russian Bloc. The ESM pushes for the "revival of the Great Russian Empire".

The Crimean branch of the "Eurasians" is meant for young people aged between 15 and 20. It is chaired by Konstantin Knyrik, a high school senior from Bakhchisaray.[35] The ESM has organised anti-NATO rallies under the banners of Russian nationalism and it has campaigned against the official recognition of the Ukrainian Rebels' Army (UPA).[36] In March 2007, the ESM in Sevastopol demanded the withdrawal of the Ukrainian Fleet from Crimea.[37] In May 2007, ESM activists called for the deportation of Ukrainian politicians to African countries.

In the second half of 2006, the Kremlin-sponsored youth movement **Nashi** appeared in Simferopol, distributing anti-American flyers.[38]

The Cossacks

Since the mid-1990s, paramilitary units, which can be categorised under the broader umbrella term of "Cossacks" and which support Russian nationalist ideology, have been proliferating in Crimea. Most of these units belong to an all-Russian network called the "Union of the Cossack

[35] His father, Sergey Knyrik, is a Member of the Bakhchisaray District Council, a member of the "For Yanukovych!" bloc, the Chairman of the Bakhchisaray Branch of the RCC and a board member of the Russian Community of Crimea. This creates yet another link between the ESM and the RCC. (From Tychenko (ed.), *op.cit*).
[36] Alexander Bogomolov, "Ukraine's Strategic Security on a Crossroads Between Democracy and Neutrality", *European Security Forum Working Paper*, no. 24 (2007).
[37] The Ukrainian Navy with its one serviceable battleship is also stationed in Sevastopol.
[38] Bogomolov, "Ukraine's Strategic Security… *op.cit.*.

Forces in Russia and Foreign Countries" (*Soyuz Kozatskih Voyisk v Rossiiy i Zarubezhiyem*). The Union receives money from Moscow. It is led by Victor Vodolatskiy, a Member of the Russian Duma.[39]

The Cossack movement in Crimea does not represent a continuation of the historical Cossack community. It is a rather new phenomenon that developed in the post-Soviet context and it has been inspired by myths of Cossack military glory. The Cossacks see themselves as the protectors of Orthodox values. Together with other Russian nationalist groups in Crimea, they share an apocalyptic vision of the future, according to which Muslims are a threat.[40]

The Crimean Union of Cossacks (*Krymski Kozazniy Soyuz*) is headed by Vladimir Cherkachyn, a Member of the Crimean Parliament, who belongs to the Russian Bloc. The membership of the Union fluctuates between 10,000 and 4,000. The Cossack units have a pseudo-military hierarchy; they have military ranks and uniforms. They also have whips, which can be used in fighting. During the last five years, many Cossacks have joined private security companies, thus gaining a right to bear gas pistols and pneumatic weapons (with rubber bullets). Most Cossacks are also registered as hunters and they have a right to bear arms. In addition, the Cossack movement in Crimea finances military sports activities for local youngsters, for example boxing, karate and taekwondo. This makes the Cossacks and their gatherings more attractive to youngsters.[41]

The Crimean Cossacks fight mostly with the local Tatar population. They are actively engaged in a war of religious symbols – the Cossacks mark visible places with large stone crosses, much to the irritation of the local Muslim population. If tensions between the Muslim population and the ethnic Russians continue to grow in Crimea, the Cossacks have a capacity to provide the infrastructure for an armed phase of a potential conflict.[42]

The Orthodox Church

Priests of the Russian Orthodox Church in Crimea frequently participate in anti-NATO rallies and in anti-Tatar actions. On many occasions the priests of the Moscow Patriarchate have openly displayed disrespect and intolerance for other faiths, such as the Crimean Muslims, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Greek Catholic Church.[43] Once a week, the Russian Orthodox Church distributes a free pro-Russian propaganda newspaper *Rusichi*, which is printed at the Publishing House of the Black Sea Fleet.[44] A number of priests who currently serve in Russian Orthodox churches in Crimea are former officers of the Black Sea Fleet.[45]

[39] On Sept 12, 2008, a Member of the Russian Duma, Viktor Vodolatsky, was not allowed to enter Ukraine to attend a coordinating council meeting of the Cossack Hetmans (leaders) from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Moldova's Transnistria region. For more information on this movement, see their homepage at http://www.skvriz.com.
[40] Bogolomov, talk at Kennan Institute, Report by Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, 09.10.2007.
[41] ICDS interview with Prytula.
[42] Alexander Bogomolov, "Ukraine's Strategic Security on a Crossroads Between Democracy and Neutrality", *European Security Forum Working Paper*, no. 24 (2007).
[43] Petro Volvach, Chairman of the Crimean Independent Centre of Political Researchers and Journalists, Opening speech, Stability in Crimea and in Ukraine in general depends on interreligious harmony, understanding and religious tolerance*., in* Crimean Independent Centre of Political Researchers and Journalists, *Crimean Tatar Issues*, No.1, Simferopol, 2008.
[44] ICDS interview with Andriy Shykun, Media-Krym civic activist, in Simfereopol, in October 2008.
[45] ICDS interview with Sergey Kulyk and Michael Gonchar, Center NOMOS, in Kyiv and in Sevastopol in September 2008.

Universities

Russian presence in the educational sector in Crimea continues to be substantial. Moscow has built schools and kindergartens in Sevastopol; it has opened branches of Russian institutes in Crimea; it has supplied them with textbooks and provided scholarships for students. The Moscow State University has established its Black Sea Department in Sevastopol. History of Ukraine is taught by former officers of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.[46]

## The Crimean Tatars

Crimea was the homeland of Muslim people called the "Crimean Tatars" until the late 18th century, when the forces of Russian Empress Catherine the Great conquered the peninsula. She defeated the Crimean Khanate and annexed Crimea to the Russian Empire. In 1944, Stalin deported all the Tatars to Central Asia. When Ukraine became independent, the Tatars started to return and today about 300,000 Crimean Tatars live in Crimea. However, they have not integrated well into the social and political life in Crimea. Local authorities dominated by ethnic Russians are hostile to the returnees and many Tatars have remained unsettled. They have limited access to housing, education, health care and other social services.

Disappointment in the Orange Forces

By tradition, the Crimean Tatars have been well-organised and consolidated in making their political choices. The Tatars were mostly anti-Soviet dissidents and later they were against the separation of Crimea from Ukraine. During the Orange Revolution, the Tatars supported Yushchenko. But as they are realising that Kyiv does not pay any attention to their problems (such as financing, education and getting land for mosques) in return for their support for the "Orange Forces", the support of the Tatars for Yushchenko is weakening.

During Kuchma's presidency, the relationship between Kyiv and the Mejlis – the representative body for the Crimean Tatars, which could make complaints to the Ukrainian central government – was solidified with the establishment of a Crimean Tatar advisory board under President Kuchma, which was called the "Council of Crimean Tatars."[47] Today, the intensity of these relations is much lower. During Yushchenko's time in office, the President's meetings with the Mejlis have become irregular and less frequent. The reason for this may be partly due to Yushchenko's personal distrust of the Tatars and his more conventional approach to traditional Ukrainian national values. The power relations between the Crimean Tatars and the President together with Kyiv are further complicated by Yushchenko's active support for the Cossacks, who are at odds with the Tatars in Crimea. For example, President Yushchenko took part in the celebration of Cossacks' Day and of Ukrainian Insurgent Army Day in Kyiv in October 2008.[48]

Split in the Mejlis

Lately, the authority of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis has been on the decline, because the Tatar leaders who have represented the community in the parliament in Kyiv have not been able to deliver on their promises to provide solutions to land problems. In addition, radical Muslim groupings are growing stronger and businessmen are gaining more influence in the Mejlis. In

[46] ICDS interview with Kulyk and Gonchar.
[47] Laryssa Chomiak, Waleed Ziad, "Islamic Organizations and Challenges in Crimea: An Interview with Dr. Alexander Bogomolov", interview conducted in August 2006, remarks updated in April 2008, at http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/bogomolovinterview.html.
[48] http://www.unian.net/eng/news/news-278534.html (UNIAN, 14.10.2008).

December 2007 during the last Kurultai (the congress held by the Crimean Tartars to elect the Mejlis and to set its guidelines), the Chairman of the Mejlis Mustafa Jemilev announced his intention to resign. There are two main candidates for the Chairman's post are Rifat Chubarov and Remzi Ilyasov. Chubarov, whom Jemilev himself endorses as his successor, has been characterised as a promising, popular, educated and moderate politician.[49] He will probably follow Jemilev's line. Ilyasov, who is also a Member of the Parliament of Ukraine, leads a business group supporting the Party of Regions. In short, the balance between ideological and business-oriented politicians among the Crimean Tatars will soon become the deciding factor.

Pro-Russian Trends Among the Tatars

As anti-Soviets, the Tatars have traditionally treated Moscow with suspicion. In return, Moscow is interested in undermining the authority of the Mejlis, in destroying the traditional unanimity of opinion among the Crimean Tatars and in disorienting the consolidated Tatar community. Experts believe that at the moment the goal of winning over some Tatars is even more important for the Russian security services than gaining the support of pro-Russian NGOs, because the NGOs are more dispersed and no single NGO can mobilise the majority of the Russian-speaking population in Crimea the way the Mejlis can mobilise most of the Tatars.[50]

A letter sent by a marginal Crimean Tartar organisation "Milli Fyrka" (*National Party*) to Russian President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin in September 2008 should be put into this context. This extraordinary appeal came from Vasvi Abduraimov, the leader of Milli Fyrka, asking Medvedev and Putin to "protect the Tatars from Yushchenko's genocide".[51] Abduraimov, a former Soviet dissident, was the only Crimean Tatar who was subjected to punitive psychiatry. He is well outside the mainstream of the Crimean Tatar public opinion on many issues, including his pronounced pro-Russian tendencies. Experts believe that the letter to Putin was most probably Abduraimov's personal initiative.[52]

Radicalisation of Crimean Muslims

When people live in poor conditions as the Tatars do in Crimea, they become susceptible to political speculation and the influence of extremists. Tatar community leaders have reported that foreign Islamic groups have tried to radicalise the disaffected Tatar youth. The radicalisation of the Crimean Muslims can become a threat to peace in the region. But as the membership of the radical religious groups remains marginal, this threat should not be overemphasised. In recent years, most of the conflicts have arisen due to the extremely inadequate policies the state has pursued with respect to the Crimean Tatars. The activation of the Crimean Muslims by foreigners is directly linked with the general social and economic difficulties of the Crimean Tatars[53]

At the moment, there are at least two groups among the Crimean Muslims who oppose the Crimean Muslims Clergy (CMC) that is formed under the moderate wing of Sunnism, to which most of the Crimean Tatars subscribe. These oppositional religious movements taking hold in

[49] Samar, *Zerkalo Nedeli,* 8-14 December, 2007.
[50] ICDS interview with Viktor Konstantinov, Institute of Russian Studies in Kyiv, September 2008; ICDS interview with Yulia Tyschenko, UCIPR, in Kyiv in September 2008..
[51] UNIAN, 15.09.2008http://www.unian.net/eng/news/news-272996.html
[52] ICDS interview with Alexander Bogomolov, Association of Middle East Studies, in Kyiv, September 2008; ICDS interview with Prytula.
[53] Andriy Kyrylov, an expert of the Crimean Independent Centre of Political Researchers and Journalists, "Islamic Extremism: Is There a Threat to Public Peace in the Crimea?" in Crimean Independent Centre of Political Researchers and Journalists, *Crimean Tatar Issues*, No.1, Simferopol, 2008.

Crimea are **Hizb ut-Tahrir** (established in 2003) and **Salafi** (Wahhabi) groups together with a nation-wide Arab-sponsored Islamic network of **Al-Raid** (established in 1997).[54] Salafis mainly concentrate their activities inside the clergy groups, while Hizb ut-Tahrir is more focused on promoting their views and ideas among Muslims and the Crimean Tatars in general. However, the radicalism of modern Crimean Muslims is still very far from extremism in its Middle Eastern or North Caucasus's form.

At the beginning of 2000, the Simferopol Medical University hosted a number of Arab students from Jordan, Egypt, Saudi and other places. After completing their studies, many stayed in Crimea and got married. Arab funds for radical Muslim movements have found their way to Crimea through these people. In part, the Russians and the Crimean Communists also financed these religious groups in order to justify the xenophobia of local Slavs during the 2003 presidential campaign.[55] Some believe that the Russians help to finance Hizb ut-Tahrir and other religious extremist groups to weaken the Mejlis.[56]

The Crimean Hizb ut-Tahrir claims to have ties with the global Hizb ut-Tahrir network. The group has adopted a general anti-US and pro-Iraq stance. It calls for the return of Muslims to the Islamic way of life and to an Islamic state or Caliphate, which would be based on the fundamental beliefs and the Sharia. Hizb ut-Tahrir has declared that its aim is to lead the Ummah in its struggle against infidels. Suggesting ideas that contradict the basis of traditional Islam, the group develops a social cleavage among the Muslim Tatars in Crimea. It remains unclear how and whether the Crimean Hizb ut-Tahrir is connected to the large London- and Jordan-based organisations or Hizb ut-Tahrir strongholds in Central Asia. It is interesting to point out that the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement is banned in Russia. [57]

By providing various services to local Muslim communities, the Arab-sponsored Al-Raid has developed a large clientele and a network of regional branches, the most active of which include those in Kyiv, Crimea, Donetsk, Kharkiv and Odessa. While these groups do receive funding from the Gulf states and global Islamic networks, their activities are limited to local Muslim communities.[58]

Events in the North Caucasus have certainly played a significant role in pushing young Tatars towards more radical Islam. More work should be done with Tatar youngsters, but Kyiv lacks the capacity to do so. According to some independent experts, the Ukrainian security services do not have the necessary experience to work with radical Muslim youth. In addition, the Ukrainian security services live in a make-believe world, believing that the First Chechen War did not really have a radicalising effect on the Tatars. They ignore the changes that have occurred after 9/11 in the radical Muslim mentality.[59]

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[54] Laryssa Chomiak, Waleed Ziad, "Islamic Organizations and Challenges in Crimea: An Interview with Dr. Alexander Bogomolov", at http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/bogomolovinterview.html.
[55] ICDS interview with Prytula; ICDS interview with the SBU of Crimea, in Sevastopol, October 2008..
[56] Chomiak, Ziad, "An Interview with Dr. Alexander Bogomolov"; Konah Ammar, Sevastopol National Technical University, "Factor of Islamic radicalism in Crimea: the case of Hizb ut-Tahrir" in *in* Crimean Independent Centre of Political Researchers and Journalists, *Crimean Tatar Issues*, No.1, Simferopol, 2008
[57] Konah Ammar, Sevastopol National Technical University, "Factor of Islamic radicalism in Crimea: the case of Hizb ut-Tahrir" in *in* Crimean Independent Centre of Political Researchers and Journalists, *Crimean Tatar Issues*, No.1, Simferopol, 2008.
[58] Ibid.
[59] ICDS interview with Konstantinov.

## Kyiv's Ambivalence

While Russia is holding all the cards to destabilise Crimea, the political forces in Kyiv lack the ability to reach a compromise, let alone to find a consensus on how to solve the security challenges in Crimea. Yet Ukraine needs a comprehensive strategy for the future of Crimea. As a prerequisite for the strategy, the level of understanding of the components of the Crimean conflict must be raised and an effective state apparatus to reduce Russia's leverage must be built. Too much will depend on Russia, if the state of Ukraine cannot meaningfully and constructively exercise its powers over the region of Crimea.

### A Need to Raise the Level of Understanding

A comprehensive assessment of the current processes in Crimea can help Ukrainian policymakers to adopt a development strategy for Crimea, to resolve ideological discrepancies with Russia and to make their dialogue with Moscow on the Black Sea Fleet more pragmatic.

Currently, Kyiv does not really seem to know Crimea; it does not understand the problems in Crimea the way the locals do.[60] Kyiv lacks comprehensive, direct and trustworthy channels of information from Crimea. True, some fragmentary reportsoccasionally reach various power structures in Kyiv, but there is often no feedback to these scanty reports. Such indifference to and underestimation of the Crimean processes by the central authorities have left Crimea on its own, allowing it to operate in a completely autonomous mode.

For example, all dealings between Ukraine and Russia that concern the Black Sea Fleet are monopolised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in Kyiv. The negotiations on the military specifics are conducted at the level of the First Deputy Minister of Defence without the full participation of the Ukrainian Navy Staff in Sevastopol. The officers of the Ukrainian Navy who actually know what is going on in Sevastopol and who see the changes at everyday level find it difficult to launch any local initiatives, because Ukraine still has a strong Soviet culture of bureaucracy. The negotiations are therefore slow and rigid, having little to do with the situation on the ground in Sevastopol.[61]

In addition, for the past four years there have been no regular links between the local government and the Russian Navy. Before the Orange Revolution, a standing group of experts from the Sevastopol City Government monitored the developments concerning the Russian Black Sea Fleet. After the events on Maidan in 2004, most of the Kuchma-era functionaries in the Sevastopol City Government were fired without hiring anyone to replace them. Today, nobody on the civilian side deals with the close monitoring of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.[62] These are only a few examples that illustrate the need to set up better and more effective channels of communication and information between the central authorities in Kyiv and Crimea.

### Effective State Institutions

Kyiv has all the necessary constitutional means to control the Parliament and the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. It should use these means better and more efficiently.

[60] ICDS interviews with Ukrainian and Tatar businessmen, a politician and a retired officer in Sevastopol in Sevastopol and Simferopol, October 2008.
[61] ICDS interview with the Ukrainian Navy Staff, in Sevastopol, October 2008.
[62] ICDS interview with Kulyk and Gonchar.

Due to the political turbulence in Kyiv and the in-fighting, government offices have a limited mandate for dealing with Crimea. What is needed is a single decision-making centre of authority, which could be established under the National Security and Defence Council.

In addition, the potential of the post of the presidential representative in Crimea has to be used to the maximum possible effect. Gennadi Moskal played a strong and visible role in Crimea, while the new presidential representative, Leonid Zhunko, is almost invisible.

**Suggestions**

***The Government of Ukraine***

Effective institutions

- Set up a high-level inter-agency working group that would provide information about Crimea for political decision-makers. The goal should be to formulate a comprehensive strategy for the future of Crimea. Consider using the National Security and Defence Council as a secretariat for the working group.

Information campaign

- Start a target-minded formation of a common civic identity in Crimea together with a comprehensive PR campaign with the aim of 'Ukrainasation' of Crimea, as well as sharing information about the goals and objectives of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.
- Generate high quality Russian language information channels in Crimea spreading Ukrainian news.
- Consider building information campaign on the assumption that Ukraine is not socially divided due to the opposition between Russian and Ukrainian ethnic nationalism, but the opposition between an emerging European-Ukrainian identity and the Soviet mentality. A common European identity could provide new opportunities for Crimea. The sense of belonging to Europe could be useful in overcoming the rift between different ethnic communities. In this respect, some clear signs of progress and an invitation to join the EU could help Ukraine.

Russia's Black Sea Fleet

- The government of Ukraine should be persistent in pushing for an infrastructure inventory of the Black Sea Fleet, as this would enable to raise the rent to the market level. Demand that the Russians pay a market-level rent between 2009 and 2017.
- Sell the land occupied by the Black Sea Fleet to some western country after 2017 and let it deal with Russia.

Crimean Muslims

- Provide solutions for socio-economic problems of Crimean Tatars.
- Facilitate dialogue with the Crimean Tatar community by providing a platform for discussion and resources to develop inter-religious understanding in Crimea.

- Increase the capacity of security services in working with the radical Moslem youth. If need be, consider using international assistance for determining best practices in this field.

***The EU and NATO***

- Finance infrastructure projects to turn Sevastopol into a commercial hub after the Black Sea Fleet leaves. If the local population has no alternative income other than that provided by the Russian Fleet, they will be easy prey for Russian propaganda. The vacuum in Sevastopol created by the future withdrawal of the Black Sea Fleet could be filled with tourism.
- Organise allied training workshops on base closing and on relations between bases and local administrations according to the principles of good practice in the West.

- Provide real-time help when natural disasters occur.

- Increase the role of private businesses in the stabilisation process of Crimea. Improve business culture and introduce western business practices.

- Provide targeted scholarships, educational exchange programmes and study visits abroad for residents of Crimea. Target local groups such as youngsters, local elite, the military, local government officials, local teachers etc. People from Crimea have rarely travelled abroad and introducing them to Western value systems could promote a more conscious geopolitical choice.