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Crimea: Competing Self-Determination Movements and the Politics at the Centre

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Introduction

The conflict in Kosovo and the declaration of Kosovo's independence on 17 February 2008 generated significant discussions in Ukraine and abroad on a possible "Kosovo scenario" for Crimea, as it did in other parts of the former Soviet Union.[1] The context of these discussions – the 'Orange Revolution', the political disappointment in Crimea in the so-called 'pro-Russian' Victor Yanukovych, along with the long-term struggle between Kiev and the autonomous region – predetermined any local settlements on the comparison between Kosovo and Crimea. Although the root causes for prolonged tension between Kiev and Simferopol (the regional capital in Crimea) lie in the ineffective socio-economic policy of the Ukrainian state towards the region and the state's inability to adequately react to challenges of the post-Soviet period, the conflict is fundamentally connected to the geo-politics of the region. Evidence for this paradox can be seen in a number of scandalous examples such as the proposal of the former president Viktor Yuschenko to join the NATO Membership Action Plan in 2005 and the resulting Crimean parliament's declaration of Crimea as a 'free from NATO zone', calls for the abolition of Ukraine-NATO military exercises on the peninsula[2], and local council support for the Russian Federation during the Russia-Georgia war in 2008.[3]

Oddly, while Kosovo has become an ever-more frequent reference in comparison to Crimea, separatist claims in the region have actually decreased. This pattern would suggest that the comparison between Kosovo and Crimea is becoming less apt overtime. For instance, only the most radical political actors on both sides of the political spectrum discuss the possibility of a Russia-Ukraine war over Crimea. In other words, the geo-political and internal status quo for Crimea provides sustainable peace. On the contrary, we argue that the potential for conflict in Crimea remains high despite the decrease in calls for self-determination. Specifically, we argue that unlike Kosovo and the NATO-led intervention, geo-politics is unlikely to be a causal factor. Rather, our argument is that a more probable trigger of conflict escalation will be the implementation of land reform that would cement the long-standing conditions of socio-economic inequality and corruption. More importantly, if social

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[1] For example, see *Interfax News Agency: Russia and CIS Military Weekly* 'Ukraine's refusal to recognize South Ossetia, Abkhazia related to separatism in Crimea – analyst' 11 June 2011.

[2] In fact, local protests contributed to the partial non-execution of the Sea Breeze exercises in Ukraine in 2006.

[3] During the conflict a number of local councils in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea voted for a statement that blamed Georgia's aggression, whereas the central government of Ukraine officially supported Georgia and limited participation of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Russia-Georgia war through establishment of legal restrictions for activity of the fleet in Sevastopol during the war. See Zayavlenie Verkhovnoy Radi Respubliki Krim, 2006 available at http://www.obzor.crimea.ua/stare.php?mark=20&day=9&month=06&year=2006; Deputati Yaltinskogo gorodskogo soveta prizivayut Verkhovniy Sovet Ukraini osudit aggressiyu Gruzii protiv naroda Yuzhnoy Ossetii, available at http://ru-news.ru/art_desc.php?aid=2212.

grievances can be directed into ethnic tension, then the probability of mass violence could increase.

The paper sets out to examine how the Kosovo arrangement affected the Crimean case and whether the prospects for a sustainable peace are better or worse for it. Our primary question is if Kosovo's self-determination is inherently tied to its context within the Yugoslav Wars and the international intervention that came with it, then to what degree does the case shed light on a somewhat similar case of co-ethnics, religious differences and a weakened state? With interesting Kosovo connotations, we argue that the current low levels of contention in Crimea are two-fold. First, as Ukrainian foreign policy has moved away from a pro-Western orientation to that of a positive relationship with Russian, the Crimea issue lacks contemporary salience. Secondly, Crimea remains unchallenged by the Ukrainian political process in the post-Orange Revolution era. At the same time, we argue that the centre-periphery relations in Ukraine have the potential to lead to conflict as Kiev attempts to reassert its authority in the region through land reform. In these ways, we find that explanations of the Crimean case can gain from the Kosovo example.

In order to answer our central research question, we focus on setting out the case for the propensity of conflict in Crimea. Within this discussion, the paper is broken down into four sections. The first section compares the Kosovo and Crimea cases, highlighting the role of geo-politics, centre-periphery relations, social conditions and ethnic politics. The second section looks at the post-Soviet circumstances of ethno-politics in Crimea leading up to the 'Orange Revolution' of 2004. Third, we analyse the geo-politics surrounding the Crimea case, focusing on the role of the Russian Federation as regional hegemon, kin-state and key stakeholder in the Black Sea region. Fourth, we examine the changing local conditions and their impact on the prospect for peace in Crimea. We finish with a conclusion that reinforces our theoretically informed central argument that land reform has the potential to ignite conflict on the peninsula.

Crimea through the Kosovo Lens: an attempt at comparison
We begin by looking at Crimea through an analytical model derived from the Kosovo case as a means to allow us to see Crimea through the Kosovo lens. Having ended with the declaration of independence and the recognition of a self-proclaimed republic by a number of states, the conflict in Kosovo put into life a wave of debates in Ukraine and abroad on the analogies between the Kosovo and Crimean cases. This debate was not new. Throughout the

post-Cold War period, the two autonomous regions have been compared especially in terms of how the international community wished to treat them. For instance, the then Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now OSCE) sought to use the Kosovo autonomous character in Crimea as a route to stability[4] only to have the role model reversed five years later as Crimea was used as a good example for Kosovo.[5] However, similarities between the driving forces and dynamics of these two conflict situations are not so evident. We argue that the best way to ascertain either differences or likenesses of these cases is to compare them upon a number of criteria generated by a reference to the literature on Kosovo. We look at four factors: a) geo-politics, b) centre-periphery relations, c) social conditions and d) ethnic politics.

Kosovo literature

Geo-politics
We begin with the most obvious comparative question: How do geo-politics shape separatist movements? Andrew Cottey (2009) argues in his article on the legacy of Kosovo that the conflict established a new geo-political dividing between those states that are within the realm of EU and NATO expansion and those that set outside of it, referring to the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltic States) as a 'no-man's land'. He argues further that, '[a]s the 2008 Georgian war clearly illustrated, strategic ambiguity here poses formidable challenges…[and] NATO's intervention in Kosovo is best understood as the high-water mark of western power and the liberal values underpinning the idea of humanitarian intervention' (2009, p.593). This ambiguity and perhaps end to Western intervention raises issues for the probability of conflict in Crimea. In the same article, Cottey looks at the counter-factual question of what might have occurred had NATO not intervened (2009, p.606)? The result, he argues, is that the escalation of conflict in Kosovo would have been far worse not less. Ironic, but unsurprising, the occurrence of Kosovo and the intervention in 1999 has meant a visual limitation of Western intervention further afield, such as to Georgia, much less Crimea. Out of Cottey's discussion is the impact of the larger context on the rise of the Kosovo conflict and the response by the international community. How might these geo-political charactertistics tells us something about Crimea?

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[4] *Switalski Ctk National News Wire* 'CSCE wants to have permanent representation in Kiev', 18 June 1994.
[5] *Knight Ridder/Tribune* 'Ethnic equality, not ethnic cleansing: Eight years into freedom, Ukraine emerges as a democratic role-model for Balkans' 22 April 1999.

The geo-politics of the Crimea are important for two reasons. First, there has been a significant amount of research on the roles of diasporas leading to regional instability. David R. Davis and Will H. Moore show that 'if members of an ethnic group are dispersed across two or more states, [the kin-state] will monitor the status and behaviour of their brethren across the border' (1997, p.173). In both cases, external forces have interfered in the autonomous regions either to escalate or de-escalate violence. At other times, they often use the conflict situation in domestic affairs and internal political competition. The policy of Russia towards the Crimea, undoubtedly, plays an important role in conflict escalation. However, polls testify against any wide-spread opinion of Russia coming to the aid of the Crimea with the decreasing intensity of Russian foreign policy on the region and the reduction in pro-Russian support overall. Most inhabitants of the Crimea emphasise local grievances and social tensions of some kind, that have risen with increasing unemployment, unlawful land privatisation, social insecurity, deepening poverty and social exclusion. All the above are fundamental factors in the Crimean case and the region's relationship with the Ukrainian state, rather than a facet of pro-Russian sentiments.

On what basis does Russia claim an interest in Crimea? And, can Russia be seen as a kin-state similar to Albania in the Kosovo case? The so-called 'triadic nexus' between the kin-state, host-state and regional minority is different in the two cases in that Albania did not have a major geo-political role to play in Kosovo (see Brubacker 1996, Gray 1999). Beyond the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) itself, the most important actors instigating independence was the West, primarily the United States. The argument followed that self-determination would be the surest way to regional stability given the years of ethnic conflict between ethnic Serbs and Albanians in the region. The tool of self-determination has a precedent in international law where ethnic conflict has occurred especially in cases of state sponsored violence (see Knop 2002). Crimean Slavs have not experienced state-sponsored violence or intimidation and thus international law would have a different view on their right to self-determination. This legal argument also suggests why Moscow has been keen to portray South Ossetians and Abkhazians as victims of Georgian aggression.

Second, the Crimea peninsula and the Black Sea are held as geo-strategically important by Ukraine and Russia, which may explain why the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation of the conflict in the Crimea has attracted so much attention. Historically, Crimea was built and perceived as a 'regional military base' and outpost for Russia and later for the USSR - a unique place (due to its natural and geographic conditions) for the location

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of submarine bases, warship ports and air force bases. The geostrategic significance of the Crimea may be explained by its location in the Black Sea. As contemporary strategic studies would suggest, the extent of sea coast plays a key role in defence and encourages a preponderance of parties to show interest, which potentially could lead to conflict in the Black Sea. The existing balance of forces in the Black Sea region between NATO countries and Russia calls forth the geostrategic significance of Crimea and the price which Russia is willing to pay for control over the territory. Here, akin to Russia's role in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it is not so important for Russia to anchor its control over the territory legally, where actual control can be gained outside of extending traditional sovereignty over the peninsula.

Russia's interest in Crimea as a strategic defence of its southern region brings us back to the international dynamics of separatist movements. We should expect kin-states to get involved in host-state affairs, whether as Davis and Moore argue to deepen or dampen the potential for conflict. At the same time, we can see in both of our cases that the role of kin-states around the issue of ethnicity has been muted. Albania's ability to effect change in Kosovo was minimal which led to a position of inaction (on positive assistance for or restrictive control over the KLA). Russia, on the other hand, is in a different position yet its focus on ethnicity beyond other geo-political concerns is minimal perhaps because there are few reasons to resent being Slavic in Crimea. More importantly, Russia sees a Ukrainian Crimea as a way to influence regional politics. As we will argue further on, the geo-political context means that neither Ukraine nor Russia have an interest in changing the status quo.

Centre-Periphery relations
In his book, Strong Societies and Weak States, Joel Migdal (1988) argues that conflict is likely to occur as conceptions of the polity are challenged by competing claims of resource allocation. The weaker the state, the less it is able to challenge alternative sources of power. As a response, peripheral actors see an opportunity to challenge the weak centre. In contrast to the Yugoslav case where the centre was strong, but lacked international legitimacy, Ukraine's state weakness in the 1990s, a number of shocks in the 1990s and the 2000s favoured an 'autonomisation' of the political and socio-economic processes on the peninsula that broke ties between the centre and the autonomous region. Finally, this post-Soviet 'condition' produced considerable tension between Kiev and Simferopol during Ukraine's "Orange Revolution".

Hypothetically speaking, with a continuous weakening of the Ukrainian state, the Crimean and other regional elites in Ukraine would likely make claims for broader self governance, transforming the current unitary Ukrainian state into a federation, which already retains some popularity among peripheral elites. Going further, under conditions of state failure, we envisage a scenario of irredentism to Russia or secession towards an independent Crimea. Ukraine is not at this point nor has been since its independence in 1991, a failed state. However, the logic of 'strong societies, weak states' suggests that the political opportunity structure that is present in Ukraine currently concerning Crimea leads us to argue that the possibility for conflict remains in the region. Alternatively, the case of Kosovo suggests that a state under siege, whether strong or not, will make possible an opportunity for secession especially under claims of relative deprivation vis-à-vis the (Serbian) centre.

The question of centre-periphery relations becomes even more problematic if we take into account the historical status of the two regions. An important similarity between the Kosovo and Crimea cases is the historically entangled and legally controversial status of the regions that enables each conflict party to claim for truth and justice as proof of its position. Serbia claimed Kosovo as a historic part of greater Serbia but also the location of a great nation-forming event, the Battle of Kosovo and the death of Prince Lazar at the hands of the Ottoman army. Crimea is not so central to either Ukraine or Russia's national historiography, but rather its place within the Russian Empire and later Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic together combined with the location of the Black Sea Fleet makes the peninsula contested in terms of geo-political location and loyalties.

Social Conditions

The literature on civil wars and social movements also suggests that relative deprivation between regions would suggest a significant propensity for conflict (see for example Østby, Nordås, and Rød 2009). Kosovo is predominantly a rural economy and remains one of the least developed countries in Europe today. Throughout the Yugoslav period and afterwards, Kosovo remained the poorest territory of the federation on indices of socio-economic development: poverty, unemployment, child mortality, access to basic education and health care. In contrast, the indices of socio-economic development in Crimea are comparable with Ukraine's national average with high potential for improvement, although the substantial depth of the shadow economy makes forecasting difficult. An annual assessment of competitiveness of Ukraine's regions in international comparisons (Foundation for Effective Governance, www.feg.org.ua) gives the Crimea 4.06 – integrated index of competitiveness -

that is comparable with indices of socio-economic development of Kazakhstan and Latvia, whereas Ukraine's average index of competitiveness is 3.97. In the meantime, the Crimea is more attractive for investments than many other Ukrainian regions. Social grievance appears as a result of the rapid de-industrialisation in the 1990s and the structural shifts in the economy from high-tech production of weapons to extensive inefficient agriculture and tourism.[6]

Ethnic politics

Migration has been an important politicising factor in Crimea's history. Mass deportation of the Tatars from the Crimea in May 1944, labour migration of the Russians and the Ukrainians in the 1950s that led to changes in the demographic structure of the territory and prevalence of Slavic population, the militarisation of the Crimea in the post-war period and repatriation of the Tatars to the Crimea in the 1990s have all contributed to the current tensions between two major ethnic groups (Slav and Tatar). As we will discuss in the last section, the role of political elites from outside the region also plays a role in balancing these ethnic groups and their respective claims.

In 1991, the population of Kosovo consisted of Albanians 82%, Serbs 11%, and 7% - representatives of other nationalities. In 2002 the proportion had changed a bit: Albanians 88%, Serbs 7% and 5% - representatives of other nationalities. According to the census of 1939, Crimea constituted: Russians 49.6%, Ukrainians 13.7%, Crimean Tatars 19.4% and Jews 5.8%. After the deportation of the Crimean Tatars following the Second World War to Central Asia, the territory of Crimea was populated by Russians and Ukrainians. To illustrate the change, in the 1959 Soviet census (first census after WWII) the population of Crimea consisted of Russians 71.4%, Ukrainians 22.3% and Jews 2.2% (Polyan 2001). In accordance with the last census in 2001, the Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) population of Crimea are approximately 58.5% and 24.4% respectively (National Population Census in Ukraine, 2001). Ethnic Russians and Ukrainians living in Crimea are overwhelmingly Russian-speaking and are affiliated with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchy. Crimean Russians and Crimean Ukrainians consistently behave as one actor. So, both Slavic groups tend to support a Russian Crimea concept (heavy industry, special economic zone, territorial autonomy) over that of Ukraine, which says a great deal about the ethnic claims and grievances on the ground. This being said, it is also remarkable that the separatist claims have decreased despite a strong Russian orientation. Again, the Russian government itself has not

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[6] The competitiveness of tourism is under considerable doubt because of its seasonal fluctuation.

pressed for separatism but rather for a special status within Ukraine. These are the claims of the Crimean Slavic population.

Unlike the Kosovo case, where the conflict situation was shaped by long-standing socio-economic inequality, ethnic grievance, exaggerated by weakening Yugoslavian state and ambitions of independence, the two main ethnic groups in Crimea do not experience significant socio-economic differences and ethnic hatreds. Although the Slavic and the Crimean Tatar communities often give different interpretations of events and decisions in domestic and foreign policy agendas, the value of integration is a more powerful factor than risks of disintegration and conflict. The Ukrainian state formally does not recognize any ethnic minorities in Ukraine, since the state did not want to grant the status of minority to any group in order not to give preferences to the largest minority in Ukraine – the Russians. Notably, the legislation of the Crimean autonomous region is more attentive to the rights of minorities than the Ukrainian state itself. The comparison between Crimea and Kosovo highlights some interesting findings which leads us to investigate the Crimean case further in the next sections. Firstly, the international context is different between the two regions. While Kosovo was seen as a victim by many in the international community (US, EU, and UN), Crimea does not hold this status. If we take out the politics of such claims, we can see that the constellation of invested actors in the international community is different in the two cases. In other words, the external pressure to find a solution will be focused on internal arrangements of accommodation rather than secession. Secondly, as we shall see later, the centre-periphery relations in Crimea are distinctly different from the Kosovo case, in terms of the status of central government and the autonomous region. Thirdly, while Kosovo remains a relatively poor region in the Balkans, Crimea has much better economic conditions vis-à-vis Ukraine as a whole. Finally, the ethnic politics of the region are complicated by a third group in the region, the Crimean Tatars. The case of Crimea then plays at two different levels, between centre and periphery and between Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) and Tatar. The circumstances make for a delicate scenario.

Contemporary Crimean separatism
The question of whether the threat of separatism is still relevant for Crimea is widely discussed and remains open. On the one hand, open secessionist conflict between Crimea and Kiev died out in the mid-1990s, as a result of an accommodation between Kiev and Moscow fostered by the OSCE High Commissioner of National Minorities. On the other hand, during the last decade the share of the republic's residents, supporting the idea of annexation to

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Russia, has grown to over 50%, thus, the social base for the separatist movement in the Crimea in the last decade has grown (Razumkov Centre 2011).

In the meantime, relations between the different conflicting parties inside Crimea, as well as Kiev and other actors (i.e. Russia), are hardly identified as critical or close to violence. Radical intentions or attitudes that might potentially lead to violent conflict on the peninsula have not been widely spread or shared. Moreover, the total number of residents in Crimea - potential supporters of separation - have been decreasing since 2009. Should we not expect more tension? As we state in the introduction, we argue that the chance for conflict has remained low for two reasons. First, as Ukrainian foreign policy has changed away from that of a contentious relationship with Russia, the salience of the Crimea issue has reduced. For example, more recently Ukraine agreed to extend the hosting of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Secondly and more importantly is the domestic factor where Crimea has experienced a greater sense of regional difference from the rest of Ukraine. This difference has led to a growing sense of what it means to be Crimean rather than Russian or Ukrainian. We argue that the longstanding dissociation of Kiev from Crimea directly impacts public opinion in Crimea and decreases separatist attitudes overall.

Having said this, we argue that two processes can make the radicalisation of violence in Crimea realisable in the short-term. The first is the weakening of the Ukrainian state through the criminalisation of state institutions, low public trust in the government, socio-economic inequality, institutional exclusion, and the spread of alternative societal structures which have developed into a survival culture. The second is the Ukrainian government's policy of land privatisation in Crimea. Under these conditions of a weak state and the uncertainty of property rights, the privatisation of land could to a radicalisation, violence, enmity, and the mobilisation of social groups under ethnic slogans (see Mason 1998).

Under the Constitution of Ukraine adopted in 1996, Ukraine has an asymmetric unitary state system. The status of Crimea and the power of local authorities are unique in Ukraine. The decision to restore the Crimean autonomous region, which previously existed between 1921-1945 and was renewed in 1991 in a referendum, avoided any radicalisation or violence which would have led to a further separation of Crimea in the 1990s. However, the restoration of the autonomous region did not resolve the contradictions in legal status nor Ukrainian suzerainty over of Crimea. Moreover, the way in which the referendum question was formulated within

the USSR as opposed to an independent Ukraine is legally questionable.[7] The Declaration of State Sovereignty of Crimea, adopted on 4 September 1991 by the Extraordinary Session of the Crimean Parliament as well as the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 1994, which fastened the status of the Crimean autonomous region as a part of the Ukrainian state, together created a framework for future questioning of the territorial belonging of the Crimea. Finally, in the General Agreement between Russia and Ukraine signed in 1994, Russia recognized the territorial integrity of Ukraine within the current borders, including the Crimea. In turn, Ukraine agreed, at the time, to maintain non-aligned status.

Since the General Agreement between Russia and Ukraine, the possibilities for radicalisation and violence in Crimea have been well covered in academic publications and public policy reports on Ukraine. The conflict potential of Crimea is comparable with other Ukrainian regions. However, the geopolitical importance of Crimea makes the situation unique and particularly crucial for security and the balance of power in the Black Sea Region, as we indicated in the previous section (see King 2007; Triantaphyllou 2007; Winrow 2008).

We identify several actors who seek power and access to resources in Crimea: a) the local elite (both Slavic and Tatar), b) the central government and elite in Kiev (both ruling elite and the opposition), and c) external forces, primarily referring to Russia. In the meantime and foreseeable future none of the above actors is interested in the extension of a Crimean separatist movement that would potentially lead to the secession of the territory from Ukraine. Rather, this constellation has arrived at an equilibrium of peace.

However, we argue that this equilibrium is not sustainable in its current form. Taking into account the collective grievances and dissatisfaction of the population with the results of socio-economic reforms, the escalation or de-escalation of conflict in the republic depends on the relations between local elites and Kiev, along with the intensity and close involvement of the central government with a solution for the socio-economic problems facing the autonomous region. Two further factors can disrupt the existing status quo: (1) changes in the demographic structure of the republic's population over the medium to long term, and (2) the dramatic weakening of the Ukrainian state and the resulting consequences of mass unrest.

Competing Movements, Competing Claims

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[7] The 1991 referendum posed 'the Crimean autonomous region republic should have to be restored as a subject of the USSR and a participant of the Soviet Union agreement'.

The comparison of Kosovo shows Crimea to be in a stable equilibrium where no sides wish to upset the status quo. The same could have been said in Kosovo in the late 1970s however. The key is that by the time there was large-scale violence in Kosovo, the existential threats of both camps had already become significantly salient as mobilizing forces. The ability to change this following the war in Bosnia and the increased pressure on Kosovo by the KLA and the Yugoslav National Army means that the convergence of interests at the regional, national and local levels were considered impossible to overcome. The Crimean case allows us to look back in time to when Kosovo too was considered stable in terms of claims made by Serbians and Albanians.

Interests of local pro-Russian (non-Tatar) elite

In defiance of popular opinion in Crimea, annexation to Russia is not an attractive scenario for the Crimean elite, where the majority of which are representatives of different business interests throughout Ukraine (for instance, extensions of the Donbass, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov and Kiev areas). Crimean business elites are essentially sheltered while they remain in Ukraine. For instance, an annexation of Crimea to Russia would make local mini-oligarchs uncompetitive before the large powerful Russian business groups. As has been seen elsewhere, competition against Russian state-supported monopolies such as GAZPROM and Alfa-Bank can be fatal for Ukrainian business.[8] Thus, the Crimean economic elite and parliamentary representatives (like their counterparts in Donetsk and Kiev) are fairly concerned about any integration with Russia, starting from membership in the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, much less a move towards annexation. Ukrainian business concerns are the reasons economic and political elites, and their commercial backing, are keen to maintain a broad autonomous region of the Crimea that guarantees their monopoly over the use of the republic's resources. Ironically, the possibility of further integration with Russia is widely played up by politicians as a way to generate electoral support, in direct contrast to their business and political interests on a wider scale.

Tatar minority interests

Nevertheless, not all societal groups have the same interests. The Tatar ethnic minority is not interested in the separation of Crimea from Ukraine. According to the Main Department of Statistics in the Republic of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars are about 243,000 (12.1% of the region's population), that is less than half the number of Ukrainians at 492,200 (24.4%) and

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[8] For instance, Gazprom halted the shipment of natural gas to Ukraine in March 2008 after $1.5 billion of payment arrears.

five times less than Russians at 1,180,000 (58.5%) (2011). Ethnic Russians and Ukrainians show the same attitude to important political events in the country and more often behave politically as one actor. The exceptional status of the largest ethnic minority in the Crimea (the Crimean Tatars) gives certain privileges to Crimean Tatar elite and creates a 'bridgehead' for negotiations with the authorities in the autonomous region and Kiev (D'anieri 2007). For the Crimean Tatars, these advantages would be immediately lost if Crimea were to join Russia, especially with its growing intolerance of Muslim minorities.

The optimal strategy for the Crimean Tatar elite is to maintain a broad system of self-governance of the region inside Ukraine, while claiming for further development of the rights and privileges of the Tatar community until a time when the population of the Crimean Tatars reaches an overwhelming numerical majority and would be able to make a claim for Crimean Tatar statehood, depending on the strength of the Ukrainian central state and geo-political conditions. Any false start in an early declaration of independence is fraught with the possibility of a toughening of state policy toward the region, further narrowing the rights and privileges of the Crimean Tatars that would change any future chance of statehood for the worse.

Interests of the political elite in Kiev
Neither group of political elites in Kiev (nationalist "pro-Ukrainian" and so-called "pro-Russian") is interested in the actual separation of Crimea from Ukraine, as neither seek to cede territory, resources, or prestige to Russia. At the same time, both groups play a part in a certain Crimea political discourse that perpetually problematizes the status of the region. Elite groups contribute to the possibility of conflict through the manipulation of public opinion and exaggerate the social problems, accentuate the contradictions and fundamentally lead to sharpened tensions.

For example, the most discussed and provocative solution of the Crimean puzzle is the termination of the autonomous region status, which if ever passed, would transform the republic into an ordinary administrative district within the unitary Ukrainian state. The proposition is often brought to the floor of the Ukrainian national parliament. The main idea of this proposal lies in the aspiration to eliminate the legal base for the possible separation of Crimea from Ukraine. Obviously, the above 'solution' appears to be an evident way to escalate the situation in Crimea to conflict, since the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants would not agree to the termination of the autonomous region. In other words, as we have seen

before, so many claims can be made on Crimea that any move in any one direction would lead to a breakdown of the stable status quo rather than solve a 'frozen' condition.

Russia as a regional power broker

Since the appointment of Viktor Yanukovich in 2010 as Ukrainian president, the tools of Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine have changed. In spite of wide-spread stereotypes and biases of the power of the 'Russian hand' in Crimea, the way in which a conflict would occur over secession and annexation is not necessarily optimal for Russia, in particular, since Russia and Ukraine signed the Kharkov agreements, cementing guarantees for the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol till 2042 (*Ugoda mizh Ukrainoyu ta Rosiiskoyu Federacieyu z pitan perebuvannya Chornomorskogo Flotu Rosiiskoi Federacii na territorii Ukraini*, 2010). Furthermore, the contentious local actions of pro-Russian non-governmental organizations in the Crimea and anti-NATO protests gave way for negotiations between "heavy weight" actors, such as the then Russian Prime-Minister Vladimir Putin, representatives of GAZPROM and the Ukrainian counterpart NAFTOGAZ around the price for Russian natural gas, gas transit and possible membership of Ukraine in the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Closer economic integration of Ukraine with Russia in the framework of the Customs Union would also restrict the geopolitical freedom of Ukraine. In this light, 'the Crimean question' appears second order in comparison to closer integration. Although the 'unification of the Russian land' has been an obvious priority of the Medvedev-Putin tandem, the risks of destabilisation as a result of possible Russian involvement in a conflict in Crimea are clearly understandable. Crimea as a part of Ukraine, which is largely pro-Russian and "manageable", is obviously preferable for Russia, than the creation of a further flash-point in the problematic and unstable Black Sea region (Kuzio 2010).

Role of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea

As discussed, the overwhelming number of academic publications on social tension, instability and the escalation of violence in the Crimea identify two main agents of separatism: (1) the pro-Russian Slavic majority and (2) the Russian State that through a foreign policy of sponsored pro-Russian non-governmental organisations and political parties realises a strategy of separation of Crimea from Ukraine (Kuzio, 2010). According to such interpretation of the Crimean puzzle, the Russian Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol can interfere in possible armed conflict between Kiev and pro-Russian militias of the Crimea, and thus, it would decisively contribute to secession of the Crimea. Views on the future of Crimea are strongly linked to those on the status of the Russian Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol. The

convincing arguments in support of any changes to the status of Crimea build, first of all, on clearly articulated priorities of Russian foreign policy, such as support for 'Russians beyond Russia' (Melvin 1995), and, second, on the experience of the Russia-Georgia war in 2008 and lessons that Ukraine learned from it.

The former Ukrainian president of Ukraine Viktor Yuschenko attempted to have the Russian Black Sea Fleet withdrawn from Sevastopol after 2017. The Ukrainian state used legal proceedings around such issues as the contested usage of light-houses, the hinterland, and the infrastructure to make their case. Attempts by Ukrainian officials to toughen the rules and disciplinary regulations for Russian soldiers and sailors in Sevastopol testified to the importance of the 'Crimean factor' for Ukrainian foreign policy. With the arrival of Victor Yanukovich to the Ukrainian presidency however, Ukraine went through an important transition, including changes in foreign policy priorities, domestic humanitarian and cultural policies, a review of the official interpretation of Ukraine's modern history and renunciation of 'Ukrainianisation'. These changes undoubtedly contribute to decreasing separatist attitudes that were raised during the 'Orange revolution'. The prolongation of agreement on the Russian Black Sea Fleet till 2042 cemented this tendency for de-escalation. According to opinion polls in May 2009, 32.3% of Crimean residents supported an idea of separation of Crimea from Ukraine. In May 2011, this rate fell to 24.4%. Furthermore, the number of residents who would support a plan for a Crimean Russian national autonomous region inside of Ukraine has also decreased (19.5% in 2009, 2.3% in 2011). Instead, the percentage of residents supporting a broad autonomous region inside Ukraine has increased to 30.9% (Opinion Polls: Crimea, 2006-2011, Razumkov Centre).

Nevertheless, decreasing separatist attitudes on the peninsula have not brought about a de-escalation of the local community's potential for conflict. Collective grievance has been channelled into discreet radical protests against the local authorities or local clashes that are not connected per se with separatist activities. Any separatist activity of the Tatar ethnic minority has been rarely analysed as a real phenomenon and a conflict factor in Crimea, but recent opinion polls show that at least 2% of Crimea's residents support separation of the Crimea and subsequent annexation of this territory to Turkey, bearing in mind that Crimean Tatars constitute just over 12% of the regional population (Opinion Polls: Crimea, Razumkov Centre, April-May 2011).

The character of relations of the Crimean Tatars and central authorities in Kiev is unsteady. During the 'Orange period' of Ukraine's history, the Tatar Mejlis became a regional ally of the then president Viktor Yuschenko and central government in Kiev. This Crimean Tatar alliance with Kiev and its pro-Ukrainian narrative became the only alternative to a Russian narrative for Crimea.[9]

One important factor which fastened a convenient alliance between the Mejlis and the 'Orange' government was a predominance of the Russian-speaking Slavic community in the social structures of the republic. However, taking into account a series of consistent, consecutive actions towards a consolidation of the Tatar self-determination movements and legal reinforcement of the rights on self-determination of the Tatars on "their historical homeland", it would be inconsistent or at least too simple to consider the Mejlis as a stronghold of the statehood and territorial integrity of Ukraine in a strategic perspective.

In a tactical perspective given the current demographic status of Crimean Tatars, any separatist intention, openly declared by the Mejlis will in turn reinforce the Russian separatism and will change for worse the conditions for defence of the Tatar's political, social and economic rights. Any change from the status quo at this stage would accordingly provoke Russia to develop further a foreign and security policy in defending ethnic Russians Crimea. Nevertheless, in a hypothetical conflict between the Tatar (then) majority, Slavic minority and Kiev, we would expect that Russia would use the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol to seek stability and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Nevertheless, this is an unlikely short to medium term scenario.

The passport problem
Similar to Kosovo and its relation to Albania, citizenship and passports become a way to build loyalties and substantiate existing policies. In 1994 Ukraine started to issue the passports to citizens, replaced old Soviet passports. Nevertheless, Soviet passports were valid till 2004, although the majority of Ukrainians had already changed their passports by the end of the 1990s. The illegal issue of passports to Ukrainians by the consulates of neighbouring countries, such as Russia and Romania, started also in 1994. The first wave of 'passportisation' and illegal double citizenship was initiated by enterprising Ukrainians themselves. The residents of Eastern Ukraine, in particular, from Donetsk, Lugansk and

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[9] Crimean Tatars see Russia, as the primary Soviet successor state, being culpable of their mass expulsion during the Soviet period.

Crimea, and those, who have relatives in Russia (the overwhelming majority of Crimea's population), were forced to choose between Russian and Ukrainian citizenships. Many in fact applied for both citizenships in order to benefit from social security, education and health systems, to ensure free movement, employment and other rights and privileges accessible for citizens of both states. The collapse of the passport services and broken connections between the internal affairs of both countries played in favour of this individual led strategy. As the recent case with the mayor of Kiev Leonid Chernovetskiy (who was discovered with his illegal double – Ukrainian and Israeli – citizenships) demonstrated, the Ukrainian state does not have any mechanisms to prevent Ukrainians from multiple citizenships, which is officially forbidden in Ukraine.

Official statistics on the number of Ukrainian citizens who have illegal double citizenship does not exist. Ukrainian authorities approximate around 200,000 of the inhabitants of the Crimea and the Eastern Ukraine received Russian passports from 1994 (10% of the Crimea's population, or 3% of the population of the Eastern Ukraine) as well as 40,000 of the inhabitants of the Western Ukraine, who received Romanian passports. At the same time, the representatives of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their Romanian counterparts have officially confirmed very few cases. Since illegal double citizenship is rather technical problem that should be resolved at the level of the ministries of internal affairs, it is often exaggerated in Ukraine's foreign policy communications, first of all for comparison and an analogy between the Crimea and South Ossetia cases. Although the threat of illegal 'passportisation' of Ukrainians appears exaggerated now, it should be regarded as a political ploy that might be exploited for geopolitical ends by the Russian and Ukrainian states.

While the Kosovo example has been cited often in relation to Crimea, it is the example of Georgia in 2008 that has caused the biggest concern. Compared to previous state documents on national security (e.g. Military Doctrine - 2004), the new Military Doctrine of Ukraine, adopted by the Council of National Security and Defence of Ukraine in April 2011, focuses rather on internal risks and threats for security. Ukraine's foreign policy returns to its multi-vectorial past as it was with former president Leonid Kuchma's times. As the new Military Doctrine states, the threats for security and territorial integrity of Ukraine derive from "destructive actions of political parties, non-governmental organisations, funded by foreign states and international organisations…interruption of foreign states and international organisations into domestic affairs, their informational and economic pressure, financial and

moral support for political forces, declaring separatist, destructive and offensive for Ukraine and its government ideas" (Military Doctrine of Ukraine, 2011).

According to doctrine, the expansion of foreign states and an "Ossetian scenario" for Crimea are unlikely (Note 'Ossetian' rather than 'Kosovo'). At the same time, the activities of NGOs and political parties (both pro-Russian and Tatar), that destabilize the region, call for particular attention from the security service. The logic of this doctrine requires the strengthening of the domestic component of the security sector in Ukraine, including the police, public prosecutors, penal institutions, security forces all the while decreasing the number of military troops in the region.

Crimea as a territory of socio-economic risk
Since 1991 a perpetual problem in Crimea has been the lack of comprehensive socio-economic and development strategies. During the Soviet era, Crimea was a 'region – military base', the centre of machine-building, shipbuilding, agriculture and food industries. The industry of tourism was constituted in a number of Soviet style state-owned unprofitable boarding houses and sanatoriums. In fact, little has changed in the region. The contemporary economy of Crimea is economically uncompetitive. Its formal structure consists of food and chemical industries aimed at the domestic market. At the same time, the rural industry of Crimea consists of a number of uncoordinated small farms, which do not amount to enough investments and credits for the purchase of equipment, vehicles and fertilizers. Chaotic socio-economic policy reforms, an unregulated land market and the prevalence of corrupt operations in obtaining licenses for construction projects and purchase-and-sale transactions lead to the appearance of a huge shadow sector that is the dominating base of the contemporary economy of the Crimea.

Land privatisation is officially not allowed in Ukraine. As a result, peasant farmers do not have the rights to determine the use of the land on which they work. The expected cancellation of the moratorium on the privatisation of land will bring the Land Code of Ukraine into effect and implement privatisation. However, the way in which the privatization would likely take place may trigger an escalation in conflict elsewhere and in particular in Crimea where disputes around property rights are accompanied by ethnic claims. The initial conditions for the privatisation of land are threefold: the low level property rights in Ukraine – about 10% (for example, in two post-soviet countries - Estonia and Georgia - this index reaches 97%), the absence of a land register and a register of citizens.

As discussed in the opening comparative section, the societal security and rebellion literature tells us that under conditions of uncertain property rights, privatisation and the distribution of state-owned land, there is a greater propensity for violence within the region and between the periphery and the centre (see again Mason 1998). Currently both organised and spontaneous actions of the 'self-capture' of land, accompanied by low-scale violence, can be considered as a rehearsal for clashes and conflicts that may occur in Crimea when mass privatisation starts. In public opinion, most land-capture cases are linked with the Tatar community. However, according to statistics, just 17% of all land-capture cases are committed by the Tatars, whereas all other illegal and violent captures are committed by other ethnic communities or mixed groups. The intention in most cases is the resale of the captured land to different commercial firms. The local media and public opinion focuses almost exclusively on the 'Tatar' land captures, leading to an 'ethnicized' view of the problem. In other words, already the debates over land reform are becoming increasingly framed in an ethnic nature.

The domination of the shadow sector and illegal economy as well as the development of the divaricated organised crime networks and political clienteles are common features for both Crimea and Kosovo and are signs of state weakness in both cases. However, it is not so much the formal institutes of the state, as the particular relations between the formal and informal that lead to institutional exclusion and are the likely causes of conflict. Institutional exclusion is an important dimension of social exclusion, which characterizes the limited access to the political and legal systems and other state institutes. Such is the public alienation from the state institutions that it increases the risk of local crises and conflicts. In comparison to other regions in Ukraine, the process by which institutional exclusion occurs in Crimea is arguably more devastating, underwritten by corrupt commercial and political networks that are created around the illegal distribution of land with the full knowledge and even participation of local authorities. Local public servants play the decisive role and manage the process of the illegal land business. The access to expensive seacoast land has been the main real interest of local governance in the Crimea.

Access to expensive Crimean land is also the main goal of political party activities, regardless of the party platform. For the sake of their own private and commercial interests, representatives of the different political parties create "land alliances" in the local Crimean councils. As evidence of state weakness and deep institutional exclusion in Crimea, one can observe a decreasing role of the regional parliament and local councils in creating a legal

framework for conflict prevention and management between conflicting social groups and ethnic communities – formerly an important objective of local authorities. More recently, the formal institutions of negotiation and justice have given way to informality and personality between leaders of the Party of the Regions and the Mejlis.

Rotating political elites and Crimea

As we discuss earlier, there has been significant elite change in the Crimean case. The reasons are two-fold. On one hand, following unsuccessful attempts at separation in the 1990s, a part of the political elite, including the former Crimean president of Yuri Meshkov, emigrated from Ukraine (to Russia). Charismatic leadership has been replaced by the representatives of powerful business groups established in the neighbouring regions, with the Donbass region being paramount. Incoming political elites in Crimea in the 2000s appeared as well-organized, monolithic, economically stronger and more politically influential than the local Crimean elite. On the other hand, decreasing public trust in the local Crimean elite, having widely participated in shadow networks around the illegal distribution of expensive land on the Black Sea cost, created the conditions for such rotation. The electoral rotation of political elites has become a function of political rearrangement between other major urban business entities, such as Kiev, Donetsk and Dnepropetrovsk. These elites come to Crimea as either delegations of political and business interests elsewhere or have 'washed up' in search of a new political haven as a result of changes in the political conditions in Kiev or other regions.

A good example of this is the old 'Donetsk elite'. Having lost their political patronage, the 'old' Donetsk elite lost its political influence and economic power, but did not leave politics in Donetsk altogether but instead have been moved to the lower steps of political hierarchy outside the region. The relocation of a certain part of the Donetsk elite to Crimea after the appointment of the President Viktor Yanukovich, resulted in the decreasing separatist attitudes and activities within the region for four reasons. Firstly, the new political elite in Crimea is an integral part of the new ruling elite in Kiev and has strong ties with influential business groups and oligarchs of the Donetsk region. Traditionally, a distinctive feature of the Donetsk elite is a high level of internal solidarity and thus, conflict between the Donestk-orientated Crimean elite and Kiev elite is unlikely, if not impossible. As a first step of this collaboration, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Crimea jointly adopted a Strategy of socio-economic development of Crimea and a number of state programmes.

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Secondly, the migration of the elite to Crimea is also supplemented by economic development, regional investment, and new projects in the industries in wind and sun energy, infrastructure and construction. At the same time however, organised criminal activity in Crimea has also received a boast from new political elite and has even resulted in a more sustainable criminal network. Rather than doing away with the criminal networks allied to the old political elite, there has been a further integration of local organised crime into Ukrainian and international organised crime networks. Thirdly, the closer partnership with Russia and "Kharkov agreement" on the Russian Black Sea Fleet de-radicalised separatist aspirations of the Slavic majority in Crimea. Finally, as discussed earlier, separatist claims where eased through the establishment of (the informal) institutions of conflict resolution and prevention between the ruling elite and the Mejlis.

While the rotation of the Slavic elite is frequent, the Tatar elite is comparatively stable, including the structure of the Mejlis, its status, leaders, representatives of the Tatar community in the local councils, general interests, strategy and policy that has not changed since their return from Central Asia. This current stability of Tatar elite has both positive and negative implications. The stability and continuity of conflict prevention mechanisms are among the positive implications of these changes. At the same time, whereas the Crimean Tatars themselves are not socially and economically homogeneous, there is a segment of the Tatar community (socially vulnerable and increasingly radicalized), which claim a stronger and uncompromising position for the Mejlis in negotiations with the local and the central authorities. This segment of the Tatar electorate is a potential base for more politicise Islamic political parties. If political representation of the Tatar community is dispersed between several political parties, the processes of negotiation, conflict prevention and management would be complicated as they would involve several actors with mixed interests. A "litmus paper", including legitimacy and perspective leadership of the new Crimean elite will be the elite's ability to establish and implement effective and transparent mechanisms of conflict prevention during the privatisation of land as well as to transform the conflict potential in Crimea.

Conclusion

In summary, although the Kosovo case is often used as an analogy and scenario of future radicalisation of violence and flash point in the Crimea, these cases are rather different. Periodically raising social tensions in Crimea is more a consequence of the complex impact of

state weakness, inefficient public policy towards the autonomous region, and regional politics-cum-business in Simferopol, Kiev and Moscow, than a result of deeply rooted ethnic hatreds or social inequality between two ethnic groups. Undoubtedly, reliance on the shadow sector and semi-criminal networks, institutional exclusion, dissemination of alternative norms and practices of a survival culture contribute to the weaknesses of the Ukrainian state, and the further distancing between Crimea and Kiev.

Nevertheless, to date Crimean separatist tendencies are not irreversible, as shown. Any Crimean separatist movements would more than likely result in open armed conflict and secession. In conclusion, we suggest that transparent privatisation, the formalisation of property rights, the rule of law, the respect for human rights, the de-politisation of public service, a culture of tolerance to "others" in the institutions of mass-media and education are necessary tools of the structural mechanisms of conflict prevention that can strengthen state institutions and anchor Crimea as an integral part of Ukraine as well as prevent a repeat of Kosovo in the autonomous region.

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