

## Crimea's Three Basic Ethnic Components: A Pledge for Peace

By Valery Temnenko,  
Zeyneb Temnenko

### **Crimea – a fell out part of the conflict bow**

Many authors mention Crimea, when speaking about rebellious autonomous republics of former Soviet Union: Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, Ichkeria (Chechnya), Abkhazia, Crimea, Pridnestrovia and Abkhazia. All of these republics except Crimea have experienced wars or other conflicts against their metropolitan countries. Some ambitious Crimean politicians claim to be peacekeepers in Crimea. Others, who are more prudent, talk about some mysterious mechanisms that “did not or do not let the ethnic conflicts occur”<sup>1</sup>.

Crimea’s peace custodian is a three-side conflict blocking system: “Crimean Russians against metropolitan country”, “Crimean Russians against Crimean Tatars”, and “Crimean Tatars against metropolitan country”.

Peaceful Crimea and Ichkeria that has suffered decades of colonial war both remained in their metropolitan countries. The rest of four autonomies turned into self-declared, unrecognized states. Some Russian politicians in “civilian clothes”, such as Konstantin Zatulin say these four states are “parallel to CIS”<sup>2</sup>, which broadens geopolitical capacities of Russian Federation. The problems of these autonomies are not solved, their existence itself is not ensured.

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<sup>1</sup> Citation of Crimean historian Andrey Malguine. See Natalya Astahova “Crimea – is Ukraine’s future” published in newspaper Krym.ru # 5 (61), 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Shmelev. South Ossetian day of independence as mirror of uncompleted dissolution of USSR. 20.09.2005 <http://www.pravda.ru/world/former-ussr/other/52046-Ossetia-0>

Nagorny-Karabakh got its independence from Azerbaijan in 1994 after 6-year war. The price of war and independence was 20,000 dead people and half a million of refugees from both sides; all Armenians and Yezidi Kurds left Azerbaijan; Azerbaijani people and Muslim Kurds<sup>3</sup> left Armenia and Karabakh. Karabakhian army is considered one of the best in CIS<sup>4</sup>. However, Azerbaijan is ready to do everything in order to restore its territorial integrity, including military scenario of solving the conflict<sup>5</sup>. War can commence any time<sup>6</sup>. The leadership of Azerbaijani nationalists admits that complete exile of all Armenians from Karabakh<sup>7</sup> can take place in future. There are no rational explanations why an 8-million country wants to conquer a small mountainous autonomy with the population that is 50 times less than Azerbaijan's; the motive power is ethnic intolerance and aspiration for revenge<sup>8</sup>, - doesn't Russia have the irrational motive power for north Caucasian war, isn't it an aspiration to keep "territorial integrity of Russia"? And hasn't this aspiration generated a popular but at the same time irrational north Caucasian slogan: "Freedom – is when Russians will leave"?

South Ossetia declared its independence on September 20, 1990 as a response to Georgian Parliament's declaration of independence and dissolution of national autonomies that were located in Georgia such as Abkhazian ASSR, Adjarian ASSR and South Ossetian AD (autonomous district)<sup>9</sup>. Afterwards armed Geogio-Ossetian conflict

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<sup>3</sup>Mikhail Tulskey. Nagorny-Karabakh doesn't wait for peace-keepers: everybody is getting ready for war. 20.01.2006 <http://www.pravda.ru/world/former-ussr/other/74311-karabakh-0>

<sup>4</sup> Valeria Novodvorskaya. Caucasus is not with me. 19.08.2005 <http://grani.ru/opinion/novodvorskaya/p.93637.html>

<sup>5</sup> Azerbaijan is ready to cope with Karabakh by using force 20.01.2006 <http://www.pravda.ru/world/former-ussr/other/20-01-2006/74311-karabakh-0>

<sup>6</sup> There can be an outbreak of war in Karabakh again. 19.01.2006 <http://www.pravda.ru/world/74167-0>

<sup>7</sup> Mikhail Tulskey, op.cit.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Such a nervous reaction on the fact of accepting separate statutory acts of metropolitan state, - before some consequences of these acts will occur – is typical of other post soviet autonomies, for instance, Crimea. active participants of the process of creating Crimean

started, which was “frozen” in 1992 after Russia sent its peacekeepers there. Georgians and Ossetians live in mixed communities, their villages are situated nearby which makes the conflict irrepressible. Georgians do not want to be separated from Georgia and Ossetians do not want to be separated from their relatives who live in North Ossetia that belongs to Russia<sup>10 11</sup>. It is said that there is no inveterate enmity between the parties of the conflict (in comparison with Karabakhian situation); there are a lot of mixed marriages and mutual Orthodox Church – however, there is no mechanism of stopping a once started ethnic conflict. Ivan Smelev says Georgians and Ossetians “prefer communicating with the help of mines and bombardments”<sup>12</sup>. Even common religion is an obstacle: Ossetians consider Georgian patriarchy “a tool of enforced assimilation”<sup>13</sup>. In comparison with Georgians, Ossetians were converted into Christianity rather late and as experts state Ossetian Christianity consists of some strong pageant components. Sheikh Mansur converted Chechnya into Islam not long ago as well if you take it historically – by using fire and sword; however nobody will doubt Ichkerians Muslim religion. Russian Orthodox Church has Ossetian religious unit – Alanian homestead that has religious autonomy but Ossetians do not expect to get such an autonomy within Georgian orthodox church<sup>14 15</sup>. Ossetian leadership suspects Georgia of exporting “colored revolution”.

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autonomy assured that first ideas about autonomy occurred in Crimea after the parliament of Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic passed Law on Ukrainian language: nothing had happened but it was already frightening. “We remember the terror of 1954”, - noticed one of those “old revolutionists” who was a child in 1954. Another “old revolutionist” who hadn’t shaved his beard since Yuriy Meshkov, the President of Crimea resigned, said that the initiators of the process were not going to create an autonomy that would be part of Ukraine – instead they were meaning to create an autonomy that would belong to Russia. But the central government in late Gorbachev period of USSR was weakening vigorously and Crimean Tatars were coming back vigorously as well which made both “autonomists” and law-abiding Crimean nomenclature make different decision.

<sup>10</sup> Ivan Smelev, op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> The same strip farming makes impossible separation of Crimean Tatar and Crimean Slavic population in case if the internal conflict happens in Crimea.

<sup>12</sup> Ivan Smelev, op.cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Having exiled Georgian population, in 1993 rebellious Abkhazia got its independence that is guarded by Russian peacekeepers. The authorities in Tbilisi cannot put up with such a loss of territory: thousands of refugees remind of it<sup>16</sup>. In Abkhazia Armenian population (65 thousands) prevails over Abkhazian (55 thousands). This fact and increasing control of Armenian community over business, annoys Abkhazian elite. Georgian experts (who are prejudiced) assume that the probability of Armenian-Abkhazian armed conflict gets more and more real<sup>17</sup>.

Some analysts assure that the conflict in Pridnestrovie originally was not interethnic. When USSR dissolved, Pridnestrovie did not have one single ethnic identity. "Its mass consciousness remained internationally soviet", writes Anton Barsuk<sup>18</sup> in "Glavred". This author describes the social structure of rebellious Pridnestrovie as "strong and cohesive directive corps ... that had good connections in Moscow; headquarters and storages of 14<sup>th</sup> Russian army (as consequence – big number of Russian officers came to Pridnestrovie and didn't want to leave it for uncertainties); numerous retired former military officers – people who were taught to be at war and who are still quite robust and vigorous... The motto "back to USSR" was seen everywhere, ... but in the beginning there was no love expressed to Russia"<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Withstanding in the leadership of Moscow and Kiev patriarchate in Crimea gives another dimension to a possible internal Crimean conflict, however religious component in Crimean Slavs identity is not significant; mass religiousness of both Crimean Slavs and Crimeana Tatars has more ritual, "marriage-funeral" nature; however, there have been some certain motions in Crimean Tatar religious situation during last years which means that there is some activity in this "ritual" religiousness.

<sup>16</sup> Both USA and Russia consider Georgia a territory: Georgia in a week. - <http://www.regnum.ru/news/557745/html>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Anton Barsuk. Pridnestrovie from the inside. – <http://glavred.info/archive/2006/01/19/131132.-7.html>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

This idyllic picture of “rebellious soviet people” is perhaps based on feelings of the participants of the revolt. Nonetheless, everything that was described except for the weapon storehouses happened both in Crimea and in Baltic countries. However, nowhere except Pridnestrovia, soldiers and employees of the empire – colonizing population that did not have roots and was strange everywhere, did not prevail over indigenous population. Such “imperial wars” won in Pridnestrovia; they are causing problems in Baltic countries now. Probably, this national “imperial” identity allows Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic to resort to Russian and Ukrainian intermediary during the negotiations with Moldova, despite the obvious fact that Ukrainian and Russian interests in the ways of reconciling this conflict were divergent<sup>20 21 22</sup>.

Everything that was said earlier makes you search for some specific roots why Crimean conflict is peaceful. Perhaps, these roots grow from three-side nature of this conflict.

The conflict in the described rebellious autonomies is binary and two-sided. Two ethnic groups, two incompatible identities that were freed of imperial supervision and regulation, that determined parity of their forces with the help of “divine court”: Like in ancient times, negotiations and agreements could only fix the decision of “divine court” but they were not allowed to change it. There is a “backward reflection” of world empires’ peacemaking role: having resolved the conflicts at home, they moved the processes of “divine court” farther to their broadening periphery. Endless wars of incompatible polis

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<sup>20</sup> Igor Solovey. Russian plane of reconciling the Prindestovian conflict: reboot. 21.10.05  
<http://glavred.info/archive/2005/10/21/105859-5.html>

<sup>21</sup> Bogdan Vasnevsky. Pridnestrovia in Ukraine’s geopolitical ambitions. - 10.01.06  
<http://glavred.info/archive/2006/01/10/104429.-3.html>

<sup>22</sup> Aliona Getmanchuk. Yushchenko’s plan was “pumped out”  
<http://glavred.info/archive/2005/09/28/131319.-7.html>

identities of Greek cities that were described by Fukidid<sup>23</sup>, Athenian officer, who was accused of treason and lost his military job, changed into imperial tranquility after Rome had swallowed Greece; now there were wars in the north and east to Dakiya, Palestine and Parphia.

There were only two parties that participated in the conflict during the birth of these rebellious autonomies; the third party was either absent at all (Pridnestrovie, South Ossetia) or was weak (Kurds in Armenia-Azeri war in Nagorny-Karabakh) or participated actively in battles for one party (Armenian battalion named after Bagramyan was very important in Abkhasians' victory over Georgians in the fall of 1993; "Armenians formed divisions against Georgia and played football using Georgian heads instead of the ball"<sup>24</sup>). Mentioned "imperial" identity of insurgent Pridnestrovie will be closer to Russian ethnic identity if you look at it more attentively<sup>25</sup>.

Three 'big' Crimean ethnic groups make 95 % of the population of Autonomous Republic of Crimea (according to 2001 Ukrainian census, Russians make 58.5% of Crimean population, Ukrainians – 24.4 %, Crimean Tatars - 12.1 %) <sup>26</sup>. Russians have superiority in strength and probably they have some "imperial" hue of their identity like in Pridnestrovie. This "imperial" hue is expressed in internal, unreflective and unrecognized confidence that empire does right things and that Russians have superiority over "foreigners". Crimean Ukrainians are in minority and they are not predominant in Crimea, their unstable situational identity is balanced due to the existence of

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<sup>23</sup> Fukidid. History/ Translated by T.A. Stratanovsky. M.: Ladomir; Open Company "Firm "Publishing House ACT", 1999, 736 p. (Classics of historian thought)

<sup>24</sup> Both USA and Russia consider Georgia a territory: Georgia in a week. 23.01.2006  
<http://regnum.ru/news/577451.html>

<sup>25</sup> It would be fare to note that Russia doubtlessly is a third "behind the scenes" actor in Georgia's conflicts with its autonomies. Some Russian analysts assume that Georgia has "has more hatred to Russia that it wants to get back its territories". – says Yuriy Kotenok. Georgia forces Kremlin to make a tormenting decision. 02.09.2006  
<http://www.utro.ru/articles/2006/02/09/520353.shml>

<sup>26</sup> Ukrainian national statistics <http://www.crimeastat.sf.ukrtel.net/perepis.html>

Ukrainian metropolitan state outside Crimea; small Crimean Tatar population is balanced due to their historical despair, unity and extreme faith in inalienable right to own this land. If they did not have this historical despair, they would have had the same destiny as Meskhetian Turks who have the same population and historical fate. Meskhetian Turks were exiled from the places of deportation in Central Asia, rejected by "divine court" in their motherland Georgia, they were humiliated and they inhabited unfriendly Kuban, small groups get political asylum in hospitable North America.

Conflict between Russian and Ukrainian parties was growing in the first half of 1990-s. It was a classic conflict on Crimean ethnic triangle – classic conflict between (Russian) colony and (Ukrainian) metropolitan state. It was damped because of Crimean Tatars, as it was impossible to "foretell" their behavior in quick changing conditions of possible armed conflict. Russian Lumpen-elite did not inherit this fear. This elite came to power after 1994 Crimean elections but professional caution bounded the initiative of serving people in those Moscow cabinets that supervised Crimean events: special weapon and money delivery operations in Crimea were technically possible. But who could risk his head and shoulder straps in Moscow and guarantee that Crimean Tatars will not receive the delivery in several days? Probably Russian special services gave tactic support to seditious chiefs of Russian Crimea but doubtless, they did not get political "protection" in Kremlin. Moscow had its own problems in Chechnya at that time and it was not prone to risky actions with unpredictable result. Crimean Tatars' presence destroyed the possibility of Pridnestovian variant in Crimea: strong colony – the remaining of waned empire, - against weak new-born metropolitan state.

There are Russian-Tatar conflicts on Crimean ethnic triangle, which looked like “repatriates against local authorities that do not understand their problems”. These conflicts conceal genuine interethnic form. Local authorities relented, as they had neither opportunities nor right on using force in conflict resolution without metropolitan state’s sanctions. The metropolitan state had neither desire, nor resources for intervention. Conflicts were developing by three stage scheme: mass protest action (force demonstration) – agreements made behind the scenes – partial filling of demands (or waiting for it). After some hiatus, these three stages recurred in a different place and different reasons caused them. These three stages underlie almost everything Crimean Tatars have obtained in Crimea. Crimean Tatar publicist, Timur Dagdzhy has said, “We did not just come back. We burst into Crimea. If they hadn’t feared us, we would not have been able to provide thousands of families with land for building houses”<sup>27</sup>.

Crimean Tatars cannot let themselves have a serious conflict on Ukrainian-Tatar line of the ethnic triangle by scheme – (Crimean Tatar) colony against (Ukrainian) metropolitan state having Russian majority in Crimea in the back. This Russian majority will benefit from such a revolt. This three-sided balance is steady but it is not eternal: neither side is fully satisfied with it; irrational components that are present in the motives of any short revolt will put an end to it eventually.

This all means that ***problems of regional identity and electoral behavior of Crimeans should be interpreted within Crimean ethnic triad: search for one “frontier” identity in Crimea would be a search for emptiness.***

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<sup>27</sup> Timur Dagdji. About recognizing deportation as an act of genocide of Crimean Tatar people. – Dialogue, # 13, 16-23 December 2005.



There is a not politically correct and not pronounced aloud statement that there are only two big ethnic groups in Crimea: Russians and Crimean Tatars. This statement is popular among Russian political analysts. “Where have you seen any Ukrainians in Crimea?” – commented one of them on three-stage model of Crimean political composition suggested by one of the authors of this article,<sup>28</sup> – “There are only several insane PhD professors and lecturers in Tavrian National university who speak for non-existing ethnic group”.

This not politically correct statement is partially proved by 2004 Presidential elections results. V. Yushchenko got only 15.4 % of votes. There is unconfirmed but rather plausible information announced by Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Djemilev<sup>29</sup> that Crimean Tatar votes make 10.5 % out of total 15.4 % that Yushchenko had gotten during the elections. It means that without Crimean Tatars, electoral index of Autonomous Republic of Crimea is almost the same as those in Donetsk and Sevastopol where 4-5 % of people voted for the “orange” president. Out of this 15.4 % there is probably not more than 1 % of votes of those people who are beyond any ethnicities. Such people are westernized intellectuals that are unable to vote for twice incarcerated candidate for President irrespective of their own political preferences. The rest 3-4 % represent Ukrainians in Crimea and their potential – despite the fact that Ukrainians make 24 % of total Crimean population. However, metropolitan country is hidden behind these “3 %” potential. It relentlessly washes away iceberg of Crimean Russian identity using its “warm” space for career opportunities and business. Different dashes, castling and alliances of Crimean elite before 2006 elections demonstrated this fact with ruthless clearness. Potential Russian-Ukrainian conflict on Crimean

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<sup>28</sup> Temnenko V. Taste of bitterness or Political model for Crimea. – “Poluostrov”, # 14 (17), 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2003

<sup>29</sup> The report of the leader of Crimean Tatar people’s Mejlis during the 4<sup>th</sup> session of IV Kurultai of Crimean Tatar people (9.12.2005, Simferopol) (translated from Crimean Tatar language - <http://www.kirimtatar.com/Problems/jemilev.html>)

ethnic triangle is not likely to happen without significant “warm-up” of cooling down “imperial” identity from the outside, from the bank of Moscow-river.

South Ossetia and Abkhazia won a victory over the metropolitan country Georgia not due to their strength, but because Georgia was weak. It still does not control its entire territory that nominally belongs to it. For instance, even Katolikos-Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II could not visit a Georgian temple in the village of Goomboordow near Akhalkalaki because Georgian army is not able to ensure Katolikos' safety in the region of Samtskhe-Djavakheti that is inhabited by Armenian separatists. “Georgians are ashamed that Armenian flag is fluttering in Georgia”, - exclaims Georgian commentator with before Westphalia pathos<sup>30</sup>.

The ability of metropolitan state of Ukraine to control its entire territory does not raise the doubts: frontier guards of Tuzla were ready to open fire<sup>31</sup>. This ability is a restraining factor for any potential “splashings” of Crimean identities. Another restraining factor is existence of the autonomy. Russian and Crimean Tatar elites perceive composition and values of autonomism differently but they are averse to risk the existence and usage of such values.

The main Crimea's peace custodian is a three-side conflict blocking system: “Crimean Russians against metropolitan country<sup>32</sup>”, “Crimean Russians against Crimean Tatars<sup>33</sup>”, “Crimean Tatars against metropolitan country”.

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<sup>30</sup> Both USA and Russia consider Georgia a territory: Georgia in a week. - 23.01.2006  
<http://regnum.ru/news/577451.html>

<sup>31</sup> The words of the participant of the events Sergey Kunitsyn. February, 2006  
<http://crimealine.tik.com.ua/2006/02/0301-p.html>

<sup>32</sup> In this case Ukraine is a metropolitan country

<sup>33</sup> Crimean Tatars are indigenous people on the Crimean peninsula

The potential of each of these conflicts is corroded and dissolved by flexible tree-structured Ukrainian political system<sup>34</sup> that gives opportunity for self-realization to many active people. The lists of five leading candidates for deputies during 2006 parliamentary elections looked like “predators’ parade” irrespective of ethnicity: many successful business people that had little to do with politics. The participants of this parade prefer using mechanisms of Ukrainian democracy without appealing to somnolence forces of ethnic identities. Their awakening is fraught with chaos and loss of achieved individual statuses.

### **Tension without conflict**

Mutual blocking of three possible interethnic conflicts does not mean that there is no interethnic tension; you can find the signs of such a tension even in newspaper advertisements, for example:

“The enterprise is looking for a worker of Slavic appearance to fill a permanent position: electric welder, wirer, and driver”<sup>35</sup>.

Essence of this advertisement can be interpreted in short negative statements:

“Crimean Tatars are unwanted”, - because the requirement to look like Slav for a welder does not make any sense as welder’s face is hidden behind the mask.

The advertisement in another Crimean newspaper says:

“Urgent!!! A seamstress with work experience is needed (a Slav)”<sup>36</sup>.

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34 The main administration of justice of Ukrainian Ministry of Justice in Autonomous Republic of Crimea registered 121 republican organization of political parties. 26.01.2006  
<http://www.crimea-portal.gov.ua/index.php?v=print&tek=1&art=6582>

35 Newspaper “Gorod na ladoniakh”, Simferopol # 55, 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2007, p. 3. This discrimination advertisement appeared in the next newspaper releases.

36 Newspaper “Gorod na ladoniakh”, Simferopol # 65 (84), 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2007, p. 7

You can see a clear-cut demonstration of interethnic hostility in Crimea not only between Crimean Slavs vs. Crimean Tatars which is fixed publicly in newspaper advertisements, but you can also notice interethnic despicability between Crimean Russians vs. Crimean Ukrainians.

In the beginning of September of 2007, with the beginning of school year in Ukraine, the representatives of Crimean pro-Russian organizations picketed the only Ukrainian gymnasium in Simferopol. The picketers demanded to close this school and “carry out in its spacious and luxurious building an exposition of Ukrainian occupation”<sup>37</sup>.

It was written not “Ukrainian” occupation in the original text but “banderovsky”<sup>38</sup> occupation.

The leader of the picketers Sviatoslav Kompaniets stated, “Crimean Russians do not need Donezk or Kiev people, they need Moscow and Petersburg people”<sup>39</sup>.

The students of this gymnasium gathered at the porch of the school and shouted altogether at the picketers: “Ganba!” (Shame in Ukrainian) and sang Ukrainian anthem. Children and adolescents are involved into interethnic tensions.

The demonstration of mutual interethnic despicability can be found in the statements of the representatives of ethnic elites.

Some of Crimean politicians and activists seemed to like the idea of having an interethnic conflict.

Fevzi Kurbedinov – leader of Crimean Tatar national party “Adalet”:  
*“We haven’t had any fights with Cossacks<sup>40</sup> so far but I sleep and*

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<sup>37</sup> Newspaper “Gorod na ladoniakh”, Simferopol # 65 (84), 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2007, p. 3

<sup>38</sup> The nickname “banderovtsy” is considered insulting, people in Crimea and Russia call so the inhabitants of Western Ukraine.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

*dream about such a fight because we'll show them who we are and they will understand that it is not that easy to scare us. Cossacks have weapons like swords, cudgels, whips. We do not have any weapons, but in case if conflict happens, we will fight against them using our hands and strength. All members of "Adalet" are athletes".*

Mufti of Crimea Emirali Ablayev is already ready for such a violent way out, wearing a gun on his belt, although he assures that it is a part of a Muslim tradition. The same is with Vladimir Cherkashin, the head of Crimean Cossack Community, who carries whips also saying it is part of a Cossack tradition to carry a whip. This tradition dates back to 17<sup>th</sup> century. Although Cherkashin says, *"The relationship between Crimean Tatars and Cossacks is stable. I have been the head of Crimean Cossack Community since 2001 and since then we have had no clashes. Crimean Cossacks have not violated any laws. Cossacks are for ethnic unity in Crimea. We have never harmed any nationality that lives in Crimea. Thanks to our community, the situation in Crimea is stable. Sometimes even Crimean Tatars thank us."* First, he did not want to say bad things about Crimean Tatars but his emotionality took over him, and made him say, *"The government spent whole bunch of money on Crimean Tatars in order to provide them with utilities in the steppe regions. They say they have experienced genocide. How come? Cossacks were those who experienced genocide. Crimean Tatars have not organized a single cultural event in Crimea, although Turkey funds them. They do not want to bring up their children. If you ask a Crimean Tatar to show his or her work record card, only 2 % of them will have jobs."*

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<sup>40</sup> Cossack community is a paramilitary organization that exists in Crimea, some parts of Ukraine and Russia. Cossacks are said to be anti-Ukrainian and anti-Crimean Tatar. Some people think that they are on special mission in Crimea and get orders from Russian government or some special secret services, whereas others welcome it, saying that its goal is to keep peace in Crimea.

Lutfi Osmanov – member of cultural committee that deals with humanitarian politics and education in Milli Mejlis<sup>41</sup>; member of the party Milli Hak, head of the crafts shop “USTA”<sup>42</sup>, prefers a less harsh way of solving problems:

*“Our non-violent way of solving problems is right, although it is not fast”.*

The same is with Daniyal Ametov – member of NGO “Avdet”, a land squatting<sup>43</sup> activist who believes that the problem can be solved non-violently:

*“Crimean Tatars are peaceful, we'll get our land without fight. We are civilized people and we do not accept violence. We understand that Germany is not only for Germans and Crimea is not only for Crimean Tatars”.*

Sergey Velijanskiy, Crimean Parliament deputy and entrepreneur, is not very optimistic about interethnic situation in Crimea: *“There is no interethnic harmony in Crimea. The communist L. Grach<sup>44</sup> said, “Interethnic conflict is a good solution of all problems.”*

Valentina Samar, a Crimean journalist, also has something to tell about Grach's actions: *“L. Grach is the author of land squatting law,*

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<sup>41</sup> Milli Mejlis – is a representative body of Crimean Tatars that is unregistered as NGO or any other private, non-profit organization, which makes its status illegal. It has some influence on state bodies in terms of ethnic issues and employment problems. Mejlis is said to be responsible for protest actions carried out by Crimean Tatars. Mejlis members are elected by Kurultai.

<sup>42</sup> Usta is a Crimean Tatar word which means skilled.

<sup>43</sup> Land squatting first appeared in early 1990 when Crimean Tatars were coming back to Crimea from exile. The first land squatting were later legalized and now there are Crimean Tatar settlements in those former squatted areas. After short hiatus, land squatting recommenced in early 2000. Crimean Tatars put tents and picket the area that they land squat. Some of them build small houses or put a fence on the squatted piece of land. In the town of Sudak, which is situated in southern Crimea, the authorities demonstratively took down some of the small constructions built on squatted land.

<sup>44</sup> Leonid Grach is the *leader of Crimean communists, Ukrainian Verhnovnaya Rada deputy. He is considered to be pro-Russian.*

*according to which those who land squat should bear criminal liability."*

Others try to explain what causes small confrontations in Crimea.

Ibraim Voenny – leader of NGO "Koideshler"<sup>45</sup>: *"Koideshler" is not involved in land squatting so far but we will land squat, if the authorities do not undertake any actions to give land for Crimean Tatars.*

Daniyal Ametov – member of NGO "Avdet", a land squatting activist, has different perceptions on solving the problem: *"The authorities don't listen to their representatives; therefore people go in the streets and demonstrate there. That's how the land squatting has started. At the same time, we don't want Russians to leave Crimea but it is our home. Crimean Tatars are in such a situation when you have a house and a garden and your neighbor tells you that you cannot plant anything in your garden. The same is with us; we cannot get our own land."*

Emine Avamileva – Kurultai<sup>46</sup> delegate, lawyer, leader of "Crimean Tatar lawyers' league": *"Oleg Rodivilov<sup>47</sup> actions were rather provocative during the market place conflict<sup>48</sup>. There are video tapes*

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<sup>45</sup> Koideshler means village mates in Crimean Tatar language. The goal of this NGO is to settle Crimean Tatars in the places where they used to live prior to deportation that happened under Stalin in 1944.

<sup>46</sup> Kurultai is a Crimean Tatar executive body, some sort of Crimean Tatar assembly that is elected by Crimean Tatars through indirect 2-stage mixed election system (similar to the one in the USA). Kurultai delegates convene meeting where they make decisions that deal with Crimean Tatar problematic, which are not obligatory to exercise. The fact how many Crimean Tatars follow Kurultai's decisions show the level of support and trust to this institution. Kurultai elections do not have legislative or governmental support.

<sup>47</sup> Oleg Rodivilov – is a deputy of Crimean parliament, leader of the organization "Russian block". He is also one of the avidest Mejlis' opponents.

<sup>48</sup> Market place conflict took place in the summer of 2006 in the Crimean town of Bakchisaray. Approximately 500 Slavs and 500 Crimean Tatars participated in the conflict. The market was said to be located on the sacred place where Crimean Tatar cemetery used to be. Crimean Tatars protested against having Market there, which caused a small

*where he is caught distributing provocative leaflets and leading Slavs that came there to fight against Crimean Tatars. But as you see, no legal action was filed against Rodivilov and he didn't take responsibility for what he had done".*

Ayshe Seytmuratova – dissident, civil rights defender, founder and head of an old people's house: *"Crimean authorities are pro-Russian and try to destabilize situation in Crimea. Due to them there is a high level of chauvinism in Crimean society."*

Refat Chubarov – a Crimean Tatar Verhovnaya Rada<sup>49</sup> deputy, member of party "Nasha Ukraina", says the following about the relations between Kiev and Crimean Tatars:

*"Kiev is a big city and there are different people in Verhovnaya Rada and the government. I think that Ukrainian politicians can be divided into three categories:*

- 1. Those who refuse to understand that there is a problem in rehabilitating the rights of Crimean Tatars. These politicians make 30-40 %. They say that deportation took place long time ago. Crimean Tatars came back and now they are ordinary people.*
- 2. Those who think that Crimean Tatars were deported fairly. This people make tenth part of all politicians in Verhovnaya Rada. For example, Petro Simonenko<sup>50</sup> states that it was good that Crimean Tatars were exiled because otherwise they would have been killed here.*
- 3. Those who understand what happened with Crimean Tatars. It is half of Ukrainian politicians. They are clever people and realize what Crimean Tatars have gone through. But these*

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confrontation between Slavs and Crimean Tatars after which the authorities relocated the market and now this place is abandoned.

<sup>49</sup> Verhovnaya Rada – is the name of Ukrainian parliament.

<sup>50</sup> Petro Simonenko – is the leader of Ukrainian communistic party, member of Ukrainian parliament.



*politicians are not ready to talk about Crimean Tatars' rights in independent Ukraine. They are sure that Crimean Tatars' rights can be protected.*

- 4. Those who understand that a Crimean Tatar problem should be solved immediately. They understand that Crimean Tatars will ask for self-determination<sup>51</sup>. These politicians make minority. They are Ukrainian nationalists who are concerned about Ukraine's future as much as we are."*

Crimean politicians, journalists and other working people have also different opinions on what can be a threat to Crimean interethnic harmony.

According to the journalist Valentina Samar year 2017<sup>52</sup> is a main threat to Crimean stability. *"Russian Black Sea navy doesn't want to leave and it will do its best to remain in Crimea. Russia will us religious, cultural issues and Russian speaking people who live in Crimea to cause a conflict. It will try to broaden the borders in order to get oil from the sea.*

*Special Islamic groups are also a big threat. They are not supported in Crimean Tatar society, nonetheless, they still exist in Crimea. Hisb ut-Tahrir<sup>53</sup> is always active before the elections. Its activities affect Crimean Tatars as then anti-Tatar forces declare that Crimean Tatars are dangerous extremists. Kiev is unable to solve the problems of repatriates. The Ukrainian leadership does not understand well what*

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<sup>51</sup> Some Crimean Tatar politicians believe that Crimean Tatars' self-determination can be implemented only within a Crimean Tatar national state. These politicians believe that such a national autonomy has to be created in order to restore Crimean Tatar language, culture and rights. This idea of creating such a state is not supported by all Crimean Tatar politicians which see Crimean Tatars' self-determination differently.

<sup>52</sup> According to Ukrainian Constitution, military bases of foreign countries cannot be located in Ukraine. Military marine base of Russian Black Sea Fleet that was inherited from soviet times and is situated in Sevastopol should be liquidated by 2017 according to transitional rules in Ukrainian Constitution.

<sup>53</sup> Hisb ut-Tahrir is an Islamic extremist group that exists in many countries, and considered terrorist and forbidden in some countries. It is registered as a political party in Ukraine. It is said that Ukrainian security services or SBU (a Ukrainian name) pursuits His but-Tahrir.

*Crimean Tatars want. Ukrainian democracy can be over for Crimean Tatars if they demand something from the state."*

According to Mustafa Djemilev – a Crimean Tatar member of Verhovnaya Rada and member of party "Nasha Ukraina" Russian secessionist movement is a big threat.

*"Those forces that think that Crimea should belong to Russia, get a big support from Russia and Russian government. There are a lot of chauvinistic, pro-Russian organizations. According to different surveys, 70 % of Crimean population agrees that Crimea should belong to Russia. Russian Black Sea navy is also a threat to Crimean stability. I have heard that it is not going to leave Crimea after 2017. Russian Black Sea navy inspires pro-Russian chauvinistic organizations. If pro-Russian separatists start implementing their actions, there will be confrontation not only between them and Crimean Tatars but also between them and Ukrainian government."*

However, Alexei Shorkin, the dean of philosophic department of Tavrian National University<sup>54</sup>, feels positive towards Russia and is not likely to consider Russian factor as a threat: *"Ukraine should be acute and create joint transnational corporation together with Russia. Then the fleet base can be a good security tool, although de-facto it is already used as security tool because Russian navy is the one that first registers poachers who are not permitted to catch fish in the Black sea"*.

Ordinary people have different perceptions on whether there are ethnic tensions or not. Probably, people who live in rural areas are more tolerant than those who live in cities and towns. In rural areas, people live in mixed small communities. During conversations with the inhabitants of one of Crimean villages in Nijnegorsky region, it

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<sup>54</sup> Tavrian National University – is the oldest and one of the biggest universities in Crimea.

seemed that there were no interethnic tensions and cleavages. Slavic women assured that Crimean Tatars, Armenians, Russians and other nationalities co-existed peacefully within one village. Crimean Tatars and Slavs were sitting in the same room, solving a problem concerning milk production in the village. Probably, those people who believe that interethnic conflicts are leveraged due to ambitious politicians that underlie the problem.