



Centre for  
**Global  
Cooperation  
Research**

Report of the InHouse & Guest Workshop

# **Crimea and Civil Society: Challenges, Antagonisms and Models of Cooperation for Ukraine and Russia**

9–10 April 2015, Bonn and Duisburg



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*Taking place about a year after the referendum on Crimea's political future, this two day event brought together academics, policy makers and researchers from Crimea, Russia, Ukraine, Canada and Germany. It focused on the current situation in Crimea, the lives of the Crimean people and current and future relations between Ukraine and Russia as well as the role of the West in finding a cooperative solution to the conflict<sup>1</sup>. The first day was organised around the Käte Hamburger Dialogue co-organized and hosted by the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) in Bonn on 9<sup>th</sup> April featuring an expert panel that examined the political, humanitarian and security situation in Crimea. A subsequent workshop on 10<sup>th</sup> April featured those same panellists along with academics drawn from the Centre for Global Cooperation Research, University of Duisburg Essen, Ruhr Bochum University, Carleton University, Kharkiv V.N. Karazin National University and Taurida National Vernadsky University/ Crimean Federal University.*

## 4th Kate Hamburger Dialogue: 'Engaging Crimea: Prospects for Conflict and Cooperation'

**9 April 2015, 18.00 h – 20.00h , Bonn**

In his opening remarks, Dirk Messner, the Co-Director of Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research and Director at the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), framed the Crimea situation as a clash between two methodological paradigms of International Relations. On the one hand, he argued, there is the Western approach to resolving conflict with its focus on universal values such as the common good, the inviolability of state sovereignty, international justice and rule of law. On the other hand, he noted, we can find evidence of an alternative frame based on geopolitical strategies, with areas of influence held by major powers and of so called "Realpolitik". This latter approach, Messner argued, is the path taken by modern Russia. Further, it is these two disparate approaches that have enabled parallel and distinct discourses creating very little space for dialogue. This methodological framing, he argued, is an important factor for understanding the destabilisation of international politics currently under way in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> A year ago on March 16, 2014 the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine) held a referendum, resulting in the decision to first seek separation from Ukraine and then reunify with Russia.



Following Messner's comments moderator David Carment, Senior Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg /Centre for Global Cooperation Research, suggested that the absence of constructive dialogue even a year after the referendum has left some very large diplomatic holes to fill. Today the future of Crimea remains unsettled legally, politically and militarily. Even though Crimea's separation from Ukraine was virtually bloodless, questions regarding the future of its minority populations, especially the Tatar, remain largely unanswered, Carment suggested. Now, a year after the referendum, Crimea is de-facto Russian territory, incorporated at both the political and societal levels of integration. With just over 2 million people and a weak dependent economy, limited access to fresh water and a lack of reliable electricity, Crimea's future looks uncertain, if not bleak. Despite some teething problems, recent surveys have shown that a large majority of people, living in Crimea accept Russia annexation and moreover feel safe and secure there.<sup>2</sup> With those issues in mind, Carment asked the panelists the following questions: What is the situation in Crimea right now? What kind of future will the region have as a part of Russia?

In responding to these questions, Ukrainian academic and journalist Olga Dukhnich with the Kiev-based journal *Novoe Vremya* argued that the results of recent surveys and public opinion polls are hard to interpret, because publicly speaking out about the uncertain political status of Crimea is, according to recently passed legislation of the Russian Federation, a criminal offense. Journalist, Ivan Preobrajensky of *Deutsche Welle* and *Rosbalt* found that his discussions about Crimea's future with various Russians have provided some insider information about the country's strategy towards Crimea. For example, President Putin's appointee to Crimea Dmitry Kozak is considered by many analysts as one of the key figures in the President's team. From 2004 to 2007 Kozak was the head of "special federal commission on the North Caucasus ". Accordingly Preobrajensky argued, Kozak will likely use a Chechen strategy towards Crimea, meaning that all local power will be concentrated in the hands of one clan as opposed to power being distributed and decentralised.

In considering the question of the ethnic minority situation in Crimea, all the expert panellists expressed their concerns in regards to the status of the Tatar, people suggesting that the situation for them has become more tenuous over the last year. For example, Elmira Muratova of *Taurida National Vernadsky University/Crimean Federal University* reported that deportations and arrests of

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<sup>2</sup> See more on this survey: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-annexation-of-crimea-to-russia-opinion-poll/5430781>  
[Accessed: May 01.2015]



the Crimean Tatar leaders, searches in homes and mosques, the confiscation of religious literature, arrests of religious activists and pressure on Crimean Tatar media have become more common over the past year. These new realities have brought new challenges, she noted. One of them is a possible increase in the number of Tatars leaving the peninsula. Another challenge is a possible radicalization of the Crimean Tatar community that may take place under Islamic slogans. The 'Caucasus scenario' for Crimea, resonates widely among experts on Islam in post-Soviet space she suggested.

Following presentations from each of the panellists the discussion moved to the floor and for another hour the audience at DIE was very much involved in the discussion on the future of Crimea<sup>3</sup>. The general conclusion from the floor, as well as among the panellists, was that the situation in Crimea would remain frozen into the foreseeable future. While it is unlikely we will see a return of Crimea to Ukraine, by the same token its legal and political status will remain on shaky ground. A military solution that might entail Ukraine retaking lost territory seemed unthinkable and unlikely. Despite the geopolitical posturing, the net losers here could well be the people of Crimea who have pinned their hopes and their economic future on re-engaging Russia. As goes Russia's future so goes the future of Crimea. Should sanctions be eased and should the economy pick up over the next year – through for example the exploitation of natural resources in Black Sea Region, Crimea could very well be a beneficiary of growth through increased tourism.

(For more information on the 4<sup>th</sup> Käte Hamburger Dialogue, please refer to a report on [www.gcr21.org/events](http://www.gcr21.org/events))

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<sup>3</sup>Media coverage by German and Ukrainian mass media of this event could be found at: *Эксперты представили в Бонне сценарии развития Крыма* (translation: "In Bonn Experts provided possible scenarios for Crimea"). In Russian. <http://dw.de/p/1F649> [Accessed: May 01.2015] and *Что думают немцы о судьбе Крыма и Украины* (Translation: "What Germans think about Crimea and Ukraine") In Russian. <http://nv.ua/opinion/duhnych/chto-dumayut-nemcy-o-sudbe-kryma-i-ukrainy-44221.html> [Accessed: May 01.2015]



## Workshop: 'Crimea and Civil Society: Challenges, Antagonisms and Models of Cooperation for Ukraine and Russia'

**10 April 2015, 8.30 h – 15.00h, Duisburg**



This workshop constituted the second day of the two-day themes panels on Crimea. The second day focused specifically on civil society in Ukraine and Crimea and its role in supporting cooperation and avoiding conflict in the region.

David Carment opened the first panel on "Constructing 'the Nation': the Role of Civil Society in the nation building process after the Crimean referendum." Carment noted that few would have imagined a year ago Ukraine would be confronting problems of lost territory, ongoing military conflict, economic decline, and social and humanitarian instability in the Donbass. Yet despite these problems, Ukrainian social activism including volunteer organizations and civil society organizations continue to shape and influence Kiev's political structures. At the same time, civil society in Russia has become polarized by the conflict in Ukraine and Russia's role in it. The largest part of Russian society and Russian political parties continue to support President Putin and his Cabinet.

Ivan Preobrajensky responded with his analysis of the most recent data on public opinion in Russia. With the growing pressure on NGO's, including intimidation and harassment of political activists and opposition and most recently and most acutely felt with Boris Nemtsov's murder, the general public still has very little influence on Russian politics. Crimea itself is fully incorporated as a Russian regional division, and has been provided with a unique administration system, heavily loaded with federal budget money. So far the majority of the people of Crimea have many reasons to continue showing their strong support for President Putin.

Continuing the discussion of civil rights in Crimea, Elmira Muratova pointed out that the life of Crimean Tatars changed radically after annexation. It is well documented that the Tatars suffered greatly during the Russian and Soviet regimes. The dramatic events of their history, like the annexation of Crimea at the late of 18<sup>th</sup> century and their deportation in 1944 are deeply rooted in the collective consciousness of the Tatar people and have as a result shaped their attitudes to the events of the so called 'Crimean Spring'. During the crisis of last year, the Crimean Tatars took an active pro-Ukrainian position while the majority of the Crimean population supported the separatists. This fact together with



their well-organized structure (headed by the Mejlis) and demands to recognize them as an indigenous people of Crimea made them a potential threat in the eyes of those who have seized power in Crimea.

The presentation by Milana Nikolko of Carleton University, Canada took the participants back to the time of Ukrainian Independence in 1991. In her presentation, Nikolko brought out the problems of methodological interpretations of the nation building process in Ukraine and perceptions of the “Other”. Living in the shade of “Big Brother” for such a long period of time, and accepting myths about “brother-nations” (“bratskie narody”), Ukraine, was for all intents and purposes a colony led by colonial type of thinking among its political elite, even after obtaining independence in 1991. Now, going through a dramatic conflict, and suffering from social, political and physical trauma, Ukraine is desperately searching for a new national ideal, with the “Other” played by Russia and the Soviet Union becoming the dominant narrative in political and social circles.

Olena Petrenko of Ruhr-University in Bochum presented her analysis of “Revitalizations of the Heroic National Narrative in the Euromaidan” paying special attention to gender roles. Petrenko’s presentation addressed the gender aspects of the Euromaidan protests by explicitly exploring the mechanisms of their construction and legitimization within the nationalist discourse in contemporary Ukraine. She reconstructed the transformation of the Ukrainian national grand narrative during the political events in Ukraine at the height of the crisis in Kiev and more recently in Eastern Ukraine. Her view was that Ukraine’s militaristic masculinity has acquired a particularly symbolic meaning due to the opportunities of the moment focused on confrontation, war, and the pursuit of victory.

The concepts of men as defenders and warriors has gained special attention and respect within Ukrainian political discourse; lending themselves to an opportunity to emulate and experience the glory of the Ukrainian heroes of the past. The Euromaidan protests effectively promoted the continuity and positions of this masculine national narrative, the main features of which are search for references to the mythologized and heroic past where even women are portrayed as mythic warriors of epic proportions.

Oksana Danylenko from Kharkiv V.N. Karazin National University in Ukraine presented her “History construction and conflict potential of socio-cultural identities in Ukraine (2005/2006 and 2013/14)”. Danylenko reported the results



of her sociological research using survey techniques on the conflict potential in the Kharkiv region of Ukraine. Special attention was given to the connection between conflicting views and interpretations of key events, symbols and slogans in Ukrainian history. Her report identified East/West differences of views on dominant topics in oral history in Lviv (Western Ukraine) and in Kharkiv (Eastern Ukraine). Danylenko found that citizens from each region interpret key symbols differently and see their community's role in the conflict differently as well. Her study was accomplished through the analysis of texts and problem-oriented in-depth interviews as well as through the interpretation of photo collection of symbols and slogans of Euromaidan and Anti-maidan rallies in Kharkiv in the Spring of 2014.

In contrast to the Danylenko presentation showing increasing East-West tensions, the next presenter Olga Dukhnych suggested, that after losing territory, Ukraine has become a more solid and unified nation in its orientation towards European values with a more influential and independent civil society. Crimea, she argued, showed opposite tendencies. Dukhnych believes there are two alarming trends occurring in Crimea: the collapse of freedom of speech and the destruction of civil society. Among the most notable facts in support of this conclusion are: the elimination of free media, including - prohibitions to broadcast in the Crimean Tatar language, selective applications of justice for dissenters, a ban on entry to Crimea for leaders of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, a ban on mass gatherings. All these processes, Dukhnych suggested have significantly weakened an already atomized Crimean society and have damaged the capacity for collective action. Under these conditions, the formation of civil society is impossible. The population of Crimea is powerless, under a situation of military and political occupation.

Oksana Huss from the University of Duisburg-Essen, provided a detailed analysis of the challenges of anti-corruption reforms in Ukraine. The Maidan movement in Ukraine was inter alia characterized as a "revolution of dignity", targeting systemic political corruption. According to the Global Corruption Barometer survey, in 2013 every third Ukrainian was ready to protest against corruption. Over the last few years, Ukraine's political system developed a close interdependence with the oligarchs strongly reinforcing political corruption in the process. Ironically, Petro Poroshenko, one of the richest people in the country, won the presidential elections in May 2014 because of his political and business connections. This outcome raises the question: what, if anything has changed and what challenges remain after the Maidan? Considering the existence of both a "culture of corruption" and a "system of corruption" in the



country, Huss's assessment challenged mainstream perspectives on recent anti-corruption initiatives, initiated in large part by President Poroshenko and political activists.

### **Open Discussion on "Perspectives of Civil Society in Russia and Ukraine"**

The open discussion concluded the workshop. Tobias Debiel, Director at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research, Germany, moderated the discussion. Debiel started with a general question about legal perspectives on Crimea's status. Both Markus Böckenförde of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research, and Hans-Joachim Heintze of Ruhr-University Bochum argued that Crimea's legal status is in jeopardy, and it will remain the same in the future with no formal international legal recognition and an annexation deemed in contravention to UN Charter law.

The Ukrainian participants were very critical about national policy towards Crimea. A year after annexation, Crimea's status remains ambivalent: official political figures declare it has Ukrainian status, but such declarations do not reflect any real or significant investment in policy processes that would achieve that goal. Discussions about the possibility of creating a Ministry of Occupied Territories remain controversial. Ukraine's physical control (e.g. water and electricity supplies, internet and telephone carriage) over Crimea has not been used as leverage in negotiation with Crimea's political elite. Nevertheless a barrier for the Crimean people remains namely the severed railway connection between Crimea and Ukraine. Ukraine's policy towards those Ukrainians, who prefer to stay in Crimea, is also very unclear.

Ivan Preobrajensky stated that even in a most positive scenario, the reconciliation of Crimea's current status with international law and the legalization of Russian occupation as well as acceptance as part of Russia will probably take up to one generation to realise if not longer. The situation needs to be continuously monitored by Europe, though a simple solution is unlikely to emerge soon. Overall, the discussion stressed the complex dynamic of modern international relations as a mix of both geopolitics and global cooperation. The participants provided a thorough and deep analysis of the Crimea situation and through that helped to establish a sturdy platform for further dialogue and collaboration.