

# CRIMEA REPORT: GEOPOLITICS RIVALRY AT THE CROSSROAD

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مركز البحوث الإنسانية و الاجتماعية

To cite this article: Çalışkan, Burak. "Crimea Report: Geopolitics Rivalry at the Crossroad", INSAMER, 16.04.2020.

 Report

## Introduction

As Ukraine gained its independence, power struggle between the Russian Federation and the West on Kiev was launched, a development indicating the degree to which it's important for global politics. In trying to pursue a balanced policy between Russia and the West after its independence, Ukraine failed to establish a stable political order and system in this process.

Accommodation of Black Sea Fleet of Russia at Crimea, falling under sovereignty of Ukraine, and prioritized position of the region in the security concept of Russia are the most important factors implying the relevance of Ukraine for Russia. As one of most populous markets in Eastern Europe, Ukraine is of value both for Russia and West because it has served as Russia's main route in delivering its natural gas to Europe for years.

The conflict of interest between Russia and the West in Ukraine led to the Orange Revolution in 2004 but the country couldn't emerge out of turmoil after the revolution. Since 2004, numerous political crisis and domestic turbulences have been witnessed. As a matter of fact, protests that broke out in Kiev and proceeded to spread all across the country resulted in important changes in the politics of the country. Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 trapped Ukraine in much more difficulty and uncertainty. The fact that pro-Russian militias took control of Luhansk and Donetsk with the backing of Russia, proclaiming their independence unilaterally, implies that conflicts and uncertainties will likely to endure.



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## Historical Process of Crimea

Halil Inalcık defines Turkish existence in Crimea as ‘...the museum of consecutive Turkish tribes’, adding that Crimean Tatar Turks have settled in Crimea for a long period of time. By the 14th century, the Golden Horde state weakened. Though this development paved the way to the establishment of independent Crimean Khanate, it strived for operating the Golden Horde state independently, which led to a struggle with the Genoese in the Black Sea. The compelling struggle pushed Crimean Khanate to make alliance with and recognize its patronage of the Ottoman Empire<sup>1</sup>. In 1457, in the sultanate of Mehmet the Conqueror, the Ottoman Empire responded favorably to the request of the Crimean Khanate and integrated Crimea into its territories by conquering Genoese colonies in the Black Sea. With the Black Sea under its control, the Ottomans succeeded in turning Istanbul into a center of attraction through a complex web of trade routes. The web of trade, spanned with the assistance of Crimean Turks and facilitated by sea routes to the North, caused the population of Istanbul to increase ten times as much in less than a century. Becoming the center of attraction, in a sense, in economical and security terms for Istanbul, Crimea have always tended to looked upon as an important target to be aspired.<sup>2</sup>

The Crimean Khanate was subordinated to Ottoman Empire from 1475 to 1774 and ceased to be under the rule of Ottoman Empire with the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainirji signed between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. But, in accordance with third article of the treaty, Muslim Crimean Turks was to keep their allegiance to the Ottoman Emperor, who was also a Caliph, in the affairs of divinity. Although both countries agreed on not to interfere in Crimea’s domestic affairs, internal disturbances that broke out soon in the Khanate presented an opportunity for Russia to invade Crimea and, in 1783, Tsarist officially invaded it. After the invasion, Crimean Turks, primary component of the region, got captured, and Russification even launched before the invasion<sup>3</sup>.

The Russian Tsardom pursued various policies to the Russification of Crimea. First, to change its demography, violently repressive policies were imposed on Crimean Turks, native and majority of the region, and within this process, thousands of Crimean Turks were forced to immigrate to different regions, notably the Ottoman Empire<sup>4</sup>. Immediately after the invasion, 80.000 Crimean Tatar Turks deserted Crimea, settling in Dobrich and Anatolia respectively. Between 1806-1812 when the Ottoman-Russian Wars and 1853 Crimea War took place, Crimean Turks immigrated to the Ottoman Empire in their thousands<sup>5</sup>. In this process, Tsardom settled Russians, Germans, Armenians and Jews in the region and, in the meantime, brought Crimea under the same roof of rule as enacted in Russian territories. All these policies had the effect of changing Crimea’s demography in favor of Russia<sup>6</sup>.

Russia attempted to remove the marks of Turkish-Islamic culture in Crimea that had its trace some centuries back. The name of several places associated with Crimean Turks were replaced by Greek ones; Akmescit by ‘Simferopol’, Kezlev by ‘Yevpatoriya’ and Kefe by ‘Feodosiya’. The naval base set up on Akkyar, a previous Crimean Tatar village, took the name of ‘Sevastopol’. Turkish-Islamic pieces dating from the times of the Crimean Khanate, the Ottoman Empire and previous ages incurred a huge harm<sup>7</sup>.

Although it is unlikely to find out the exact number of Crimean Turks who migrated from Crimea, it is estimated that at least 1.800.000 Crimean Turks seek refuge to Anatolian and Rumelia territories of the Ottoman Empire between 1783-1922<sup>8</sup>. After the drastic demographic change following the migration of Crimean Tatars from the region, Russian statesmen brought forward the suggestion of exile to drive out all holdovers. The motive behind it was to keep hold of Crimea. In fact, the decision of exile, which couldn’t come into effect in the era of Tsardom, was put into practice by the Soviet Union in 1944. On 18 May 1944, all settlements were evacuated and, according to Soviet figures, over 200.000



Crimean Turks were sent into exile. Majority of the people died on the way<sup>9</sup>.

After the death of Stalin in 1954, with the initiative of then Soviet president Nikita Khrushchev, the supreme presidium of the Soviet Union ruled that Crimea would be subordinated to Ukraine. Having its independence as the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine recognized its autonomous status of Crimea in 1991 and allowed all Crimean Turks to return from exile<sup>10</sup>.

## Geopolitics Importance of Crimea and the Black Sea

Geopolitics is not only about physical elements such as mountains and rivers but also climate, demography, cultural regions and natural resources and it offers a space in which international relations can be made. In this context, Tim Marshall, writer of 'Prisoners of Geography; Ten Maps that tell you everything you'll need to know about global politics', argues that what is called as the North European Lowland is rather favorable for a power intent on attacking Russia. A number of conflicts happened in the region, with Russia standing in defence of lowlands to its West, a fact confirms the claim<sup>11</sup>.

Regarded as the most important inland sea of Eurasia, the Black Sea has always retained its importance. It remained immune to external influences for ages under the rule of the Byzantine, Ottoman Empire and Russia and became subject of international rivalry, perhaps, for the first time after the cold war. The Black Sea is connected to the White Sea via Bosphorus, to the Caspian Sea via Don-Volga shipping canal, to the Sea of Azov via Kerch Bosphorus, to the North Sea via Rhine-Danube canal, a feature that attracts attention of global Powers without coast on it<sup>12</sup>.

Crimea is located on the North of the Black Sea, making it a position of paramount strategic importance. Because of this feature, Crimea has always been susceptible to aspirations of empires and big powers on it. In this sense, like all Turkish that happened to rule over Crimea, Russians attached huge importance to the region. Russia regards Crimea as a gateway to the Black Sea and has a reservation that all its South borders can be jeopardized in the case of losing its dominance on the region.

Sevastopol has still great importance emanating from the fact that it harbored Russia's biggest fleet in the Soviet Union era. Although Russia also has a fleet in the Arctic Ocean, since it tends to be frozen for the 9 months in a year, the fleet has limited maneuverability. The fleet at Crimea and Sevastopol harbors also has very strategic importance where it constitutes a safeguard against attacks from the Black Sea shores, one of the most favorable points for an attack, along with the North European Plain<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, Russia's Black Sea Fleet remained in the sphere of Ukraine's sovereignty and it was perceived as a crisis in the view of Russia's foreign affairs. The fact that the main port of Russian fleet remained in the sphere of Ukraine also led Russia to forfeit its leadership in the Black Sea. For this reason, heated debates between the two sides that started in 1992 and prolonged up to 1997 culminated in an agreement for the status of the Black Sea fleet. But, sovereignty of Crimea has continued to be one of the most problematic issues for Moscow<sup>14</sup>.

In 1997, Russia rented its Black Sea Naval Base in Sevastopol to Ukraine for 100 million dollars for 20 years. Though Russia sustains its military presence in the Black Sea, discussions on the status of region have never disappeared<sup>15</sup>.

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## The Process Leading to the Crisis and Intervention in Georgia

Russia's biggest reservation in the Black Sea is that a big power that is not neighboring the Black Sea or a military organization such as NATO can make its way into the region. But, the expansion of NATO in 1999 and 2004 proved that it's not in the power of Russia to prevent it to happen, particularly when Romania and Bulgaria became member states of NATO and the European Union made the institutions adjacent to the Black Sea, trivializing a red line of Moscow on the issue<sup>16</sup>.

Discussions of membership of Ukraine and Georgia into the EU and NATO increased further concerns on Russia. After the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, Moscow began to pursue a proactive foreign policy in these countries and set prevention of membership of these countries into NATO as a main target for its national security.

At this point, Russian President Vladimir Putin views the membership of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO or the European Union as geopolitics containment of Russia hence he laid out his policies accordingly<sup>17</sup>.

On 8 August 2008, Moscow made a military intervention in Georgia on the excuse that it invaded South Ossetia and recognized the unilateral independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia<sup>18</sup>. Moscow took Georgia's pre-Western policies as a challenge to itself and its military intervention had clear implication that it could take every measure in the face of NATO's threatening initiatives across its borders.

After Russia's intervention, Georgia's NATO and EU membership was delayed. Creating buffer zones in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Moscow made great acquisitions in the Black Sea. Moreover, EU countries and the US, while encouraging Georgia for their respective membership, just stood by and watched the status quo change in the interest of Russia. What was

experienced in Georgia played an encouraging role for Russia's subsequent initiatives.

Subsequently, the issue of Ukraine, as a non-aligned country, granting a naval base to NATO in the Black Sea in the attempt to be accepted into the EU and the US was raised, led to discussions within Russia. The security of Russia and the likely constraint on the access to the fleet in the Black Sea became two of the leading agendas in Moscow. In summary, preventing Ukraine's membership into NATO and securing the place of the fleet in the Black Sea was set as strategic targets and it has always retained its relevance for Moscow.

## The Invasion of Crimea

The EU's support, notably of Germany and France as locomotive countries of the EU, as well as the US, were given through their respective state and civil society institutions without taking dynamics of Ukraine and geopolitics of the region into account to the provisional government in Kiev and it got Ukraine in a uncertain and unstable process.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine tried to pursue a balanced policy between the West and Russia but failed to establish a stable political order. Two different accounts of policy (pre-Western or pre-Russia) reflected in the polarization of the Ukrainian people. Ukraine opted for rapprochement with Russia again soon after the pre-Western Orange Revolution in 2004. But, since the majority of Ukrainian would rather align with the West, notably the EU, the protests evolved to make a radical change and, it marked a decisive break in the Ukrainian history.

Though there are a number of reasons behind the protests that emerged in Kiev and spread rapidly all across the country, suspension of scheduled partnership agreement between Ukraine and the EU in Eastern Partnership Summit on 28-29 November 2013 in Lithuania served as an incentive for protests to emerge. The fact that then president Victor Yanukovic took such

a decision immediately after his negotiation with Vladimir Putin was the last straw for the opposition.

Protests gained more pace soon and protestors took to the streets shouting pre-Western and anti-Moscow slogans. The protestors were suppressed with harsh reactions by the Ukrainian security forces only to escalate tension in the country. The protestors asked for resignation of Yanukovic and the ruling party during what is called the “Euromaidan Events”. Aside from harsh reactions, Yanukovic also suggested heavy penalties against the protestors. As conflicts with the police claimed the lives of tens of protestors, a negotiation was conducted between Yanukovic and the leaders of opposition through intermediary of foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland. Although Yanukovic stated after the negotiations that he came to terms with demands of opposition to significant extent, he left the country one day after and took refuge in Russia<sup>19</sup>. Upon this development, the Ukrainian Assembly formed a provisional government to dismiss the president. In this process, while the EU supported the opposition, Russia sided with Yanukovic. The fact that Moscow administration accused the West of interfering with Ukraine’s domestic affairs and helping to topple an elected president implied Russia’s concern that a pro-Western and anti-Russian government could come to power through the Orange Revolution in 2004. As a matter of fact, pro-Western provisional government was heavily resented because of its initiative to remove the status of Russian as its second formal language in both east of the country and Crimea.

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in the discussion of securing Russian ethnic minorities and putting the option of military intervention on Moscow’s table. Indeed, while pro-Western protests were continuing in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the militias with no symbol of any government took over government buildings with the backing of Moscow on 27 February 2014. Zafer Karatay, Turkey’s representative to the National Assembly of Crimean Tatar and the Chairman of Emel Crimean Foundation, argued that the militias from the Russian Special Forces and tanks, fighter aircrafts and helicopters of Russia were present in the region during the invasion.

Subsequently, the National Assembly of Autonomous Republic of Crimea proclaimed its independence in cooperation with the politicians in the region and Russia was quick to recognize the decision. On 16 March 2014, an unlawful plebiscite was held for the integration of Crimea into Russia. In the aftermath of the referendum, it was announced that the majority voted yes to the “integration of Crimea into Russia”. Russia argued that 83% of participants voted in favour of “integration”. It is estimated that the turnout of the referendum was 32, 4%. On 21 March 2014, Vladimir Putin signed an enactment of justification of the invasion of Crimea and the integration of Sevastopol harboring Russia fleet into Russia on the ground of the referendum.

The most remarkable point about Putin’s speech about the invasion was that he put emphasis on geopolitics reality employing the discourse of geographical imperativeness<sup>20</sup>. In using geopolitics as a legal instrument, Russia experts just like Putin asserted that Moscow conducted a preventive operation to look after its rights in the region. The security of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, considered as one of the underlying problems in the aftermath of the Cold War, was won by Russia by means of its invasion of Crimea.

## **Developments Associated With the Invasion**

Several developments happened as Russia invaded Crimea on 21 March 2014. The growing

crisis between Russia and Ukraine both raised the bilateral relations to a different level and took on an international dimension to it.

## War in Donbass

The regions in Donetsk and Luhansk to the east of Ukraine are called Donbas. This region has a considerable influence on Ukraine's politics and economy; especially in the Donbas region where mining and industry sector are prevalent, in which the majority of the population is Russian<sup>21</sup>.

After Yanukovic left the country and took refuge in Russia, Russian secessionists in Donbas launched an armed struggle. On March 2014 the militias took over some part of the country with Russia's support causing the conflicts to intensify. As Ukraine's army mobilized and got involved in region to repulse Russian secessionists, a civil war broke in the country.

Although global public opinion accused Russia of supporting the secessionists in the eastern part of Ukraine, Moscow denied the accusations. Nevertheless, the militias' equipment being of Russia origin proved the obvious. The militias took over an important part of the country and held two unlawful plebiscites in Donbas, establishing two separate entities, named the Republic of People of Donetsk and the Republic of the People of Luhansk. Global and Ukraine's Public opinion maintained that the elections were unaccepted, however, Russia made the statement of "we're respecting the election results"<sup>22</sup>. After the referendum by pro-Russian militias, Alexander Zakharchenko was chosen as president of the Republic of the People of Donetsk and Igor Plotnisky as president of the Republic of the People of Luhansk. Ukrainian army couldn't attain what it expected of the engagement with Russian militias in Eastern Ukraine. Nevertheless,

the Ukrainian administration has taken more aggressive stance against the secessionists since 2018. Pro-Russian president of the Republic of the People of Donetsk Alexander Zakharchenko lost his life in an explosion in the city square in August 2018. While Moscow charged Ukraine with the explosion, the Ukrainian administration presented the case as the death of a terrorist.

In 2015, it was estimated that 12.000 Russian soldiers were deployed in Eastern Ukraine but, in February 2019, Ukraine's Representative to the United Nations stated that about 35.000 secessionist militias and over 2.000 Russian soldiers were deployed in the region. In this fluctuating conflict, it is estimated that 13.000 people, of whom 3.000 were civilians, have been killed so far<sup>23</sup>.

On the other hand, both secessionist groups in Donbas articulated their thought of integration with Russia in every occasion but Moscow didn't take a concrete step in this regard. It is prevailed among the Moscow administration that the invasion of Donbas wouldn't benefit Russia as much as it would harm it. For this reason, Moscow decided to create a "crystalized crisis" by way of establishing buffer zones

in Eastern Ukraine as it did in Georgia and Moldova instead of gaining more territory as a more important step in the interest of Russia<sup>24</sup>.

## The Kerch Strait Incident

Russia threatened Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov, a development that push Ukraine to establish a military naval base in the region. Kerch Bosphorus is a strategic location that falls between invaded Crimea and Russian territories across Crimea. The first crisis in the region broke out in September 2003 upon the launch of studies for dam establishment by Russia without informing Ukraine. In December

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2003, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuçma and Vladimir Putin met and had a negotiation before the crisis deteriorate into a war and they signed a cooperation agreement on the use of the Sea of Azov and Kerch Bosphorus<sup>25</sup>. After the agreement, passages through Kerch Bosphorus went on properly until Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, which triggered a new tensed process.

Ukraine did not accept the situation. But after the invasion Russia began to claim that Ukrainian ships should receive permission because they pass across Russian coastal waters. Notwithstanding, the Ukrainian administration was outraged by Russia's stance on the issue and claimed that the region already belonged to Ukrainian coastal waters. In the end, there is a disagreement between two countries on the use of Ukraine's coastal waters.

By 2018, Ukrainian ships that departed from Odessa harbor and tried to get to Mariupol Harbor on the Sea of Azov through Kerch Bosphorus often suffered harassments by Russian war ships. In November 2018, two gunboats and a towing bot with a total of 24 crew owned by the Ukrainian Naval Forces were confiscated by Russia and it justified its act by stating that the ship violated Russian coastal waters. Ukraine, however, deemed Russia's act as a clear violation of international law<sup>26</sup>.

Russia threatened Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov, a development that push Ukraine to establish a military naval base in the region. Statements of Petro Poroshenko, then President of Ukraine, that Ukraine would reinforce its defence facilities on the Sea of Azov worried Moscow. The prospect of Ukraine allocating a base in the Sea of Azov or of Ukraine building a military base with the support of US is the most important reason for this concern.

## **The Independence of Ukraine's Orthodox Church**

Ukrainian nationalists consider that the pro-Western-nationalist Ukrainian church would play a critical role in creating an independent

Ukrainian identity that is totally independent from Russian identity. Ukraine's pro-Western politicians have been striving to free the country's Orthodox Church from Russian influence.

As the Soviet Union collapsed, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was divided into three separate churches; the oldest is the Metropolitan of Kiev, subordinated to the Moscow patriarch from 16th century. The Nationalist Ukrainian priests, aimed to the complete detachment from Russia, established the Kiev Patriarchate and the Ukraine Autocephalous Church. Although the issue of church autonomy was first discussed in 1992, the thought was hardly accepted both by Russia and the Orthodox World<sup>27</sup>.

The prospect that more than 40 million Orthodox Ukrainians cease to be under the divine influence of Moscow worries Russia and the Ukrainian nationalists, hence the potential danger was responded by recognizing the Fener Greek Patriarchate as an authority whose support can be used against Moscow.

In this process, Ukrainian president Victor Yushochenko took the first serious step in 2008. He called on the Fener Greek Patriarchate for the independence of the Ukrainian church and Patriarch Bartholomeos paid a visit to Ukraine in the same year, implying that he was in favor on the issue. Russia, however, resented Patriarch Bartholomeos bitterly for his visit, stating that nobody could unilaterally grant any autonomy to a church. Respectful as they are inching toward the Fener Greek Patriarchate given Russians inherited Christianity from the Byzantine Empire, Russia claimed that the real leader of Orthodox Christianity is Moscow.

Spot: By claiming that Ukraine is not a subordinate to the Russian Church but under its divine authority, the Fener Greek Patriarch accepted the request of establishing an independent Ukraine Church.

Long debated notion of the independent Ukraine Orthodox Church was finally brought to table in the sacred synod of Fener Greek Patriarch held on 9-11 October 2018. By claiming that Ukraine

is not subordinated to the Russian Church but under its divine authority, the Fener Greek Patriarch accepted the request of establishing an independent Ukraine Church. But this decision resulted in a serious crisis between Ukraine, Russia and the Fener Greek Patriarch. Thus, the Moscow Patriarchy announced after the meeting that it decided to dissociate itself entirely from the Fener Greek Patriarch in Istanbul<sup>28</sup>.

After the Ottoman Empire conquered Byzantine in 1453, Moscow increased its leverage over the Orthodox in the time of Ivan III in a struggle to make Moscow the “Third Rome”. Introducing themselves as hereditary of Byzantine and Rome and protector of all Orthodox World, Russians assumed that the Fener Greek Patriarch ranked lesser than Moscow Patriarchy. It can be said that the struggle of leadership between the Fener Greek Patriarch and Moscow Patriarchy is still happening until today.

Spot: In 2014, upon Russia’s invasion of Crimea and its support to the secessionists in Eastern Ukraine, the Kiev administration asserted that Russia attempted to exploit Kiev’s subordination to Moscow patriarchy to create disorder in Ukraine.

This Orthodoxy leadership rivalry gained more coverage after the crisis with Ukraine and, in 2014, upon Russia’s invasion of Crimea and its support to the secessionists in Eastern Ukraine, the Kiev administration asserted that Russia attempted to exploit Kiev’s subordination to Moscow patriarchy to create disorder in Ukraine. They also claimed that the Russian Orthodox Church became one of Putin’s ideological legs and several priests in Eastern Ukraine who belong to the association of Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine supported by pro-Russia separatists. For these reasons, a group of deputies declared that they would appeal to the Fener Greek Patriarchate for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to be separated from the Russian Orthodox Church and to create an independent church<sup>29</sup>.

In April 2018, Assembly of Ukraine drafted the text of appeal to be submitted to Fener Greek Patriarch for an independent Ukraine Orthodox

Church. Previously, Ukrainian authorities paid a visit to Turkey and negotiated both with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Patriarch Bartholomeos and later stated that they had good negotiations. Despite the developments, Moscow sustained its opinion that Fener Greek Patriarch couldn’t take such a decision. Nevertheless, in June 2018, a delegation from Fener Greek Patriarchate attended the 1030th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity by Ukraine and Patriarch Bartholomeos expressed in his letter that he would take the initiative to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church.

In the process, Fener Greek Patriarch took profound decisions to deeply influence the Orthodox World. The most important step taken was the annulation of a 1686 rule that put Ukrainian Church under Moscow Patriarch. The other important decision was the verdict of excommunication of such religious figures such as Maletchy and Moscow Patriarch undid Filaret in 1997.

In January 2019, the process culminated ultimately in the granting of autocephaly to Ukraine Orthodox Church. With the establishment of a national church in Ukraine, the effectiveness of Metropolitan Kiev decreased though it continued to exist. The fact that Ukraine ceased to be under the divine authority of Moscow was presented by Ukraine as a development that ensured full independence of Ukraine.

## Crimean Tatar Turks

Russian intervention brought along a number of change and it has been Crimean Turks, local people of the region, who were effected most by these changes in the region, are now faced with a difficult process once again.

The invasion marked the launch of a new period for Crimean Turks. After the invasion, thousands of Crimean Turks were forced to migrate to other cities of Ukraine, notably Kiev, or other foreign countries. Those who remained in their homeland despite Russian repressions and violence are faced with difficulties.

## ***Exiles and Their Influences***

From 1783, the year Czarina Catherina II annexed Crimea into Russia, until World War I, hundreds of thousands of Crimean Turks were forced to migrate to territories of the Ottoman Empire because of the oppressions and injustice practices they went through. In the Soviet Union era, Crimean Turks suffered an even bigger disaster. On 11 May 1944, Russian Security Committee of State took a secret decision by the command of Stalin where all Crimean Turks without exception were sent on an exile into the deserts of Central Asia, Siberia and Ural Mountains. On 18 May 1844, Crimean Turks were loaded onto wagons and exposed to a fatal exile<sup>30</sup>.

Zafer Karatay, representative of Turkey to the National Assembly of Crimea Tatar and chairman of Foundation of Emel Crimea, pointed out that Soviet authorities understated the figures on purpose and around 423.000 Crimean Turks were sent into exile<sup>31</sup>. Non-human practices of Stalin and the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union left almost every single Crimean Turks behind in Crimea in this period. After this exile and attempt of genocide, Crimean Turks lost half of their population.

Towards the end of the 1980s, thousands of Crimean Turks began to return to their homelands. The Ukrainian Government advocated the return as well. Crimean Turks returning to their homelands to try make a more stable life for themselves. Starting to be active in industry, education, art and agriculture, Crimean Turks soon built schools, mosques and trade centers and established their own TV stations. In this process, Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu assumed leadership and defended the rights of Crimean Turks all across the world<sup>32</sup>.

To increase the cooperation among Crimean Turks and not to live down the past, Memorial Day of Victims of 18 May 1944 was launched by small-scale ceremonies in 1989 and was later joined by thousands of Crimean Turks in the Akmescit Square after the collapse of USSR. The Ukrainian government declared 18 May as the Day of Mourning.

When Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, it soon prohibited the 18 May commemoration and introduced a prohibition of entry to Crimea for several important political figures such as Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu and Rıfat Cubarov. Moscow imposed a crackdown on the people and caused thousands of Crimean Turks to migrate to different regions since 2014.

## **New Life after the Invasion**

Over 30.000 Crimean Turks reside in Kiev labeled the city as capital of the Slav world. Since the Russia's of Crimea in 2014, the Turkish population in Kiev is ever increasing. It must be stated that both the Ukrainian State and Ukrainian people look rather favorably on Crimean Turks. Crimean Turks are particularly active in the fields of trade, science and culture, contributing significantly to Ukraine.

Forced to migrate from Crimea, the activities of Crimean Turks is often centralized on Kiev. On the other hand, Crimean Turks tend to voice the rights of other communities both before the UN and other international organizations and strives to maintain their traditions and cultures; the mufti of Turkish Religious Foundation performs an important role in this matter. But the Crimean Turks are divided on the issue of the mufti. Operating for 5 years in Kiev, this new mufti brought several successful projects into life. Performing a uniting role for Crimean Turks scattered all over Ukraine, The Muftiate engaged heavily in cultural studies and they are much appreciated.

Unlike the black propaganda carried out against Islam all across the world, the opposite is the case in Ukraine and activities of Crimean Turks tend to be conducive to the good relations between Ukrainians and Crimean Turks. Distribution of Ukrainian translated Koran by The Muftiate in the busiest streets of Kiev to hundreds of people and informative endeavors about Islam gave very good results.

Because there is no mosque in Kiev, Muslims in Kiev observe their communal prayers in the cultural centers allocated for their use. Being used extensively in religious and national holidays in

particular, these cultural centers serves a uniting role for Crimean Turks in exile. The Muftiate in Kiev is in cooperation with the Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey and the Turkish Civil Society Organizations for Islamic tradition practices.

After the invasion, it was observed that not only did Crimean Turks migrate to Kiev, but they also migrated to smaller cities like Vinnitsya. Over 3.000 Crimean Turks, predominantly children, settled in the regions reserved for them by the Ukrainian government. Ukraine is delivering health and education studies to Crimean Turks in Vinnitsya, showing an established relationship between the parties. But in the interviews we conducted with Crimean figures, they underlined that it would be more beneficial for Crimean Turks come to big cities like Kiev, a statement delivered out of concern so that young population in the region can be assimilated.

## Violations of Human Rights in Crimea

The United Nations Charter, the Agreement for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Helsinki Final Act prohibit the invasion of any country by any other country by any means and defines such acts as illegal. Russia went against all these international agreements and invaded internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. Blatantly violating international law through its military operations in Crimea, Russia also violated Ukraine's territorial integrity by breaking the very assurance it promised in Memorandum<sup>33</sup> of Budapest to protect it<sup>34</sup>.

These unlawful acts of Russia brought along several violations of human rights in the region. Moreover, immediately after the invasion, it introduced the prohibition of entry for political leaders and influential figures of Crimean

Tatar Turks into Crimea. These names include important figures such as Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu, Chairman of the National Assembly of Crimea Tatar Rifat Cubarov, ex-councilman Sinarov Kadirov, Crimean media personnel Gayana Yüksel, Ismet Yüksel and Lemur Islam<sup>35</sup>. Besides, Ilmi Umerov and Ahmet Ciygoz, vice-presidents of the National Assembly of Crimea Tatar, were sentenced to imprisonment by the Russian courts. They were released through Turkey's intermediary in October 2017.

Due to their protesting the invasion of Crimea and criticizing Russian policies and violations of human rights, Crimean Tatar Turks and Ukrainians have suffered various imprisonment and sanctions; on top of that, almost all media outlets run in Crimea were shut down. From 2014 on, the total of 28 media outlets, including ATR, the country's national television station and Crimea national news agency were shut down, with their web sites' access being blocked

and tens of newspapers and magazines being confiscated. Police raided mosques and religious education organizations run by Crimean Tatar Turks were and various religious books and works were taken over on the ground that they are 'against the Russians law'<sup>36</sup>.

Subsequently, raids against civil society organizations and individuals were also conducted. Moscow took a number of Crimean Turks into custody on the accusation of 'radicalism' and 'Islamic terrorism'; a great number of them were sentenced in the resulting lawsuit.

In the report titled "The Violations of Human Rights in Crime Under Occupation and Violations of Human Rights in the Russian Federation in general" by the association for

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culture and fraternity of Crimean Turks, it is put forward that various people observing their religious duties peacefully were imprisoned for various charges. Not only are these violations of liberty of conscience and freedom of religion are done against Crimean Turks, but they are also aimed at the Christian community, in which heavy pressures against Crimean Orthodox Churches and their assets continues<sup>37</sup>.

The Russian Federation took a decision to adjourn the National Assembly of Crimea Tatar. Though UN's International Court of Justice called Russia for cancellation in April 2017, Moscow announced that it would not comply with it. This act against the National Assembly of Crimea Tatar denotes outright violation of human rights intended for constraining political rights<sup>38</sup>.

Since 2014, a total of 15 people - some of whom in prison - lost their life. This figure includes unidentified murders. The Russian authorities haven't made any inquiries into these murders. What those who lost their life have in common is their anti-Russian speeches and activities. Invading Crimea despite modern international order, Russia is committing numerous violations of human rights, including the right to life<sup>39</sup>.

After the invasion, unidentified persons abducted 16 Ukrainians and Crimean Tatar Turks who protested Russian practices and their whereabouts and conditions remain unknown. The Russian authorities didn't make any inquiry in the face of it and tried to present those events as discrete ones. The abduction of Assistant Secretary of the World Congress of Crimea Tatar stands out among others<sup>40</sup>.

There were 14 national schools in Crimea that deliver their lessons in Tatar until 2014. After the invasion, the Russian government removed the statue of these schools as national schools. According to UNESCO figures, while there were 384 schools that teach Crimean Tatars in Crimea, the number fell to 133 in 2018. Similarly, while the number of students who took education of Crimean Tatar was over 18.000, it plunged to

just 2000 in 2018. There is a great decrease in the number of schools that teach Ukrainian and students who take education there as well<sup>41</sup>.

One of the most important works of Crimean Tatars named Hansaray located in Bahcesaray is one of the few structures that survived the invasion in 1783. With ascribed statue of National Museum until 2014, Hansaray underwent restoration by Russia in 2017 and operations incompatible with architecture of the building were made. UNESCO called on Russia to stop the destruction and brought up the issue in a report but it couldn't get a satisfying response from Russia<sup>42</sup>.

Policy of demographic change is one of Russia's underlying policies that it imposes in the regions it invaded after 2014 since Tsardom. Russia increased its efforts in this regard in Crimea, a demography of which was made upside down by Russia since 1783. After 250 years of the policy, Crimean Turks make up only 13% of the Crimean population and, according to the figure provided by Mustafa Abdulmecid Kırımoglu in October 2019; about 30.000 Crimean Turks were forced to take refuge in other countries leaving behind all their assets.

Russian repression, policy of frightening and discouragement and firings are the leading reasons for the migration. Between 2014-2018, it's estimated that 10% of Crimean Turks who lived in Crimea deserted the peninsula. On the other hand, figures of the National Assembly of Crimea Tatar show that 105.000 Russian citizens, excluding official stuffs, came to Crimea from different parts of Russia. The initiation of Russia in changing its demography is irremovably in favour of Russians.

## Crimea's Socio-Economic Situation

Crimea is a peninsula extending from the north of Black Sea to the south of the Azov Sea. The region has the perfect geography for sheep and goat farming. Crimea accommodated 16 cities, 56 towns and 956 villages before the invasion and over 100 different ethnicities lived in Crimea. It is also able to facilitate water transportation

due to its beaches. As a region of Ukraine that sees the sun most, its geography is favorable for agriculture because of the heat source it receives accompanied by rich water resources.<sup>43</sup>

Akmescit was the capital of Crimea when it was autonomous. Other important cities of Crimea are Akyar (Sevastopol), Kerch, Kezlev, Yalta, Cankoy and Bahcesaray. Cold climate characters are located on the northern side of the peninsula while mild climate prevails in its southern part. Major sources of income of the region are agriculture, mining-based industry and coastal tourism. North Crimea is the most favorable region for agriculture where sunflower, wheat and corn are cultivated there. Meanwhile the south of Crimea is rich with grapes and flowers used for perfume production.

Sunni Muslims as the majority of Crimean Turks belong to school of Hanefi. All their vernaculars are invariably ones of Turkish<sup>44</sup>. After the census done in October 2014 following Russia's invasion of Crimea, the Russian Federal Statistical Institute announced that 2.284.000 people live in Crimea and the number of Crimean Turks are approximately 277.000, in which 13% of population of Crimea is made up by Crimean Turks<sup>45</sup>. But these figures should be evaluated as a reflection of policy intended for changing Crimea's demography pursued by Russia since the era of Tsardom.

Russia claims that it is restructuring the economy of the region after the invasion, basing its claim due to official figures' statement that the region was advancing. It also put forward that Crimea enjoyed a significant increase in GDP as it reached up to US\$2900. In 2018, it was stated that the increase was over 10% and Crimea was presented as one of the regions subsidized most by the Russian state with the sum exceeding US\$650 million<sup>46</sup>. But, these figures, presented as a success story by Russia, have nothing at all to do with Crimean Turks and other ethnic groups standing up against the Russian invasion.

Previous vice president of the Association for Crimea, Tuncer Kalkay, asserted that Moscow

policies are aimed at creating a prototype of Crimean Tatar deprived of its essence. Stating that Crimean Tatar Turks have trouble even in sustaining their daily lives and have been dismissed from their state-run offices by the Russian government to a large extent, Kalkay remarked that there is an increased inclination toward cabman and peddler's trade among Crimean Turks.

Tuncer Kalkay also said that his biggest concern is how people from Russia settled in the region after 2014. He expressed that the number could exceed 105.000 with reference to Gonul Samilkızı, writer of 'Fires in Crimea' and Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu. But the identity and quality of the people settling in the region are more important than their quantities. Kalkay also remarked that retired colonels constitutes a majority of population settled in the region and interpreted that the real motive behind it is to create an armed force at its disposal to fight in the name of Russia when necessary.

## How the World Sees the Invasion

68/262 United Nations General Assembly Resolution, dated 27 March 2014, provides important insights into how the world sees the invasion. The resolution reads that Russia perpetrated an evident encroachment against territorial integrity of Ukraine by violating both UN laws and Constitution of Ukraine. In the voting, 100 affirmative vote, 11 black ball and 24 abstention were casted; 24 countries didn't attend in the voting. Syria, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Armenia, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, South Korea and Sudan casted black-ball together with Russia<sup>47</sup>.

The US, EU countries, Turkey and the Baltic states sought to get plurality for Ukraine. The states that have good relationship with or refrain from Russia either refrained from voting or didn't attend the voting. Venezuela and Nicaragua also recognized the sovereignty of South Abkhazia and Ossetia, implying that they sided with Russia. Since China didn't want to face any opposition from Russia and the

West alike, it refrained from voting. It did so particularly because of the East Turkistan issue, hence it implicitly showed its direct support for Russia.

*The EU took some initiatives regarding economic sanctions on Russia because of the increasing international public opinion and insistence of some of its members.*

The stance of the West on Russian invasion was neither an act of unity nor a cause for concern for Russia. The EU couldn't act, like in many other foreign policy issues, in harmony. While the UK and Eastern European countries, notably Poland, insisted that severe sanctions should be imposed on Russia, leading member states of the EU, such as Germany and France, supported attempts of mediation. However, it was Germany and France that encouraged

Kiev most to join NATO and the EU. Several demonstrations in Ukraine were financed through German and French non-governmental organizations and activists. The stance of the EU is a further encouragement for Russia, as with Georgia. This situation implies that the EU is gradually losing its influence within the international system.

They gave more reaction to the secessionist in Eastern Ukraine than Crimea. The EU put sanctions such as the freezing of assets into practice and imposed sanctions on the secessionist in Donbas region and firms owned by them<sup>48</sup>. But these sanctions remained limited to economical terms and failed to end the invasion of Crimea. Besides, these sanctions were nothing more than a lip service because EU countries in question are heavily depended on Russia for natural gas. Nevertheless, they agreed on extending the sanctions for six months in September 2019. According to the latest figures,

the number of person and firm whom travel ban was introduced to and of whom assets frozen are 170 and 44, respectively. Russian state banks are excluded by finance sector in Europe and the EU put some constraint on the procurement of some of Russian technologies in the sector of petroleum and natural gas<sup>49</sup>.

The Minsk talks sought to alleviate the instability in Ukraine. Taking a neutral stance on the Russian invasion, Germany and France can have what they expect to get by securing their chairs in the talks. But, all these developments brought the future and cogency of the EU into question. Brexit was partly influenced by inconsistent stances of Germany and France on Ukrainian crisis.

One of the most important decisions of West, led by the US, with regard to Ukraine was the suspension of membership of Russia in G-8 in March 2014. Besides, the US also announced that it suspended credit of export provided for Russia in June 2014. The circles following the developments in the region evaluated as a heavy loss for Russia. These decisions include the introduction of prohibition of entry into the US and freezing of assets for persons within Putin's close circle. Moreover, Russia's assets in the fields of petroleum, finance, technology and arm in the US were frozen and it was subject to severe restrictions in this regard<sup>50</sup>.

Under the direction of President Barack Obama, the US extradited 35 Russian diplomats in December 2016 and two Russian diplomatic buildings were shut down. In Donald Trump's era, important sectors as mining, shipping,

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metallurgy and railway for Russia were targeted. In the meantime, foreign companies that do business with Russian petroleum firms were also subject to restrictions<sup>51</sup>.

This led to serious divergences between the US and the EU, Germany and France in particular. The relations of these countries with Russia was resented by the US, in which European firms, in turn, expressed that they would suffer a profit decrease due to the US decree. The Nord Stream Project<sup>52</sup>, in particular, is hampering US-EU relationship.

The Nord Stream Project, operable in full capacity since 2017, is accompanied with the launch of preparations of Nord Stream 2 project in 2018. The pipeline will extend from city of Narva in Russia to city of Greifswald in Germany and it is scheduled to complete by the end of 2019.

The US, Ukraine, Poland and Baltic countries argue against the project, planned to deliver 55 billion meter cubic of natural gas annually. The US warns European companies working in the project of sanctions that could be imposed on them.

Being against the first project as well, the US endeavored to market its rock gas to Europe to replace Russian natural gas but it outweighed the costs and European countries haven't regarded favorably the project. When it was determined that Nord Stream 2 would be undertaken by same companies that conducted Nord Stream 1, consortium couldn't be ensured because of the US' opposition, and some EU countries and Russian Gazprom took on the whole project. But, nevertheless, Shell, the affiliates of Holland-England, Australian OMV Energy Company and German banks announced that they would help finance the project. Only France, unlike its stance on the first project, criticized Germany<sup>53</sup>.

Habibe Ozdal, assistant professor at the department of international relations in Okan University, carrying out her studies on Foreign Policy of Russia, also affirmed that Germany and other EU countries diverged on their

relationship with Russia, in the field of energy in particular. Stating that Russian invasion of Crimea influenced every aspect of Russia-EU relationship, Ozdal remarked that the effects of crisis came to temper over time. Ozdal also added that energy issue is of paramount importance for the relationship between Russia and the EU; and EU countries won't go as far as to recognize the invasion of Crimea.

## **Turkey's Stance on the Invasion of Crimea**

Turkey-Ukraine relationship saw important proceedings after Ukraine gained its independence. To promote relations is enormously of strategic value for both Turkey and Ukraine. Their common feature as littoral states in the Black Sea have had determining effects on the course of bilateral relations and Crimean Turks, Meskhetian Turks and Ghuzz Turks in Ukraine do their parts in the relations.

Turkish similarities with the country deepen the relations, which makes it hard for Ankara to be indifferent to the developments in Ukraine. As a matter of fact, promising Turkey-Ukraine relationship gained more pace particularly after Russian invasion of Crimea.

In this process, the Republic of Turkey underlined that territorial integrity of Ukraine should be respected and set the rights of Crimean Turks as the most important issue. Mustafa Abdulcemil Kırımoglu, Chairman of National Assembly of Crimean Tatar, paid several visits to Turkey and were rewarded the Order of the State by former president Abdullah Gul.

With the protests aggravated, unlike the stance of the West and Russia, Turkey invited the sides of the conflict to reconciliation and conducted a cautious but active policy. It underlined in every occasion that territorial integrity of Ukraine should be respected and sought to create a ground for reconciliation meeting through diplomacy with all parties in question.

From the very beginning of Ukraine crisis, Turkey has pursued a very different policy



from that of the Cold War. Within this process, Turkey, instead of just mimicking the policies of West, sought to put forward its own arguments and realize them. Though they disagreed on several political issues, Turkey hasn't endorsed the sanctions against Russia. It's only after increased engagement of Russia in the Syrian crisis and its aggressive stance that Turkey and Ukraine could come to be a strategic alliance.

On 24 November 2015, Turkey downed Russian fighter jet of SU-24 type, which led to a serious crisis between Turkey and Russia. It had a broad repercussion in Ukraine and then Prime minister of Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Chairman of the National Security and Defence Council, Alexander Turcinov put their support behind Turkey immediately after the incident. Two deputies of the Ukrainian Parliament put a star in front of the Turkish Embassy to imply their gratefulness to Turkey.

Not only did Ukrainian Authorities support Turkey but public opinion in Ukraine also showed a keen interest in the issues. A video clip prepared for the Turkish Air Forces and hit one million view within short time, reflected the sympathy of the Ukrainian people for Turkey in social media. That Crimean Turks appeared in 61th Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden with the song about exile in 1944 had an effect on advancing the relations between the people of Turkey and Ukraine. Ukraine's support to Turkey was motivated by the fact that Turkey proved that it could take all necessary measure to protect its borders.

Honorary Consul of Ukraine, Görkem Sehsuvar, making great contributions to the relationship between Ukraine and Turkey, underscored the fact that invasion of Crimea by Russia, culminating in displacement of Crimean Turks from their homelands, hasn't been and

will not be recognized by Turkey. Recalling that millions of people of Crimean Tatar origin live in Turkey and they're closely following the developments in Ukraine, Sehsuvar interpreted Ankara's stance on the issue as a 'question of principle'.

Sehsuvar also added that they're in touch both with Ukrainian authorities and leaders of Crimean Tatars in protecting the rights and interests of Crimean Turks, prioritized by Turkey, and they mediate in all international institutions, primarily UN, to raise the problems of Crimean Turks.

## **Strategic Alliance between Kiev and Ankara**

The first Turkey-Ukraine High Level Cooperation Council meeting, co-organized by Turkey and Ukraine, was held in Ankara in 2011. These meetings took also place in 2012 and 2013 but they were cancelled because of the situation in Ukraine. In the 2016 secession, Ukrainian President Porosenko told that Ukraine-Turkey relationship enjoyed its highest level ever and said, 'Turkey is our strategic ally'. Turcinov, however, stated that military cooperation is vital to strategic cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine. Indeed, subsequently, both sides agreed on developing joint projects such as manufacturing ironclads, drones, tanks and rockets.

Another important realm of cooperation between Ankara and Kiev is tourism. Both countries introduced visa-free policy reciprocally in 2012 and proceeded to passport-free travel policy as of 2017. From 2014 on, the number of tourist from Ukraine in Turkey is over one million and that figure tends to increasingly rise each year. Entry with respective

*Ankara and Kiev support each other in international organizations such as the UN, the European Council and AGIT and made important progresses in recent years.*



national identity cards into both countries is rather significant since it indicates how the bilateral cooperation improved.

Trade volume between Turkey and Ukraine has seemed to fluctuate around five million dollars in recent years. Though hundreds of Turkish firms operate in Ukraine, the crisis in Ukraine halts the Turkish firms to live up to its full potential. But, recent initiatives with regard to economy created an expectation for an increase in the trade volume.

Ankara and Kiev support each other in international organizations such as the UN, the European Council and AGIT and made important progresses in recent years. NATO-Ukraine Commission, BLACKSEAFOR and Operation Black Sea Harmony draws the attention as the first attempts in military cooperation; while the cooperation in defence industry also made an important progress.

Turkey's expectation for transfer of technology in defence industry wasn't met at the level of NATO countries. Looking for different alternatives, Ankara enjoyed very important progresses in its relations with Ukraine regarding joint manufacturing and transfer of technology.

After Russia's invasion of Crimea, Turkey and Ukraine agreed on conducting several joint projects in defense industry in 2014. In this process, they decided to jointly manufacture fighter jets, aircraft engines, rocket systems, drones and ironclads.

Respective targets of both countries' defence industry are complementary to each other, which had influence in the decisions taken. Indeed, Turkey's Defence Industry Initiative that made great progress in recent years brought up the transfer of technology and search for market but NATO allies couldn't meet Turkey's expectation

for this. Kiev, however, has a great body of knowledge in the area of defence industry that it inherited from the Soviet Union and a number of defence companies.

At this point, Turkey and Ukraine are two peas in a pod, the former seeking to improve its defence industry and the latter seeking to reinforce its armed forces. In 2015, the representatives of Turkish and Ukrainian military defence companies met in Ankara where Turkey supplied about one million dollar worth of ammunitions to Kiev.

By 2016, the countries stroke a strategic cooperation deal in the area of defence industry. Afterwards, Turkey again sent the ammunition and military equipment worth four million dollars.

In June 2018, the first session of Turkey-Ukraine Defence Industry Cooperation was held to stimulate the ongoing cooperation between both countries in the area of defence industry. The most important outcome of the meeting

was the cooperation protocols signed between Ukroboronprom, state-run defence firm, and Turkish Aselsan. Subsequently, Aselsan supplied cutting-edge wireless communication technology to the Ukrainian military and it was announced that the technology would be jointly manufactured by both countries in Ukraine. It's an important success story for Turkey to become an exporter of military equipment within a very short period of time led up by the acceleration of studies for Turkey's domestic production since mid 2000s.

Then President of Ukraine Poroshenko expressed that he sought to equip the Ukrainian military with modern armaments, living up to NATO standards and he articulated on several occasion that Turkey as second largest military

*After  
Russia's  
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Ukraine  
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conducting  
several joint  
projects  
in defence  
industry in  
2014.*

of NATO and with a coast on Black Sea is a significant partner for Ukraine.

In January 2019, Ukrainian authorities announced that they signed a procurement agreement for IHA drones manufactured by Baykar. Based on the agreement, Baykar was to deliver six pieces of Bayraktar TB2 to the Ukrainian Army and its deliverance will be completed in October 2019. Along with IHAs, three ground control services and their equipments was put at the disposal of the Ukrainian Army. On this point, Honorary Consul of Ukraine Gorkem Sehsuvar draws attention that Ukraine is a neighbor of Turkey at the Black Sea and stated that bilateral relations between both countries has levelled up to strategic alliance. He added that Ankara also assigned great value to the ever-developing and deepening relations in every realm and underlined that Turkey was the first country Zelenskiy visited after he came to power.

## Russia in Bilateral Relations

It can be readily said that problems of each country with Russia had a determining effect on the relations of Turkey-Ukraine. Particularly since mid 2015s, Russian interference in regional problems directly relating to Turkey's interests, notably that in the Syrian crisis, has tensed Turkey-Russia relations for a long time.

Though normalization process has begun in Turkey-Russia relations and certain cooperation was ensured, divergences of the two countries on Caucasia, the Middle East and the Black Sea and conflicts of interests continue. At this point, given the fact that Turkey is bordered by Syria to the South and by Ukraine to the North, geopolitics importance of Turkey-Ukraine relations can be better understood. No matter how much Turkey and Russia have been in cooperation in certain realms against the West, (in October 2019, some agreements on security zone, for which Ankara had long asked, were ensured), Russia's activities in the South of Turkey through Syria is likely to form a threat to Ankara in the long run. In this context, Strategic Alliance between Ukraine and Turkey in the

Black Sea is capable of alleviating the threat on the southern border of Turkey and Russia and containing it within Syria.

## New Era in Ukraine and Presidency of Zelenskiy

Without any political experience, Volodimir Zelenskiy received 73% of votes in the presidential elections on 21 April 2019. Playing the role of a President in a very popular Ukrainian TV series, 'Servant of People', Zelenskiy conducted his election campaign through stand-up shows and social media rather than meetings<sup>54</sup>.

Petro Poroshenko, who came to power after Yanukovic in 2014, demanded votes of Ukrainians with his nationalist discourses and his anti-Russian approach. Particularly his statements about that Crimea is a part of Ukraine and will be reconquered, anti-Russian stance on the issues of Kerch Bosphorus and the Black Sea and maintaining the combat against the secessionist in East Ukraine was endorsed by Ukrainian nationalist and anti-Russian circles. To increase that support, Poroshenko conducted successful process for Ukrainian Church's independence from Russian Church to occupy an important place in creating a Ukrainian identity that is entirely independent from Russian identity.

Although Poroshenko's anti-Moscow policy received some popular support, the Ukrainian people have more prioritized problems, hence the elections didn't come out as he expected. Poroshenko retained his important position in the business world through his presidency term and there were rumors that while people were impoverished, his companies continued to prosper and the fact that corruptions couldn't be prevented combined to determine the course of Poroshenko's campaign.

Ukraine is faced with serious problems in its foreign policy, security and economy. Combating the secessionist in East Ukraine particularly is causing great harm to both the country's economy and security. Inexperienced

politician Zelenskiy has not a clear program for foreign policy. Zelenskiy seeks to fill the defiance through bureaucrats and advisers.

What brought him to power had been his promises on clean politics, struggle to fight corruption and ending the hegemony of oligarchs in Ukraine. But the claims about Ukrainian-Jewish billionaire Ihor Kolomoyski being behind Zelenskiy's campaign blurred Zelenskiy's own promises and that fact has remained a cause of concern.

Though radical changes didn't happen after he assumed power, it is safe to say that Zelenskiy had pursued a temperate policy regarding East Ukraine. Advocating negotiations with the secessionists in East Ukraine rather than conflict, Zelenskiy has been criticized by several Ukrainian nationalists because of the discourse in question. He also hasn't said anything to imply his intention to retrieve Crimea so far.

## Conclusion

Aside from the crisis in Donbas and Crimea, Ukraine will likely to experience important developments in its domestic and foreign policy. The issue of energy, related with the project of NordStream-2, would be among them. Russia hasn't completed the project at the end of 2019 and couldn't eliminate Ukraine in the field of natural gas. If things had worked out as Russia expected, Ukraine would have lost an important source of income and suffer a decline in its strategic importance for the Western bloc. For Russia, however, quite contrary, more chance of cooperation with several European countries would have come up, capable of facing off the US and Germany.

It's an important detail to make sense of the process that the agreement on the transition of natural gas between Russia and Ukraine<sup>55</sup> expires at the end of 2019. For this reason, the US attempted to preclude it to be completed on time with sanctions on co-conductors of NordStream-2. At this point, Russia will likely to come to the table with Ukraine to stay away from trouble with European countries in delivering

natural gas. In the case of such a scenario, Ukraine will possibly be backed both by the US and countries opposing the NordStream-2 and get an upper hand ahead of negotiations with Moscow. While Russia discusses a short-term agreement, Ukraine is requesting a deal to last much longer.

Although, the phone call scandal between Trump and Zelenskiy on 25 July 2019 did put Zelenskiy in a very difficult situation. Ukrainian nationalist reacted with such comments such as, "Zelenskiy can make any concessions to get support of the US".

But, important developments, both to influence the rule of Zelenskiy and the politics of Ukraine at large could be seen in Eastern Ukraine. The Donbas Contact Group met on 1 October 2019 and agreed on the 'Steinmeier Formula' plan. The plan is intended to enable free and fair elections to be held in Donetsk and Luhansk-in the parts not under the rule of Kiev- and secure Ukraine's 'special statues' for these regions. Zelenskiy's support to the plan, and his statement that he would withdraw some soldiers from some parts of Eastern Ukraine, led to nation-wide protests. Protestors assumed that the special statue is a capitulation and it appears that the process will quite likely to culminate in autonomy.

Zelenskiy has a lot of reasons for why he made serious concessions regarding Eastern Ukraine. First of all, to sustain the war is very costly for Ukraine. Because of the instability caused by the war, the country has trouble attracting foreign investors to the country. The cooperation of France and Germany with Moscow in both trade and energy is undermining the economic and diplomatic support they have given to Ukraine since the beginning of war.

Nonetheless, a secessionist group of militias of 40.000 is present in Donbas. Though Kiev administration wanted the militias to return to Russia, Moscow insists on turning them into the police and border patrols, in which case a force (a Trojan horse for some) would have been created in Ukraine, easily controllable by Russia. For

Moscow, however, the issue of Crimea is non-negotiable. In this process, Russia is likely to only bring up the issue of Eastern Ukraine and trying to convince the Republic of Luhansk and Republic of Donetsk to sit on the negotiation table.

Habibe Ozdal remarked on the issue that some important developments must be experienced to oblige Russia to change its politics on Crimea or Donbass. Stating that it's hardly possible for Russia to take a step back in Crimea, Ozdal expressed that Donbass policy can go on as a 'frozen conflict' or 'gradual political solution' can be an option. Prevailing the political climate of Ukraine will have influence on the stance to be taken by Russia.

Zelenskiy has so far signaled that he can take any measure to make peace with Russia or normalize its relations. Economy is presented as the main motivation behind it. Although the young President of Ukraine is willing to make more concessions with Moscow, to withdraw military forces from Eastern Ukraine can result in a bigger debacle for Kiev.

In the election campaign, after he was associated with Ihor Kolomoyski, both his concessions to Moscow and his phone call scandal with Trump combined to reduce the trust felt for him. After all, new protests such as the Orange Revolution (2004) or the Euromaidan Events (2013) are

increasingly anticipated. Compared to Ukraine's political dynamics, the issue of Crimea and Crimean Turks are even much more delicate subjects. With all of the economic sanctions, political and diplomatic statements, Russia proved that it wouldn't abandon its invasion on Crimea; still more, it seeks to get around the issue of Crimea for it to cease to be a negotiable one. Aside from its invasion, Russia's violations of human rights against the Crimean Turks, its assimilation policies, its destruction of historical artifacts associated with Turkish-Islamic culture, irrevocable alteration of demography by it and similar practices, are unacceptable for the international society.

A great number of Crimean Turks now live in diaspora, far away from their homelands but, under the leadership of the legendary Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu, they continue to seek justice. Crimean Tatars have strong Diasporas in a lot of countries and through their foundations, associations and civil society establishments, they both keep their bonds among them and make their voices heard.

Most importantly, Crimean Turks still maintain their hopes that they'll retake and return to their homelands again just as they did in the past. This ancient people, who produced numerous scholars to the Turk-Islam world, are destined to rise like a phoenix from the ashes.

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- <sup>22</sup> Halit Burak Uyanıker, "Kırım Sorunundan Donbas Savaşına Rusya-Ukrayna Anlaşmazlığı", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Güz 2018, s. 150-152-155
- <sup>23</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Ukraine: Background, Conflict with Russia*, and U.S. Policy, Şubat 2019, s. 11
- <sup>24</sup> Ali Nedim Karabulut, "Eski Savaş Yeni Strateji: Rusya'nın Yirmibirinci Yüzyıldaki Hibrit Savaş Doktrini ve Ukrayna Krizi'ndeki Uygulaması", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Cilt 13, Sayı 49, 2016, s. 36.
- <sup>25</sup> Naja Bentzen, "Russia-Ukraine Conflict Flares Up in the Azov Sea", European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018.
- <sup>26</sup> Burak Çalışkan, "Karadeniz'i Isıtan Gerilim: Kerç", *Yeni Şafak*, 2018
- <sup>27</sup> Deniz Berktaş, "Patrikhanenin Ukrayna Hamlesi", *Cumhuriyet*, Ocak 2019
- <sup>28</sup> Burak Çalışkan, "Ortodoks Dünyasında Kilise Savaşları", *Yeni Şafak*, Ekim 2018
- <sup>29</sup> Burak Çalışkan, "Ukrayna Kilisesi ve İstanbul-Moskova-Atina Denklemine Kilise Savaşları", İNSAMER, 2018
- <sup>30</sup> Stephen Mulvey, "A Lunatic's Revenge", *Minorities: Crimean Tatars*, SAGE, 1994, s. 77-79.
- <sup>31</sup> Zafer Karatay, "73 Yıldır Dinmeyen Acı: Kırım Sürgünü", *Karar*, Mayıs 2017
- <sup>32</sup> Burak Çalışkan, "Sürgünde Bir Hayat: Kırım Türkleri", İNSAMER, Kasım 2017
- <sup>33</sup> In 1994, Budapest memorandum was signed by Russia, USA, Great Britain and Ukraine to destruct nuclear weapons Ukraine inherited from Soviet Union. but Ukraine surrendered its nuclear weapons in return for an assurance to ensure its territorial integrity. Annexation of Crimea demonstrated that, Russia, one of the guarantee states, let alone protecting territorial integrity of Ukraine, is indeed violating it. Both constitution of Crimea and Ukraine clearly recognize that Crimea is an autonomous region of Ukraine, thus implicating that such a referendum couldn't be held.
- <sup>34</sup> İşgal Altındaki Kırım'da İnsan Hakları İhlalleri ve Rusya Federasyonu'ndaki Genel İnsan Hakları İhlalleri Hakkında", *Kırım Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*, Ankara, Aralık 2018, s. 3-4
- <sup>35</sup> Amanda Paul ve Marta Zakrzewska, "Occupied Crimea: Europe's Grey Zone", European Policy Center, 2018, s. 2

- <sup>36</sup> European Parliament Policy Department, “The Situation of National Minorities in Crimea Following its Annexation by Russia”, 2016, s. 18
- <sup>37</sup> “İşgal Altındaki Kırım’da...”, s. 5
- <sup>38</sup> “İşgal Altındaki Kırım’da...”, s. 10.
- <sup>39</sup> European Parliament Policy Department, “The Situation of National Minorities in Crimea Following its Annexation by Russia”, 2016, s.20
- <sup>40</sup> Open Society Report, “Human Rights in the Context of Automatic Naturalization in Crimea”, Haziran 2018, s. 17
- <sup>41</sup> Open Society Report, “Human Rights in the Context of Automatic Naturalization in Crimea”, Haziran 2018, s. 44.
- <sup>42</sup> “İşgal Altındaki Kırım’da...”, s. 10
- <sup>43</sup> *Kırım Özerk Cumhuriyeti Bölge Raporu*, T.C. Odesa Başkonsolosluğu Ticaret Ataşeliği, Şubat 2012, s. 4-5
- <sup>44</sup> Hakan Kırımlı, “Kırım Tatarları Kimdir?”, Kırım Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği, <http://www.kirimderneği.org.tr/temel-bilgiler/kirim-tatarlari-kimdir>
- <sup>45</sup> Unrepresented Nations&Peoples Organization, “Crimean Tatars”, Ekim 2017, s. 1-2.
- <sup>46</sup> “Kırım’da Beş Yılda Ne Değişti”, *TürkRus*, Mart 2019, <http://www.turkrus.com/747953-kirimda-bes-yilda-ne-degisti--xh.aspx>
- <sup>47</sup> Mustafa Kemal Öztöpan, “Önde Gelen Uluslararası Örgütlerin Kırım’ın Yasadışı İlhakına Tepkileri”, *Uluslararası Suçlar ve Tarih*, 2018, s.
- <sup>48</sup> Martin Russell, “EU Sanctions: A key Foreign and Security Policy Instrument”, EPRS, 2018, s. 11
- <sup>49</sup> European Union, “EU Restrictive Measures in Response to the Crisis in Ukraine”, 2018, s. 1-4
- <sup>50</sup> “U.S. Sanctions on Russia”, Congressional Research Service, 2019, s. 30
- <sup>51</sup> “U.S. Sanctions on Russia”, s. 33
- <sup>52</sup> A consortium was established, called NordStream, to deliver Russian natural gas to Europe in 2005 after 6 years of study. Co-partners of it has been Russian *Gazprom*, *Wintershall* and *PEG* of Germany, *Nederlandse* of Holland and French *ENGIE*. By the end of 2017, deliverence of a total of 51 billion cubic meters had been ensured, proving that system can almost operate in its full capacity.
- <sup>53</sup> Marco Giuli, “Nord Stream 2: Rule no more but Still Divide”, European Policy Center, 2018, s. 17.
- <sup>54</sup> Burak Çalıřkan, “Ukrayna’da Yeni Dönem: Halkın mı, Oligarkın mı Hizmetçisi?”, İNSAMER, 2019
- <sup>55</sup> Because pipeline system of Ukraine is rather ragged, it’s expected to be out of use soon. Modernization of system requires at least 7 billion dollars but it’s hardly possible for Ukraine to raise such amount of money in medium and long term. As such, it’s quite likely for an accident to happen in deliverences.