

In Our Country, but Outside Our Homeland:  
Identity and Diaspora Among Ukraine's Internally Displaced Crimeans

By

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## **Abstract**

In response to Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, tens of thousands of Crimean residents have relocated to mainland Ukraine as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including many ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, and indigenous Crimean Tatars. Deliberately choosing to remain Ukrainian rather than Russian citizens, Crimean IDPs have become emblematic of new discourses of Ukrainian civic and multicultural nationalism emerging in the wake of the 2013-2014 Euromaidan protests. While they are proud Ukrainian patriots, most Crimean IDPs also maintain a strong sense of regional identity tied to Crimea itself, and therefore understand themselves to be simultaneous "in place" and "out of place" within the Ukrainian mainland. This disjunctive sense of territorial belonging bears most of the hallmarks of a diasporic condition, except for the presumption of international migration that undergirds normative "transnational" theories of diaspora.

Showcasing Crimean IDPs as a salient case study, this dissertation advances an alternative "translocal" theory of diaspora that is attentive to discourses of belonging and exclusion whether or not migrants have crossed an international border. Relying on ethnographic fieldwork conducted within Crimean IDP communities in the cities of Kyiv and Lviv, this dissertation traces the motivating factors driving internal displacement from occupied Crimea, unpacks the Ukrainian and Crimean identities that dialectically animate IDPs' schismatic senses of territorial belonging, and analytically situates their varied experiences within a diasporic framework, disrupting the problematic epistemological binary of internal/international migration that hampers theories of diaspora.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

On a cool afternoon in October 2015, I was walking leisurely along a sidewalk in the center of Kyiv, Ukraine with a friend whom I will call Natalia. We had first met some seven years earlier in Simferopol, the capital of the Ukrainian region of Crimea, where I was investigating Crimean regionalism as the recipient of a Fulbright research grant, and where Natalia—who originally hails from the city of Kerch at the far eastern tip of the Crimean Peninsula—was attending university. This was the first time we had seen each other since my last visit to Crimea in 2011, and Natalia had become a Fulbright student herself in the meantime, going on to earn a master’s degree from the University of Minnesota. Natalia had returned to Ukraine earlier in 2015 along with her new American husband, but not to her native Kerch or even to Crimea; Ukraine had experienced tremendous social and political upheaval during her time away in the United States, and by the time she returned Crimea was no longer under the control of Ukrainian authorities.

Crimea had been forcefully annexed by the Russian Federation in March 2014 following the three-month-long Euromaidan protests that rocked Kyiv and precipitated a major geopolitical schism between Ukraine and Russia. Natalia proudly identifies as Ukrainian, and had even organized demonstrations in support of the Euromaidan in front of the Minnesota capital building during her time as a Fulbright student. But like many people from Crimea, Natalia also professes a strong sense of Crimean regional identity. Devastated by the news of the annexation, she had not been back to Crimea since she first left for Minnesota in 2012. Natalia’s family back in Kerch had favored the annexation and remained supportive of the Russian authorities who had seized power in the region, and Natalia’s relationship with them had suffered gravely as a result

of their divergent values and ideologies. Now living and working in Kyiv, Natalia was proud as ever to be Ukrainian, but struggling emotionally from the strained relationship with her family and from the painful experience of being displaced from her beloved Crimea. As we walked together to the nearest metro station after catching up over coffee, Natalia suddenly stopped and pointed to the manhole cover



beneath her feet. Like many of the manhole covers found in Kyiv and

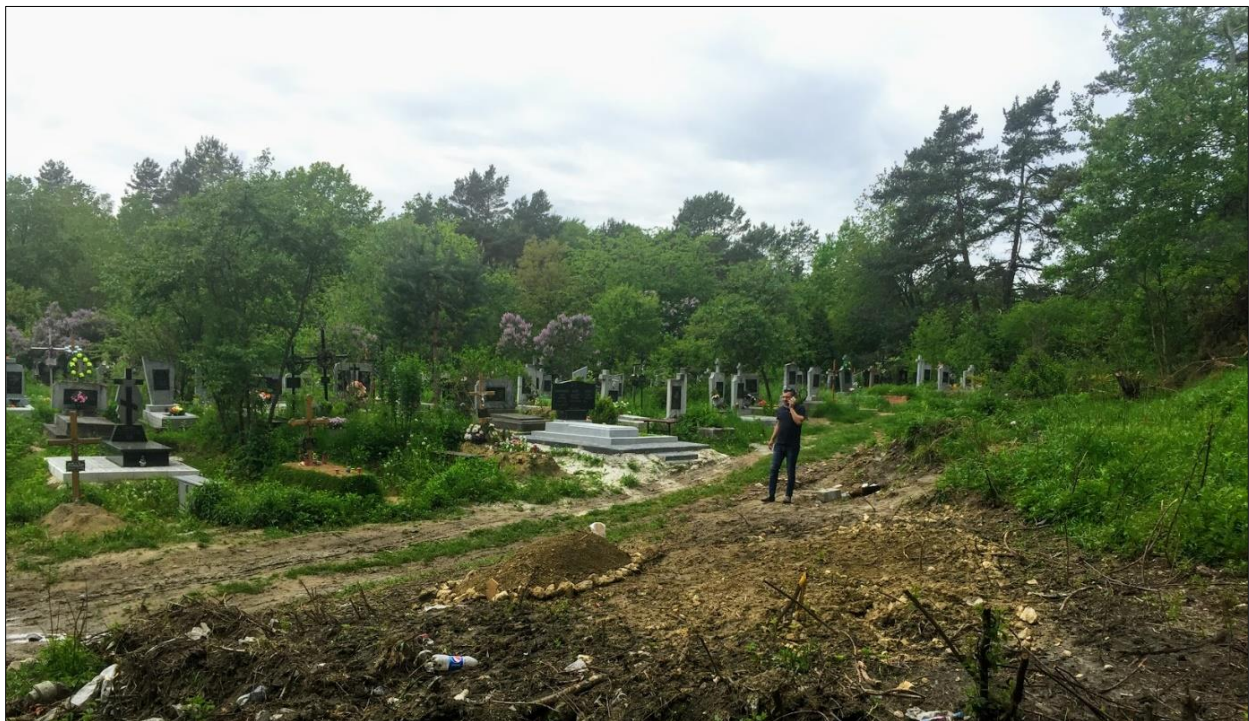
*Figure 1: A Kyiv manhole cover made in 1977 at a Soviet sewage pipe factory in the Crimean city of Kerch. The name of the city appears at the top. (Photo by author)*

countless cities across the former Soviet Union, this one bore the name of the now-defunct sewage pipe factory in Natalia’s hometown of Kerch where it was produced (Figure 1). “I love coming across these when I’m walking in Kyiv,” she told me, “it’s like a small connection to home for me.”

Seven months later, on a warm May afternoon, I found myself in a large cemetery in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv with my new friend Enver. Enver was an aid and assistance coordinator for the Lviv branch of *Krym SOS*, an organization founded in 2014 to provide legal, logistical, and humanitarian aid to internally displaced peoples both from Crimea and the war-ravaged Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. He himself had arrived in Lviv with his wife and infant son only two years earlier as internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Crimea. Enver is also a Crimean Tatar, the Turkic-speaking Muslim people indigenous to Crimea who make up a

significant portion of the Crimean IDP population in mainland Ukraine, and who have recently attained new levels of support and visibility within Ukrainian society thanks to their resistance to the Russian annexation of Crimea and displays of Ukrainian patriotism.

Enver had invited me to join him on a visit to the cemetery, as he needed to inspect the condition of a grave where a Crimean Tatar man had been buried a few days earlier. He explained the situation to me on the drive to the cemetery: the man, an IDP living in the city of Lutsk about 100 miles northeast of Lviv, had died suddenly of a heart attack. His grieving family was insistent that he be buried on the same day of his death as dictated by Islamic custom, but there were no cemeteries with a Muslim section in the small city of Lutsk, where the Muslim population is minuscule. Even more problematically, the man had passed on a Sunday, a day when cemetery employees were off work and many would be attending church or spending time with their families in this more traditionally Christian region of Ukraine. Unsure what to do, the



**Figure 2:** *Enver, an employee of the humanitarian organization Krym SOS, inspects the condition of a fresh grave in a Lviv cemetery, where an elderly Crimean Tatar man had been buried days earlier. (Photo by author)*

family called the *Krym SOS* hotline, prompting Enver and other employees to spring into action to find a solution by day's end.

Enver explained that plans had already been in place to set aside a new Muslim section in the Holosivs'ke Cemetery on the outskirts of Lviv, as the city had recently experienced an influx of Muslims arriving from Crimea and elsewhere, but the work had not yet begun. The team at *Krym SOS* started making calls to see if work could begin immediately to accommodate the deceased man, and they quickly reached Lviv's mayor, Andriy Sadovyi, who had famously released a video during the first days of the IDP crisis declaring the city open and welcoming to Crimeans. Sadovyi contacted the cemetery's chief administrator, who then ordered his employees to the cemetery to locate a new section for Muslims and to immediately dig a grave for the man's body, which was en route from Lutsk by car. Thanks to the quick work of Enver and *Krym SOS*, and to the empathetic and respectful attitudes of a few key Lviv officials, the family managed to bury their loved one on the same day of his passing in accordance with their Islamic faith in a nominally Christian cemetery, in an overwhelmingly Christian region, and on a Sunday. Enver was returning to the gravesite at the family's request to confirm that the freshly cleared area still appeared suitable, and that the grave had not been disturbed by runoff from the adjacent slope after a couple rainy days (Figure 2). With all appearing to be in order, I was struck by the symbolism of the scene: far from their native land and outside of their own cultural and religious milieu, internally displaced Crimean Tatars had found in Western Ukraine a welcoming home and a community willing to go to great lengths to accommodate the alternative beliefs and traditions of these fellow Ukrainian citizens, rushing to literally make space for them in their own hallowed ground.



These two instances—Natalia’s reaction to the manhole cover and Enver’s role in securing a burial site—are very different and seemingly unrelated, yet both are emblematic in some way of the experiences of Crimean IDPs in mainland Ukraine following the Russian annexation of Crimea. Accurate estimates of just how many people have been internally displaced from Crimea to the mainland are unavailable, as official statistics only reflect the number who have officially registered as IDPs, and not all chose to do so; official records show that approximately 20,000 people from Crimea had been registered as IDPs in 2015 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2015), although some have placed the number as high as 100,000 (Blair 2016). What is certain, however, is that the number of IDPs from Crimea is far exceeded by those from the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, where a Russian-backed separatist movement beginning shortly after the Crimean annexation in May 2014 has devolved into a deadly and destructive military conflict (Figure 3). Under direct threats to their homes, lives, and



**Figure 3:** Map of Ukraine, featuring the occupied regions of Crimea and the Donbas, and the cities of Kyiv and Lviv--this study's two primary field sites. (Map source: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2015/05/21/10-maps-that-explain-ukraines-struggle-for-independence/>)



livelihoods, millions of Donbas residents have fled from the region since 2014. While some headed to Russia, roughly 1.5 million have registered as internally displaced peoples elsewhere in Ukraine, with most resettling in areas adjacent to the warzone (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine 2018). Even if the highest estimates of their numbers are assumed to be accurate, Crimean IDPs therefore make up a rather small portion of Ukraine's total population of internally displaced peoples; this fact, coupled with the far more dire circumstances Donbas IDPs face, means that Crimeans have been somewhat lost in the shuffle of Ukraine's IDP crisis.

Crimean IDPs are a unique group in several ways. Facing no direct military threat like their Donbas counterparts, Crimeans who left the region mostly did so deliberately and consciously, choosing to remain citizens and residents of Ukraine while Crimea was forcibly transformed into a Russian jurisdiction. Crimean IDPs are also uniquely diverse; like those from the Donbas, their ranks are made up of both ethnic Ukrainians and Russians along with some small minorities, but the indigenous Crimean Tatars also make up a large segment of the Crimean IDP population. Crimea and the Donbas are both notorious in Ukraine for their ethnic and/or linguistic Russian majorities and for their decidedly pro-Russian political attitudes, but Crimea has long played a hugely symbolic role in narratives of Russian and Soviet nationalism, and these narratives played a key role in how the annexation was executed and justified. From my perspective, the most important factor that distinguishes Crimean IDPs from Donbas IDPs is a strong, well-developed sense of Crimean regional identity compared to weakly-developed discourses of Donbas regional identity (Korzhov 2006). My understanding of Crimean regional identity is informed by my own extensive research on the question of socio-spatial identities in Crimea (see Charron 2012, 2016). Following fieldwork in Crimea in 2011, I concluded that being from Crimea is highly salient to discourses of identity among Crimeans of all ethnic

backgrounds, although Crimea means different things to different people according to which “national lens” they view it through (2012).

In the late winter of 2014, watching from abroad with great interest and concern as the devastation and triumph of the Euromaidan gave way to the Crimean annexation and the beginning of the IDP crisis, I could not help but wonder whether the regional, national, and ethnic identities I had investigated in Crimea were undergoing radical reconfigurations as a result of the unprecedented events unfolding in Ukraine. Before my very eyes, it seemed that Ukrainian national identities were being redefined through the remarkable demonstration of civic pride, pro-European political ambitions, and resistance to Russian influence that lay at the heart of the Euromaidan protests. In the wake of the Euromaidan and the annexation that followed, thousands of Crimeans were rejecting Russia and relocating to the Ukrainian mainland amid this reinvigorating new atmosphere of patriotism, while many remaining in Crimea rejoiced at the arrival of Russian occupiers

My “aha moment” came in the spring of 2015 upon discovering the website of a Kyiv-based organization named *Krymskaia Diaspora*—or “Crimean Diaspora”—that a group of Crimean IDPs had founded to assist others arriving from Crimea and, later, from the Donbas (Figure 4). Here was a group of internal migrants—Ukrainian citizens who had left one region of the country for another—referring to themselves as a diaspora, a concept that I understood to apply only to migrant groups residing outside their state of origin. As unconventional as this self-applied label first appeared to me, it nevertheless seemed to reinforce my own findings about the strength of Crimean regional identities, specifically the point that a majority of Crimeans view the region as their homeland rather than the state of Ukraine as a whole (Charron 2016). Crimean



**Figure 4:** A banner advertising the organization "Krymskaia Diaspora," standing in the organization's Kyiv office. The banner features a map of Crimea emblazoned with the words, in Russian, "Crimea is people!" (Photo by author)

IDPs clearly felt a strong sense of belonging to Ukraine by the mere fact that they had chosen deliberately to live there rather than Russian-occupied Crimea, but to call themselves a diaspora also implied that they must continue to feel a profound sense of belonging to the regional homeland they left behind, or that being Crimean now served as a significant marker of difference in mainland Ukraine. Paradoxically, Crimea was now *de facto* a part of Russia despite near-universal recognition of its *de jure* status as a part of Ukraine, so the matter of whether migration from Crimea to mainland Ukraine is still *internal* had now been brought into question.

The perplexing concept of a “Crimean diaspora” proved to be my reentry point back

into the study of Crimean identities, and a topic that would allow me to conduct research in mainland Ukraine while occupied Crimea is decidedly off-limits for the type of in-depth, ethnographic project I was interested in doing. Diaspora, I determined, would make for a powerful theoretical framework for (re)interrogating the regional, national, and ethnic identities of Crimeans now residing in mainland Ukraine following the great upheavals of the Euromaidan,

the Crimean annexation, and processes of internal displacement. If diaspora and diasporic identities denote a state of migrant dispersal to points beyond and outside an original homeland generally fixed at the scale of the nation-state, then what can the notion of a Crimean diaspora reveal about the roles of Crimea and Ukraine in Crimean IDPs' constructions and performances of identities? If diasporas are typically assumed to be ethnically homogenous, then what to make of the ethnic diversity found within the community of Crimean IDPs, and might a diasporic condition transcend ethnic categories? More importantly, how might the experiences and identities of Crimean IDPs help us unsettle or retheorize the concept of diaspora itself?

### **Theoretical and Empirical Objectives**

Problematizing the rigid assumption that diaspora emerges only through transnational migration—i.e., when migrants have crossed an international border—is indeed the primary theoretical thrust of this dissertation. From a critical political geographic perspective, diaspora's transnational criterion clearly falls into the “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994) by reifying the nation-state system as an essential territorial order, wherein international borders are accepted as fixed “containers” of homogenous peoples, cultures, and identities. Under this regime, migration within and between “containers” therefore produces divergent categories of migrants or migrant identities. The transnational theory of diaspora therefore assumes that migrants necessarily enter a different social, political, linguistic, or ethno-cultural environment only when they cross an international border, and that their diasporic condition is manifested through being simultaneously foreign and increasingly integrated and acclimated within an adoptive home. According to this logic, people and groups who migrate within the territorial confines of their own nation-state remain emplaced within the same social and cultural milieu, and therefore do

not experience the same disjunctive senses of belonging to both an adoptive home and the one left behind—from whence materializes diaspora. If belonging to a particular nation-state is paramount to senses of socio-spatial identity, then internal migrants essentially remain where they belong, and their experiences cannot be considered diasporic according to a transnational definition.

This approach to diaspora—like the essentialist view of the nation-state at its foundation—ignores the reality that peoples, cultures, and identities located within a single nation-state may be considerably diverse and heterogeneous unto themselves. Accordingly, internal migrants within diverse states may also find themselves outside of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or regional environments where they feel a sense of belonging, and the friction generated between their experiences of simultaneous *displacement* and *emplacement* may be just as powerful and productive of a diasporic condition as that of transnational migrants. Crimean IDPs offer a timely and opportune case study for situating internal migrants within the theoretical framework of diaspora; they remain within the state where they are citizens and where they feel some sense of national belonging, but they are outside of the specific region where many feel an even more profound sense of belonging—especially the Crimean Tatars, who maintain a deep sense of collective belonging to their Crimean homeland. Considering the experiences and socio-spatial identities of Crimean IDPs may therefore help advance theories of diaspora beyond the limiting and problematic paradigm of transnationalism. The solution, I argue, is to reframe diaspora as a *translocal* phenomenon rather than a *transnational* one.

Translocalism has been proposed in recent years as a more critical approach to theorizing the socio-spatial and ethno-cultural hybridities emergent in our increasingly mobile and globalized world (Oakes and Schein 2006; Freitag and Von Oppen 2010b; Brickell and Datta

2016). Like transnationalism, translocalism offers a framework for analyzing the intersections and entanglements of cultures, identities, societies, and economies produced through human mobility and migration, but does not privilege movement across international borders nor rely on the nation-state to delimit social groups or categories. Translocalism is therefore a useful approach to retheorizing migrant identities that circumvents the epistemological pitfalls of the “territorial trap,” yet the study of diaspora remains stubbornly stuck in the problematic paradigm of transnationalism. Through a detailed examination of Crimean IDPs’ experiences and discourses of identity (re)construction, I argue in this dissertation that they exhibit a fundamentally diasporic condition despite their status as internal migrants, and that the case of Crimean IDPs can help elucidate a more critical, translocal theory of diaspora with applications well beyond Ukraine in the study of migration, diaspora, and socio-spatial identities broadly.

Along with the goal of advancing a translocal theory of diaspora, I also follow the lead of scholars such as Gilroy (1997), Clifford (1994), Butler (2001), and Mavroudi (2007) in problematizing the view that diaspora denotes a stable social group or a characteristic passively embodied by a monolithic migrant cohort. Rather than a label to be applied or an objective “thing” that exists independent of any action, diaspora is better conceived as a set of discourses and processes that migrant peoples must actively (re)produce. In other words, diaspora is something migrants *do*, not something that they *are*; a diasporic condition prevails when and where the perceived disjunctions between territorial belonging and exclusion are salient to migrant experiences or identities—when the schismatic tension between *here* and *there* produces a liminal sense of belonging suspended between the two but unmoored from either. These circumstances may not always be present in the everyday lives of nominally diasporic groups and individuals, and diaspora is therefore an ephemeral condition that may materialize and

dissipate along with this schismatic ebb and flow. Accordingly, as migrants assimilate and lose their connections to the home left behind, these tensions may become weaker or less frequent with time, and diaspora may lose its relevance as an expression of migrant identities.

Moreover, diaspora may be fleeting for some and not for others within a cohort of migrants originating from the same place. Following Brah (1996), Anthias (1998), and Soysal (2000), diaspora does not require ethnic homogeneity, but may in fact be a locus of intersecting ethnic, racial, gender, and class identities strung between a particular *here* and *there*. As such, some identities may engender a diasporic condition in more potent or enduring measures than others. Crimean IDPs also offer insight into these diasporic topologies; in this dissertation, I will demonstrate how Crimean IDPs' diasporic condition is temporally and contextually contingent, forming a solidaristic bond across ethnic subgroups in certain instances while galvanizing only certain groups in others. I argue that while ethnic homogeneity is not a prerequisite of diaspora, Crimean Tatar-ness is ultimately a more resilient type of identity that is likely to prop up a diasporic condition for longer than the Crimean-ness of Slavic Crimeans.

In addition to critically advancing theories of diaspora from a political geographic perspective, my goal with this dissertation is to present a detailed and nuanced portrait of contemporary Ukrainian identities that centers Crimea and Crimeans. Although much of the global community has condemned Russia for forcibly annexing Crimea and thereby violating Ukraine's territorial integrity, some commentators appear willing to accept that Russia's claims to Crimea are legitimate due to the region's ethnic Russian majority and the pro-Russian attitudes of many of its residents (Sakwa 2014, 100–119; Rapoza 2015; O'Loughlin, Toal, and Kolosov 2016; Rosenfelde 2017). While many Crimeans have indeed oriented themselves more toward Russia than Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the narrative of Crimea's

inherent Russian-ness is extremely reductive, essentialist, and ahistorical. Moreover, it obfuscates the very real and sincere Ukrainian identities of other Crimeans, many of whom now live in the Ukrainian mainland as internally displaced peoples. My hope is that this dissertation will help shed light on Crimeans' Ukrainian identities—both latent and proactive—in a way that pushes back against assumptions that Crimea and Crimeans *should* be part of Russia even if the process of incorporating it into the Russian Federation was illegal or improper.

Moreover, I also aim to contribute to the growing body of literature concerned with the more civic and inclusive narratives of Ukrainian national identity that have become increasingly mainstream since the Euromaidan protests (Kulyk 2016b; Onuch and Sasse 2016; Shore 2017). Ukrainian society is in the midst of a remarkable social transformation in response to the events of 2014, its geopolitical break with Russia, and its increasingly rapid integration into European political, social, and economic structures, and among the issues under renegotiation is the very meaning and substance of being Ukrainian. As I will demonstrate throughout this dissertation, Crimea and Crimeans—perhaps most notably the Crimean Tatars—play a crucial role in these new discourses of Ukrainian civic and multicultural nationalism. Highlighting these narratives and practices of identity helps gird against the cynical temptation to fixate on far-right groups who profess exclusive forms of Ukrainian ethno-nationalism. The presence of these groups in contemporary Ukraine is indeed problematic (see Ishchenko 2016; Bennetts 2018), but their reach and influence have often been overstated (Shekhovtsov 2014; Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014), and the attention they receive in the international press can deflect from the more influential and progressive trend of burgeoning civic nationalism in Ukraine. This trend is much more clearly visible from the vantage of Crimean IDPs, and by focusing on their experiences and perspectives I hope to help illuminate this powerful new trajectory of Ukrainian civic society.



## **Methodology**

Following the initiative of other geographers including Herbert (2000) and Megoran (2006), I have deployed an ethnographic methodology in this study. My decision to approach the question of Crimean IDP identities ethnographically is in part a reaction to my experiences using quantitative methods of statistical analysis in my MA thesis regarding Crimean regional identity. In that study, I applied two different statistical analyses—an Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA) and a Chi-Squared test—to survey data in order to identify statistically significant differences between the responses of Crimea’s primary ethnic groups that would suggest real-world differences in their identities. While I remain confident in the conclusions I drew from those analyses, I was ultimately left unsatisfied with the methodology and unconvinced that a quantitative, statistical approach is the most effective or appropriate way to understand the messy concept of identity. I was pleased with the rich data set I had gathered through surveying—both through my own recruitment and solicitation and with the assistance of faculty at a Crimean university—but found that the abstract language of statistical testing was cold and distancing from the very humanistic concepts with which I was grappling. I had interviewed a handful of topical authorities and regional elites, but these interviews ultimately did not factor into my analysis, and I did not have the time to conduct in-depth interviews with the “average” Crimeans whose identities I strived to understand.

Embracing the idea that “[n]o understanding of a world is valid without representation of those members’ voices” (Agar 2008, 27), I endeavored to take a more qualitative approach to this study that would give greater agency to my research participants, allowing their own words and actions to play a more central role in the way I represent them. To this end, I looked to ethnography and the methodological tools of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and

participant observation, which together would allow me to engage closely and directly with my research participants and produce a rich body of qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews begin with a set of prepared questions but leave room for the interview to evolve, digress, or meander in ways that allow for valuable new points of discussion to emerge organically while still giving the interviewer control over its trajectory (Dunn 2010). Focus groups provide an opportunity to discuss the same questions and issues raised during interviews, but in a more controlled environment and with the input of several participants, who may help elucidate or clarify certain points in a more conversational setting (Bennett 2002). Participant observation is a flexible research methodology that amounts to “being part of the spontaneity of everyday interactions” (Kearns 2010, 245) through immersion in and careful observation of the organizations, activities, and interactions that constitute the social world of the people being researched. Keeping detailed field notes about participant observations, interviews, and other relevant encounters in the field was also an important component of this ethnographic methodology (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011).

With funding from a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (Award #1546954), I carried out the bulk of fieldwork between September 2015 and June 2016. I selected the cities of Kyiv and Lviv as my two primary field sites, as it had become clear through media reports and the anecdotal accounts of my Crimean friends that these two cities were the most popular destinations for IDPs arriving in the mainland from Crimea (Trukhan 2014; Friedman and Lichfield 2015). As the capital and largest city of Ukraine, Kyiv had emerged the top destination for Crimean IDPs, and so I focused more of my time there than in Lviv; Kyiv was my base of operations from September 2015 to February 2016, and Lviv from February until June 2016, punctuated by frequent return visits to Kyiv. I also conducted a

handful of additional interviews in the city of Kherson in southern Ukraine during a short visit in January 2016, and in the western Ukrainian city of Drohobych during a daytrip from nearby Lviv in April 2016. With additional funding from the Howard J. Baumgartel Peace and Justice Award from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Kansas, I returned to Ukraine for one month in the summer of 2017 to conduct a round of supplemental interviews in both Kyiv and Lviv.

Obtaining a representative sample of the Crimean IDP population through interviews, focus groups, and participant observations proved an impossible task; their social demographics, like their overall population, are unrecorded and unknown. In short, there is simply no way of knowing what a representative sample of Crimean IDPs would even look like (Uehling 2017, 64). Rather than a representative sample, I therefore pursued a “purposeful” (Palinkas et al. 2015) or “judgement” sample (Agar 2008, 168) that includes a wide and diverse range of individuals according to their social demographics and perspectives. As ethnicity plays a central role in this study, I tried to achieve a balance in the ratio of ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, and Crimean Tatars—Crimea’s three primary ethnic groups—within the sample of research participants. I also strove to maintain a suitable gender and age balance, although I only included individuals over the age of 18. I also targeted individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, although as I will discuss in Chapter Four, many Crimean IDPs tend to have similar socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Many within the Crimean IDP community maintain a fairly high public profile—journalists, politicians, government officials, activists, artists, musicians, organization founders, academics, etc.—and I attempted to speak with many of these more prominent individuals in addition to the “average” Crimeans without a public

platform. Additionally, I interviewed a handful of individuals who are not Crimean IDPs themselves, but who have unique expertise or insight into the experiences of Crimean IDPs.

Recruiting interviewees and other research participants proved a rather easy and painless task. I already had many friends, acquaintances, and contacts from Crimea from my time living and conducting research there, and many of them have since relocated to the Ukrainian mainland either before or after the annexation. These contacts served as initial entry points into the Crimean IDP community; they introduced me to or put me into contact with others who had arrived from Crimea, many of whom provided additional contacts in a classic “snowball” method of sampling and recruitment (Sheskin 1985), which has been shown to be an effective sampling method in post-Soviet contexts (Rivera, Kozyreva, and Sarovskii 2002). I quickly discovered that the Crimean IDP communities in Kyiv and Lviv are rather small and highly interconnected, and there was never a shortage of people to interview. Moreover, certain highly-connected individuals proved instrumental in reaching a wide array of additional research participants. In most cases, if I became aware of a specific individual whom I wanted to interview, I already knew somebody who was close to them and who would happily put me in contact.

Although I contacted many participants by phone or text message, social media proved essential to my sampling and recruitment methodology and to the very success of my fieldwork altogether. Facebook became my primary means of communication with research participants, typically through the Facebook Messenger service. “Friending” research participants after interviewing them, I would often write them through Messenger to inquire about additional contacts. Facebook also served as something of a directory where I could find and contact potential participants even without a mutual contact. I frequently sent Facebook messages inquiring about an interview to individuals with whom I was not already “friends,” and in nearly

all cases I received a positive response. In fact, one interview was carried out completely through Facebook Messenger while the interviewee was serving in the so-called Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) against separatist groups in eastern Ukraine.

Some interviews took place in homes, offices, or other private spaces, but I met with most interviewees in cafes, restaurants, parks, or other public places. I conducted most interviews in Russian, although English was the interview language in some cases where interviewees were highly proficient. In total, I completed 94 interviews—86 with Crimean IDPs and eight with other experts or specialists. I organized a total of three focus groups with the assistance of contacts I had made in the field; one was held in the offices of an NGO, another at a restaurant, and another in a school. Participant observations happened in a wide variety of venues and situations: at concerts or other performances, at festivals and celebrations, in NGO offices, in cafes and restaurants, and at parties and other social gatherings. Participant observation also took place online through regular monitoring of the social media accounts of Crimean IDPs and the various organizations and initiatives they have created, effectively extending the field site(s) into the digital realm (Sanjek and Tratner 2016). I recorded interviews, focus groups, and portions of participant observation sessions using a simple voice recorder app on my smartphone, which made for convenient storage and back-up of audio files through a cloud-based data storage service. In compliance with the protocol approved by the Human Subjects Committee of Lawrence (IRB ID: STUDY00002650), I received oral consent from all interviewees, focus group participants, and observed individuals before commencing research-related activities.

My research plans did not initially include a survey, but toward the end of my time in the field I was well positioned to develop a powerful survey instrument informed by the issues and themes that had emerged in the course of fieldwork. Rather than a source of data for statistical

analysis, I determined that survey data could provide useful descriptive statistics to bolster and compliment the rich ethnographic data I had collected through interviews, focus groups, and participant observations. Moreover, after making extensive contacts within the community of Crimean IDPs, I was able to reach a wide pool of potential respondents with an online survey. I developed and implemented this survey using Google Forms between June and July 2016, beginning just as I was preparing to return home from the field. Links to the questionnaire were distributed primarily through social media, beginning with my own Facebook account and shared by dozens of others at my request. I received a total of 523 individual responses to the survey, but the total useable sample came to 497 after excluding responses from individuals under the age of 18, responses from those who did not currently reside in mainland Ukraine, and duplicate responses that were presumably submitted by mistake. The responses I received from Crimean IDPs living all throughout Ukraine brought invaluable insight into their perspectives and experiences, but also provided precious data concerning the demographic makeup of the Crimean IDP population, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Four.

A few caveats are required here. Participation in this survey required access to the internet and, in most cases, a Facebook account. Internet penetration has grown rapidly in Ukraine in recent years, particularly with the increasing availability and affordability of smartphones and other mobile devices (Freedom House 2017, 3), and anecdotal evidence suggests that the use of Facebook among Ukrainian internet users and especially members of the Crimean IDP community has become widespread. As discussed above, I relied extensively on Facebook as a tool for recruitment and communication with research participants while in the field. Nevertheless, the exclusion of those who do not use the internet means that this survey sample should not be considered representative. It should again be noted, however, that the lack

of certainty regarding precise demographics of Crimean IDPs makes it impossible to obtain a representative sample. Given Crimean IDPs' scattered distribution across Ukraine and their relatively high rates of internet use, I determined that an online questionnaire is the most effective instrument for reaching a wide range of survey participants, despite its limitations.

With the assistance of an academic friend in Kyiv, I hired a group of students from the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine to transcribe the interviews and focus groups sessions I had conducted in Russian. I transcribed the English-language interviews myself upon returning from the field. Once all interviews and focus group sessions had been transcribed, I used the online, open-source qualitative data analysis program Dedoose to organize and code all textual data. I followed a "grounded theory" methodology of textual coding, wherein coding and memo writing function as heuristic processes of discovering new themes, trends, and theories that may emerge from the textual data itself (Thornberg and Charmaz 2014). Through careful and detailed readings of the transcripts, I developed and applied to excerpts an extensive list of codes and related sub-codes. These codes pertained to a wide variety of attitudes, opinions, beliefs, ideas, experiences, events, places, and individuals relevant to Crimean IDPs and to questions of identity and diaspora at the heart of this study. Developing this list of codes was an essential step in the process of elucidating recurring themes and trends within the textual data, and my code list served as an invaluable index while gathering the relevant quotes I use throughout this dissertation.

As ethnography denotes a genre of academic writing as much as it does a set of field methods, my goal was to allow the voices of my research participants to come through as much as possible in the final written product. This dissertation therefore relies heavily on quotes drawn directly from interviews and focus group sessions, often in long form and with conversational

structures left intact. I translated individual quotes from Russian into English as needed rather than translating entire interviews, and I strove to keep translations as close to the original Russian text as possible. I include short bracketed excerpts from the original transcriptions in instances where it may be helpful to the reader to see the original Russian. In cases where interviews were conducted in English, I often made small modifications or grammatical corrections to original quotes to maintain clarity and understanding, but adhered as closely as possible to the original text. Where quoted, I have preserved the anonymity of most research participants by referring only to their interview number, ethnicity, gender, and approximate age. I make exceptions to this rule for interviewee with an elevated public profile or who are known to routinely make public statements about Crimea or Ukrainian politics, in which case I attribute quotes to them directly.

I have not performed any statistical analyses on the data I collected through the online survey. I allow these data to serve merely as descriptive statistics that give added weight to particular arguments or observations emerging from the qualitative data. In most cases, this amounts to a breakdown of how the entire sample and each ethnic subgroup responded to a specific question, expressed in percentages. My objective in including these data is not to offer any kind of conclusive statements about the real world based on statistically significant analytical results, but rather to supplement my observations and contentions with related survey data that may either be supportive or contradictory.

### **Statement of Positionality**

Taking stock of one's own social and political position vis-à-vis his or her research participants is essential in any study, and all the more so in an ethnographic study such as this



that relies on close interaction with participants, and which pivots on a highly controversial political question. Tens of thousands of Crimeans and nearly all my research participants now reside in mainland Ukraine because of the Russian annexation of Crimea—the singular event that triggered Ukraine’s IDP crisis. Since 2014, the question of to whom Crimea belongs has become a fiercely contentious issue; Russia is firmly in control of the region and has criminalized speech challenging the prescribed truth that Crimea is a part of its sovereign territory (see Chapter Four), while Ukrainians and the vast majority of state governments worldwide assert that Crimea remains a part of Ukraine now under illegal occupation. Although not criminalized, the suggestion that Crimea belongs to Russia is highly insulting to most Ukrainians, and completely anathema within the community of Crimean IDPs, for whom “Crimea is Ukraine” is an essential truth and a near-sacred mantra (see Chapter Five).

The matter of Crimea’s rightful territorial jurisdiction and the justness of the annexation are not issues toward which I can have a neutral opinion. Having spent a great deal of time in Crimea prior to the annexation, where I developed many personal relationships and a deep reverence for the peninsula itself, I cannot remain impartial to the fate of Crimea and its people. After speaking and spending time with dozens of Crimean IDPs and learning of their difficult experiences under Russian occupation, I cannot maintain indifference toward the question of whether the annexation and occupation are justified. Critical as I am of essentialist notions of the nation-state, I cannot endorse the view that Crimea “belongs” inherently or naturally to one state or another; moreover, I fully acknowledge that many Crimeans do feel a stronger connection to Russia than to Ukraine. Nevertheless, I am firm in my conviction that the annexation of Crimea was improper, illegal, unjustified, and should not bring acquiescence to the notion that Crimea is rightfully a part of the Russian Federation. In my view—and that of much of the global

community—Crimea is a Ukrainian territory occupied by a hostile foreign power, and I do not hesitate to refer to it as such throughout this dissertation.

While acknowledging my own views in this way may invite accusations that my work is informed by personal biases, I argue that holding this position is in fact necessary to the success of this project. Cultivating trust and respect among the peoples and communities under investigation is crucial in any ethnographic study, and forging relationships with Crimean IDPs would not have been possible had I not been empathetic toward their plight or expressed solidarity in their geopolitical convictions. If the objective of ethnography is to immerse one's self in a particular cultural or social environment and to view the world from the vantage of those who dwell within it, then to position myself as neutral toward the political status of Crimea would be untenable in this particular study. However, my solidaristic positionality does not preclude me from reaching conclusions with which some research participants may disagree; as I will discuss in Chapter Eight, my arguments regarding Crimean IDPs' diasporic condition will ruffle some feathers.

I must also state that I feel a particular admiration and affinity for the Crimean Tatars, both as a people and as a subset of the Crimean IDP population. I have grown ever fascinated by this resilient ethnic community and their culture over the past ten years since I first began studying Crimea; their commitment to non-violent resistance, their uniquely intimate and enduring connection to an indigenous homeland, and their easy embrace of civic and cosmopolitan identities strike at the very heart of my scholarly interests as a political and cultural geographer, and resonate deeply with my own system of values. This dissertation concerns Crimean IDPs of all ethnic backgrounds, but Crimean Tatars have taken a prominent leading role

both within the IDP community and Ukrainian society at large, and this is reflected throughout the dissertation.

In a related matter, I must also acknowledge that while in the field I participated in the creation of a short film regarding the annexation of Crimea and its impact on Crimean Tatars. The film, entitled *Crimea. The Resistance* [*Krym. Soprotivlenie*], was produced and funded by the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, although I received no compensation for my participation. I took a leading role in this production, playing an American researcher investigating the annexation and the Crimean Tatar community, and providing voice-over narration for both English and Russian-language versions of the film. I was asked to participate by Emine Dzheppar, the First Deputy Minister of Information Policy and a Crimean Tatar IDP who had provided me with many helpful contacts. Rather than highlight my own research, the film called for an actor to play the part of a fictitious researcher, and I reluctantly agreed to the role on the condition that I also use a fictitious name, lest the research depicted in the film be confused with my own work. I had some qualms about participating in this production, but agreed as a token of gratitude to Mrs. Dzheppar for the assistance she had provide me, and in the understanding that it would help build trust within the community of Crimean Tatar IDPs. In fact, some of the most profound and enlightening moments of my fieldwork came during the process of creating this film, as I will discuss in Chapter Sixteen. I am generally pleased with how the film turned out and how it has been received, but I feel it is my responsibility to disclose my involvement here as it occurred during my time in the field.

Finally, I must also acknowledge that my status as a foreigner and an outsider to the Crimean IDP community likely impacted my participants' perceptions of me and my research, and may have affected my ability to access and build trust within this community. Although I

have built an extensive network of friends, acquaintances, and contacts from Crimea dating to my earliest experiences in the region in 2008, my status as a resident and citizen of the United States is nevertheless a social barrier between myself and my research participants, and this status has likely restricted the breadth and depth of my interactions within the Crimean IDP community.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

Following this introductory chapter, this dissertation is divided into three sections followed by a final concluding chapter. The first section provides important theoretical, historical, and contemporary contexts for the analytical chapters that will follow, and is divided into three chapters. Chapter Two offers a review of literature and theoretical perspectives on the topics of identity, nationalism, regionalism, territoriality, and diaspora, within which I situate this study. Chapter Three traces broad themes in the history of Ukraine and Crimea to provide the historical context necessary for understanding Ukraine's contemporary social and political circumstances, including the IDP crisis. This chapter underscores that Ukraine and Crimea should be viewed through the analytical lens of postcolonialism, although I argue that distinctive postcolonial conditions exist within mainland Ukraine on the one hand and Crimea on the other. Chapter Four functions as a profile of the Crimean IDP community, including a discussion of the experiences that motivated their departure from Crimea, and an outline of their social and demographic characteristics revealed through survey results. This is the first chapter in the dissertation to rely extensively on qualitative data collected in the field through interviews, focus groups, and surveying.

The second section of the dissertation concerns how Crimean IDPs identify as both Ukrainian and Crimean, and is divided into two chapters. Chapter Five addresses discourses and practices of Ukrainian national identity—or “Ukrainian-ness”—among Crimean IDPs. This chapter includes a discussion of how Crimeans have come to embrace, accept, or invent their own Ukrainian-ness at different times and via different routes, and the role that Crimean IDPs play in newly emerging narratives of Ukrainian civic nationalism in the wake of the Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea. Chapter Six, alternatively, is focused on how IDPs continue to identify as Crimean following their relocation to mainland Ukraine. I distinguish between two distinct types of Crimean identity: general “Crimean-ness,” which mostly characterizes the identities of Slavic Crimeans and denotes a personal sense of place attachment grounded in Crimea; and “Crimean Tatar-ness,” which is exclusive to the ethnic community of Crimean Tatars and includes a deeply-rooted, inter-generational narrative of indigenous belonging to Crimea. In this chapter I also demonstrate how Crimean Tatar-ness is far more culturally dynamic and multifaceted than Crimean-ness, and why it is therefore likely to remain the more salient type of Crimean identity while Crimeans remain internally displaced. Together, these two chapters establish the divergent discourse of territorial belonging at the foundation of Crimean IDPs’ diasporic condition.

The third and final section of the dissertation addresses the question of whether diaspora is an appropriate framework for understanding the identities of Crimean IDPs, and consists of several chapters. The structure of this section follows Cohen’s (2008) prescribed rubric of diasporic characteristics in order to assess whether Crimean IDPs resemble other nominally diasporic groups despite lacking the presumption of transnational migration. Chapter Seven concerns “ideal types” of diaspora, and argues that Crimean IDPs most resemble a “victim

diaspora.” Chapter Eight addresses the question of etic and emic claims to diaspora, and explores how Crimean IDPs have variably embraced and rejected the notion of a Crimean diaspora in mainland Ukraine and their own belonging to one. In this chapter I also discuss the contested geopolitical implications of diaspora, and how they are persistently informed by the criterion of transnationalism. Chapter Nine explores the “time dimension” of diaspora, and argues that Crimean Tatars exhibit a greater propensity than Slavic Crimeans to remain diasporic in the long-term.

Chapter Ten concerns the diasporic requirement of dispersion to two or more foreign locations, and argues that dispersion to multiple locations within a single nation-state should be equally supportive of diasporic claims within a translocal framework. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the motivations and pull factors that have variably drawn Crimean IDPs to Kyiv, Lviv, and other locations within Ukraine. Chapter Eleven addresses how Crimean IDPs remain socially and emotionally engaged with Crimea and the loved ones who remain there, including a discussion of IDPs’ return visits to the region and the complications now associated with getting there. Chapter Twelve focuses on IDPs’ ongoing political engagement with Crimea through debates concerning its hypothetical political status after returning to Ukraine, centered primarily on the controversial proposal to declare the region a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region.

Chapter Thirteen concerns the role of ethnicity within diasporic assemblages of Crimean IDPs, arguing that ethnic homogeneity is not required for a cohesive diasporic condition, but nevertheless serves as a more enduring basis of diasporality in the case of Crimean Tatar IDPs. Chapter Fourteen looks at the relationships between Crimean IDPs and their host societies in mainland Ukraine, revealing that IDPs generally feel highly accepted and welcomed in their new homes, but often experience discrimination at a bureaucratic level due to policies that restrict

their voting rights and access to banking services. Chapter Fifteen explores IDPs' relationships to other diasporic communities of Crimeans beyond Ukraine; however, the absence of a trans-ethnic Crimean diasporic consciousness outside of Ukraine means that this discussion is germane only to Crimean Tatars, of whom there is a well-established global diaspora. Chapter Sixteen discusses the case of Crimean Tatar singer Jamala and her extraordinary victory for Ukraine in the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest, which further underscores the emerging diasporic condition of Crimean Tatar IDPs specifically. Finally, the dissertation ends with Chapter Seventeen, which revisits key points from throughout the dissertation and offers some concluding thoughts.

# **SECTION I: THEORETICAL, HISTORICAL, AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS**

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature and Theoretical Perspectives**

### **Theorizing Identity**

The question of identity lies at the heart of this study, and before delving into the complex and multifaceted ways that identities are expressed and embodied, it is worth pausing to consider identity as a concept. The task of theorizing identity in the broadest sense has typically fallen to sociologists and social psychologists, and as an analytical concept it is notoriously messy and frequently used imprecisely. Jenkins (2008, 5) provides a basic definition of “identity” as a practical starting point: “identity is the human capacity—rooted in language—to know ‘who’s who’ (and hence ‘what’s what’), This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on.”

Identities are essential elements of social interaction that help establish how individuals relate to one another in both interpersonal and complex social settings, and thus “identity” is often divided into a few broadly distinguishable categories: *personal*, *relational*, and *collective* identities. Personal identities are self-ascribed, and “typically refer to characteristics of the self that one believes, in isolation or combination, to be unique to the self” (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004, 82). Conceptualizing one’s personal identity requires constructing and maintaining “a unique constellation of traits and characteristics that distinguishes the individual within his or her social context” (Sedikides and Brewer 2001, 1). Relational identities are those that enable individuals to manage and negotiate interpersonal relationships, containing “those aspects of the self-concept that are shared with relationship partners and define the person’s role



or position within significant relationships” (1). Collective identities, on the other hand, are those that situate the individual as a member of a socially defined or categorized group containing more than two people—i.e., those identities extending beyond the domain of the “relational” or interpersonal. Collective identities are “shared with a group of others who have (or are believed to have) some characteristic(s) in common” (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004, 81), but belonging to a group “does not require direct contact or interchange with all others who share category membership” (2004, 81), and the group may extend far beyond the circle of one’s own personal associations. Collective identities are also personal insofar as the individual is responsible for ascribing and/or accepting group membership for his or herself; in other words, a “category does not become a collective identity unless it is personally acknowledged as self-defining in some respect” (2004, 81).

The term “social identity” is commonly used more or less interchangeably with “collective identity,” as both may denote a set of meanings that locate the individual within or outside of larger group configurations. “Social” rather than “collective” identity has been accorded greater terminological purchase among social psychologists, and the so-called “social identity approach”—which itself integrates Social Identity Theory and the interrelated Self-Categorization Theory—is an influential framework used among social psychologists for understanding how identity mediates relationships between individuals and groups (Tajfel 1981; Turner et al. 1987; Abrams and Hogg 1990). The founder of Social Identity Theory, Henri Tajfel, provides one of the most frequently cited definitions of social identity, describing it as “that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (1981, 255). More recently, social psychologists (Simon 1997; Sedikides and

Brewer 2001; Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004) and sociologists (Jenkins 2008) alike have eschewed the term “social identity” in favor of “collective identity,” arguing that even personal identities are inherently social because they emerge through social exchange and interaction with others. To speak of an explicitly “social” identity is therefore redundant (Jenkins 2008, 17), and any distinction between “social” and “non-social” types of identity reinforces a false dichotomy between the personal and the social. Approaching identities in their “collective” forms is more precise.

Conceiving collective identities first requires as referents the existence of collectives, or groups, to which individuals may ascribe social meaning and claim membership, but not all theorists accept the existence of social groups as ontologically stable. Brubaker offers a critique of what he labels “groupism,” or, “the tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis” (2006, 8). According to Brubaker, social groups such as races, ethnicities, and nationalities are cognitive phenomena existing only in the collective imaginations of individuals, and to treat such groups as observable things unto themselves—with stable definitions, fixed boundaries, and internal homogeneity—is to reify a set of constructed meanings. To emphasize the constructed nature of social groups, Brubaker proposes the term *groupness* to describe the discourses and processes through which groups and their identities are imagined into being. Jenkins (2008), on the other hand, points to the rigid view of groups that underlies Brubaker’s thesis, arguing that it is a misrepresentation of how groups or “groupness” function in the real world. Jenkins (2008, 9) suggests that viewing a group simply as “a human collectivity the members of which recognize its existence and their membership of it” bolsters Brubaker’s rightful assertion that groups are social constructed, but also recognizes the very real power

behind the mere belief in the existence of a group. “Groups may be imagined,” Jenkins concedes, “but this does not mean they are imaginary. They are experientially real in everyday life” (2008, 11). That groups have no substantive reality of their own should not, therefore, deter us from examining their roles in the construction and presentation of identity.

The grounds on which identities are constituted—whether individual, relational, or collective—is also an important topic of debate among identity scholars. Rather than a centripetal force that pulls individuals together around a core of mutual affinities or characteristics, several prominent theorists point to the centrifugal force of *difference* as the fundamental principle spurring the formation of identities. Stuart Hall, for one, argues that identities “are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity,” for “identities are constructed through, not outside, difference,” and, “it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term—and thus its ‘identity’—can be constructed” (1996, 4). For many, framing identity as a byproduct of difference is a repudiation of essentialist and universalist discourses that collapse the multitudinous ways of identifying into a limited and rigid set of categories such as race, gender, and ethnicity (see Irigaray 1993; Benhabib 1996; Seidman 1997; Butler 2006).

Although there is broad agreement that identities are multidimensional and multitudinous even as they are professed by individuals (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004), some argue that along with difference, *similarity* drives identity construction to an equal degree, for identity is “as much about difference as about *shared belonging*” (Gilroy 1997, 301). Jenkins (2008) argues convincingly that collective identities are born from this tension, that the centripetal force of similarity draws individuals together around common identities while the

centrifugal force of differences repels and distinguishes them from others. It is not enough, Jenkins argues, to define oneself only in opposition to the groups to which one does not belong; one must also embrace the perceived characteristics shared with others in order to “give substance to what or who one might claim to be” (2008, 22). If we are to recognize that identities are fluid, multifaceted, and contextual, we must also be mindful of how discourses of similarity and difference ebb and flow in the course of identity construction, where relationships of inclusion and exclusion may materialize and dissipate as identities shift and evolve in response to changing social conditions.

Following Brubaker’s argument discussed above, identities are often treated as substantive yet passive “things” that individuals are said to either *be* or *possess*. Adhering to this normative understanding of identity obscures the important point that identities do not exist independently of the people who claim them, that it is only through the collective agency of individuals to *identify* in a certain way that identities emerge as discourses that may be mobilized or engaged with. In Jenkin’s summation, “[identity] is a process ... not a ‘thing.’ It is not something that one can *have*, or not; it is something that one *does*” (2008, 5). Identities must therefore be made, maintained, and performed—they are a matter of *doing*, not of *being*.

To summarize, identities—whether personal, relational, or collective—are part and parcel to how humans understand both themselves and others, how they situate themselves within social relationships, and how they communicate their social positionality to others. Identities emerge in the liminal space between similarity and difference, defined both in terms of what they are and what they are not, and are therefore social by definition even when they are otherwise “personal.” Collective identities are constructed when individuals are drawn into groups imagined to include members who share common characteristics, perceptions, or goals, and the

mere imagining of such groups grants them real discursive power despite their lack of ontological substance. Because they are not real “things,” one cannot “be” or “have” an identity; they exist only insofar as individuals and groups express, perform, or otherwise *do* them. Because of its conceptual illusiveness and the propensity of academics and laypeople alike to invoke it indiscriminately, some argue that “identity” is too imprecise as an analytical concept and should be dispensed with in favor of more critical approaches to understanding social relationships (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Malešević 2002). I instead echo Jenkin’s (2008) assertion that identity must be taken seriously precisely because of the power that it holds over human consciousness as a framework for making sense of social existence, of both self and Other. A serious approach to the study of identity requires “a compromise between a complete rejection of ‘identity’... and an uncritical acceptance of its ontological status and axiomatic significance” (Jenkins 2008, 14). With this balance in mind, I now turn to a discussion of the key forms of collective identity that are germane to this study.

### **Nationalism and Territory**

Of the numerous social categories from which collective identities derive, few have assumed such preeminence in the human imagination or have had such a profound impact on the global social order as the concept of the nation. This assessment is not meant to diminish the role of other social categories in driving the construction of collective identities; race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, to mention only the most immediate examples, all play immensely important roles in defining and situating individual and collective selves within complex social matrices. However, through all its ambiguities and abstractions, nationality occupies such a preeminent place within our explanations of who we are and how we relate to others that it is

often taken for granted as the prototypical form of collective identity. Although belonging to a nation is by no means “an inherent attribute of humanity,” Gellner (1983, 6) notes that the global ubiquity of national consciousness suggests that “it has now come to appear as such,” to the point that it strains credulity to imagine a person without a nationality. Tellingly, nationality is often assumed as a prerequisite social context within which the intersections of other identity categories may be examined.

Despite its grip on our understanding of collective identity, nationality is a slippery and illusive concept. In a reaffirmation of nationality’s political primacy, many of its suggested definitions tend not to differ much from the broad definitions of “groups” and “collective identities” offered above. Gellner (1983, 6–7), for example, suggests that individuals are bound by nationality “if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating,” and “if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation.” Vague still is Brown’s (2000, 4) assertion that nations may be defined as “communities united by their ‘moral conscience’ or their consciousness of themselves as a nation.” Merely recognizing shared elements of “culture” or “conscience” in others hardly distinguishes nations from, say, fan bases of a particular sports team. However, French philosopher Ernest Renan first articulated two crucial and distinct elements of the nation over 130 years ago; in his 1882 lecture, “*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*” (“What is a Nation?”), Renan offered the following definition:

[A] large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. (Renan 1990, 19)

The temporal elements here are key. As Renan argues, nations are a particular type of collectivity perceived to have a certain historical trajectory: born in some mythologized past, carried forward through generations to the present moment, and sustained by a vision of self-preservation and perpetuation into the future. Nations are often steeped in mythologies about their origins, the trials and tribulations they have endured to survive intact, and both historical and contemporary enemies perceived to undermine or inhibit the nation's wellbeing. Nations are often the largest and most salient orders of social collectivity with which individuals maintain an explicit affiliation or solidarity. National identities therefore unite disparate individuals through bonds of familiarity and mutual affinity into large segments of humanity that move and develop collectively through time.

Furthermore, those who share a national identity must actively (re)negotiate its social boundaries and assert their collective interests in order for the nation to remain vital. Thus, nations are an inherently political project, circumscribed by the power their members wield to continually define and defend themselves as a national unit. To this end, Weber (1978, 398) defines the nation as “a specific kind of pathos which is linked to the idea of a powerful political community of people who share a common language, or religion, or common customs, or political memories.” This political component is another key distinction between nations and other forms of collective identity, and *nationalism* can be understood as the politicization of national identity to safeguard or advance the status of one's own national group.

The politics surrounding national identity are most salient in their spatial manifestations, and nationality is itself an inherently spatial construct (White 2007). In a very basic sense, humans inhabit the earth's surface according to certain patterns of spatial distribution, and mere spatial proximity can contribute fundamentally to perceptions of similarity and difference.

However, in virtually all cases, collectively inhabiting and prioritizing a nation's stewardship and control over a particular portion of the earth's surface is part and parcel to the expression of national identity, and nationalism generally boils down to the struggle for self-determination within an ascribed national space. Nationalism is therefore closely related to the concept of *territoriality*, or the practice of exerting power over space resulting in a particular type of space known as *territory*. Territory is a unique form of spatial organization with a long and contested historical development (Elden 2013), and it can be invoked by a variety of agents at virtually any spatial scale. Sack (1986, 19) defines territoriality as "the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area," whose "boundaries are used to affect behavior by controlling access." It is through the process of territorialization that power is expressed spatially; territory is a mechanism used to delimit and enforce belonging to spatially-bound collectivities, chiefly the nation. Nations and the nationalisms that sustain them require "territorial foundations," because nationalism itself "implies a promise to promote the welfare of the people" belonging to the nation, assuring "a set of material resources at their disposal and, if they so decide, at their exclusive disposal" (Gottman 1973, 95). It is therefore "the right to exclude others that could not be implemented without territorial sovereignty" (Gottman 1973, 95).

Beyond its political functions, the production of territory also takes on important symbolic meaning in the construction of identities among territorially-delineated groups such as nations. Like identities, territory itself does not exist independent of its social production; it is a matter of *doing* rather than *being*. In other words, according to Knight (1982, 517), "territory itself is passive, and it is human beliefs and actions that give territory meaning." Despite lacking any ontological grounding, the enduring "allure" of territory as a method of spatial organization



(Murphy 2013) has ensured the perpetual reification of territories—especially the nation-state—as spaces imbued with particular meaning and significance for those who inhabit it. Knight (1982, 517) argues that “many people ‘see’ meaning in or ‘obtain’ meaning from territory and the landscape within it, fully believing in the territory and its landscape as living entities that are filled with meaning,” and that these “landscapes as perceived by the occupants [of a territory] can have powerful symbolic links to a group’s territorial identity.” Similarly, Burghart (1973, 243–44) argues that as members of nations or other territorially-constituted collectivities perceive the existence of a shared territorial unit, they “come to identify themselves with these units,” and the collectivity “learns to understand itself in terms of, and in conjunction with, the land it perceives as being its own.”

Tuan (1990) uses the term *topophilia* to describe the intimate relationships individuals and collectives develop with the territory and landscapes to which they ascribe a sense of belonging, and emphasizes the power of place attachment in the construction of identities. Häkli (1999, 145) employs the concept of “discursive landscapes” to describe the process through which national identities and their attachment to a particular territory are reinforced, wherein, “the consciousness of ‘history’ and ‘region’ come together in the emergence of national discursive landscapes, giving them both legitimacy and territorial extension on different geographical scales.” Such “territorial imagery,” Häkli argues, is “part and parcel to the historical negotiations of national identity” (145). Similarly, White (2007, 59) argues that three primary factors may indicate how a national group may come to recognize a specific geographic area as its national territory:

- (1) The sites identified by the locations of important institutions and of historical events;
- (2) the landscapes described in nationally renowned literature, poetry, art, and music; and
- (3) the historical willingness to use force to hold onto a particular territory.

Moreover, once the boundaries of a national territory have been established either legally or in the collective consciousness of its inhabitants, maps and images of the territory's shape also become important tools in the reproduction and reinforcement of national consciousness.

Anderson (2006, 175) refers to simplified and easily reproducible images of national territory as "logo-maps." "Instantly recognizable [and] everywhere visible," Anderson suggests, "the logo-map penetrate[s] deep into the popular imagination," providing an every-day reminder of the collective space that the nation shares, reveres, and defends.

The role of territory in the construction of national identities is perhaps best expressed in the concept of *homeland*, although this term may be applied at a variety of spatial scales including those not necessarily associated with the national unit as a whole. Tuan (2001), for instance, situates "homeland" toward the smaller spatial end of the scalar continuum ranging from one's personal armchair to the earth as a whole (148), defining it as "a region (city or countryside) large enough to support a people's livelihood," containing symbolic landscapes, monuments, and landmarks that reinforce personal and collective attachment to the homeland itself. Homelands and the powerful bonds that nations and other groups form with them are typically cast as eternally stable, unchanging, and immutable, although Diener (2009) demonstrates how homelands, like identities, are socio-spatial constructs that must be reproduced and may be reconceived. Diener (2009, 19) defines a homeland as

a portion of the Earth's surface rendered significant by the interrelation of historical, political, economic, and sociocultural contingencies ... [that are] discursively manipulated by elites within a particular ethnic or national community to establish a pathological conception of separation among the inhabitants included within the identity structure."

As I discuss below, such conditions for the perception of a collective homeland may also occur at the sub-national scale, but framing a shared territory as a national homeland is nevertheless a crucial aspect of constructing national identities.

Nationality is thus a profoundly spatial type of social phenomenon, entwining identity with place at large scales of spatial organization through the process of territorialization. To this point, Symmons-Symonolewicz (1985, 221) accounts for both the spatial and temporal elements of national consciousness in his thorough yet succinct definition of a nation as

a territorially-based community of human beings sharing a distinct variant of modern culture, bound together by a strong sentiment of unity and solidarity, marked by a clear historically-rooted consciousness of national identity, and possessing, or striving to possess, a genuine political self-government.

This criterion of a shared culture, like the concept of culture itself, is another crucial yet abstract and deeply contested attribute of national identity. I now turn to a discussion of culture as a unifying force in the construction of national identities and how it ties nationality to the closely related concept of ethnicity.

### **Ethnicity and Primordial Nationalism**

Closely related to and sometimes understood as coterminous with nationality is the concept of ethnicity. Derived from the Greek word for a people of common descent—*ethnos*—the modern term *ethnicity* in its original meaning implied “a basic human category,” or the highest order of division of humanity into its fundamental constituent groups (Connor 1978, 386). However, usage of “ethnicity” and “ethnic” as a descriptor has largely veered from this original meaning and become more closely associated with racial or cultural minorities and subgroups found within a larger society, a misinterpretation that Connor (1978, 386) attributes to American sociologists. According to the original meaning, any group—be it a majority or a minority within

a given social context—whose members share or *believe* to share a common ancestry may be considered an ethnicity or ethnic group. Crucially, ethnicity also requires a set of shared cultural meanings, practices, and symbols familiar to all members of an ethnic group, and which distinguish one set of co-ethnics from another. Combining these elements, Schermerhorn (Schermerhorn 1996, 17) defines ethnicity as “a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood.” Schermerhorn elaborates that such “symbolic elements” may include “kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these” (1996, 17). In other words, ethnicity signifies both a set of socio-cultural traits and the belief in a common ancestral origin shared among a large group of people. Belonging to a given ethnic group generally implies that a person is “born into it,” receiving membership by dint of their ancestry and inheritance of the socio-cultural trappings that come with it (Eriksen 2010, 8), and so ethnic identities can be rather exclusionary compared to other forms of collective identity (Barth 1998).

Ethnicity is frequently upheld as the foundation from which national consciousness emerges, that the common ancestry and culture shared by members of an ethnic group are the same commonalities in which national identities are rooted. Indeed, for many the concepts of ethnicity and nationality are virtually one in the same, with group affinities and political solidarities extending only to other members of one’s ethnic group. Excluding ethnic others from the framework of national consciousness while also privileging the rights and political aspirations of one’s own ethnic group is often referred to as *ethno-nationalism*. An ethno-nationalist view of the nation-state, accordingly, is that the boundaries of the state should be

coterminous with the boundaries of the ethnic group and ethnic homeland to the exclusion of others. While there are almost no nation-states today that even come close to achieving this idealized ethno-centric pairing of nation and state, ethnonationalism remains a powerful political force throughout the world, driving political and territorial conflicts in a variety of global contexts.

Beyond the politicization of ethnicity in the construction of modern national identities, many scholars argue that nationalism as we know it today is rooted in the historical emergence and proliferation of ethnic identities and in the belief that ethnic groups are natural, organic, and essential categories of humanity existing since time immemorial, or at least since before the modern era. While Day and Thompson (2005) refer to this as the “ethnicism” approach to nationalism, this school of thought is more commonly known as *primordialism*, and its proponents argue that the kernel of national consciousness is a profound sense of kinship and distinctiveness within a specific ethno-cultural community—or *ethnie* (Smith 1986, 1991)—whose origins lie deep in a mythical past (Connor 1993, 103–106; Brown 2000, 6–13; Ozkirimli 2010, 49–71). While some primordialists postulate that the bonds of ethnicity are fundamentally biological, representing genetic kinship and instinctual group loyalty extrapolated to a large social scale (van den Berghe 1987), others maintain that the ethnic identities at the heart of national consciousness rely only on the *perception* of a natural and eternal biological kinship among co-ethnics (Shils 1957; Geertz 1973).

Another, more critical approach to primordialism is sometimes referred to as *perennialism*. Its adherents still view nationalism as a fundamentally ethnic phenomenon, but argue that ethnicity is a social product with deep historical roots, i.e., merely *ancient* rather than *eternal* and *natural*, as other primordialists maintain. In line with the perennialist view, Smith

argues that six common attributes of human collectivities are required for the emergence of an ethnic consciousness:

(1) a collective proper name; (2) a myth of common ancestry, (3) shared historical memories; (4) one or more differentiating elements of common culture; (5) an association with a specific 'homeland;' and (6) a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. (Smith 1991, 21)

Smith further argues that in order for ethnic communities to achieve the status of a nation, they “must become politicized and stake out claims in the competition for power and influence in the state arena” (1991, 156). In other words, nationhood emerges through the political mobilization of collective identities, but according to the perennialist view it is the pre-modern bonds of ethnicity that engender a sense of collective solidarity that is sufficiently durable and authentic to mobilize its members around common political aims (Hastings 1997; Hirschi 2012). Thus, while primordialist views do vary, the central tenant of primordialism is that nationalism is born only from the enduring bonds of ethnicity, which necessarily precede the emergence of a national consciousness and undergird any sense of large-scale social affinities and solidarities.

### **Modernist Theories of Nationalism**

Primordialist theories of nationalism have come under harsh criticism for their *a priori* assumptions about historic and pre-historic ethnic solidarities, and their teleological arguments concerning the trajectory from ethnic to national consciousness (Eller and Coughlan 1993; Horowitz 2002). With some exceptions (Grosby 2002; Roshwald 2006), scholars have mostly moved beyond primordialist approaches to theorizing nationalism and have embraced the view, first articulated by historians such as Hans Kohn (1944) and Elie Kedourie (1960), that nationalism is a much more recent political and social phenomenon dating to the beginnings of the Modern Era in late eighteenth-century Europe.

Another influential proponent of this view, philosopher Ernest Gellner, recognizes the role that ethnicity plays in the formulation of national identities and affinities, but eschews ethno-centric explanations for the emergence of nationalism as a political force. Instead, Gellner (1983) argues that nationalism is a byproduct of industrialization and the shift from agrarian to industrial societies in Europe, which brought profound changes to the organization of social life that required new cultural and institutional models to function. As industrialization drove the specialization of labor, the flow of rural migrants to urban industrial centers, and the erosion of ecclesiastic and monarchical authority, scales of identity and collective solidarity shifted from the local and parochial to the emerging framework of the nation. More precisely, Gellner suggests that these changes precipitated a profound cultural de-stratification; in agrarian societies there was a clear segregation between the “high culture” of the ruling class and the “low culture” of the laboring masses, and the imperative to preserve these social boundaries precluded the development of a national consciousness that would promote broad cultural and political solidarities irrespective of class. In a capitalist, industrialized society that offered greater social mobility and required unencumbered communication across social strata, the “high culture” of the ruling elite began to permeate and homogenize societies at large, thus catalyzing the cultural affinities and political solidarities at the heart of national consciousness. According to Gellner (1983, 35), this socio-cultural reorganization required members of an industrial society to “constantly communicate with a large number of other [people], with whom they frequently have no previous association, and with whom communication must consequently be explicit,” and thus universal education and literacy in a standardized national language became the primary institutions responsible for the reproduction of nationalist solidarities.

In Gellner's assessment, nationalism therefore emerged in Europe at a particular historical moment in response to the political, social, and economic changes associated with industrialization. While competing industrial societies incorporated and modified certain ethno-cultural symbols and myths in the expression of national identities, Gellner argues that ethnicity itself does not explain the emergence of national identities. Gellner is thus a central figure in the development of an approach to the theorization of nationalism known as *instrumentalism*, sometimes referred to as *situationalism* (Brown 2000, 13–19), which views nationalism as a particular form of politics that emerged to best serve the interests of social and political elites at a time of great societal upheaval brought about by the transition to industrialism.

John Breuilly, another early proponent of the *instrumentalist* view of nationalism as a form of politics, notes that the breadth and diversity of nationalist movements around the world dictate that no grand theory about the emergence and character of nationalisms is possible, but argues that nationalism is nevertheless a form of politics that is tied explicitly to the function of the modern nation-state and the powers imbedded within it (Breuilly 1982). Like Gellner, Breuilly attributes the shift toward nationalist politics to the social restructuring that accompanied industrialization, but points instead to changes in the institutional division of labor. In pre-industrial societies, Breuilly argues, core social institutions such as the church, lordships, and guilds were multifunctional, responsible for overseeing the economic, cultural, and political functions of its membership and thus commanding the loyalties and insularity of its members. In industrialized societies, the power of these institutions began to dissolve and the functions they once performed were spread across a growing assemblage of public and private institutions linked to the state, effectively driving social cohesion around the state itself and elevating citizenship to the primary form of collective membership. To bolster the legitimacy of state



power and ensure mass support behind the state's authority, Breuilly argues, political elites in early industrial societies appealed to a sense of shared culture and common ethnic attributes to construct an identity for its citizenry, thus giving birth to the modern conception of the nation and its inextricable relationship to the nation-state. Breuilly resists making universal assessments about the goals and characteristics of national movements—indeed, he employs a six-category taxonomy to distinguish between different types of nationalisms (Breuilly 1982, 11)—but nevertheless maintains that nationalism is always a political discourse used either in opposition to an existing state structure or in defense of it.

Other prominent theorists employing this *instrumentalist* approach to the study of nationalism include Paul Brass, who is credited with coining the term itself. Echoing Breuilly's fundamental argument, Brass asserts that neither nationality nor ethnicity are given social categories, but are instead discourses mobilized to serve and legitimize the interests of the ruling elites. Based on his study of ethnic and national identities in India, Brass argues that both categories of identity are contingent and malleable, that “the conversion of cultural differences into bases for political differentiation between peoples arises only under specific circumstances” when it is advantageous to political elites in their competition for power and state resources (Brass 1991, 13–14).

Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm has also contributed to this *instrumentalist* paradigm, viewing nationalism as a political mechanism of state authority arising along with the nation-state as a condition of modernity. “Nations do not make states and nationalisms,” Hobsbawm argues, “but the other way around” (Hobsbawm 2012, 10). Central to Hobsbawm's view of nationalism is his theory of the “invention of traditions,” wherein an “invented tradition” represents “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a

ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past,” pursuant to the construction of national identity (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012, 1). Invented traditions may come in the form of long-standing cultural practices reframed as essential markings of national identity, or they may be wholly created anew in order to rally citizens around the goals and interests of political elites. Hobsbawm points to three specific traditions that are all products of nationalist politics beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: (1) primary education, reaffirming one of Gellner’s major arguments; (2) public ceremonies meant to commemorate important moments in the course of a nation’s history, with Bastille Day as the clearest example; and (3) the proliferation of public monuments to key figures and events in a nation’s history (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012, 271–72). Such traditions are meant to ensure public acceptance and support for particular national narratives implemented “from above” by political elites seeking to legitimize and consolidate state authority.

Another key theory of nationalism shares much with the *instrumentalist* approach in that it holds ethnicity and nationality to be fluid categories with roots in the period of early modernity, but instead highlights how nationalism is a dynamic discourse with which societies actively engage rather than a set of principles imposed “from above” and guided by the “rational choices” of political elites. This so-called *constructivist* theory of nationalism does not discount the role of elites in the production of national identities, but emphasizes the participation of all members of a given national community in constructing and institutionalizing discourses of national identity for itself. Brown (2000, 20) summarizes the *constructivist* approach as one that holds national identity to be “constructed on the basis of institutional or ideological frameworks which offer simple and indeed simplistic formulas of identity, and diagnoses of contemporary

problems, to otherwise confused or insecure individuals.” In other words, constructivists view nationalism as a practice through which large-scale, territorially inscribed communities make sense of themselves and their relationship to others outside of the community.

Probably the most well-known proponent of the *constructivist* approach to nationalism—and one of the foremost theorists of nationalism generally—is Benedict Anderson, whose theory of the nation as an “imagined community” is foundational in the study of nationalism. Anderson (2006, 6) defines the nation as “an imagined political community,” which is “imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign,” i.e., consisting of an inclusive collective of individuals who share the common political objective of self-determination. That such communities are “imagined” does not imply that they are false constructs or stand in contradiction to some other, more “real” model of community. Anderson’s argument is that national consciousness is built upon a network of cultural affinities and political solidarities among a large group of people who will never meet or personally know every other member of the group, and therefore a set of symbols, myths, and discourses about what draws disparate individuals together in such a way must be “imagined” for a nation to exist. As Anderson notes (2006, 6), the nation “is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”

Anderson’s basic explanation for how such political communities were first imagined into being was the increase in education and literacy rates that accompanied industrialization, coupled with the rise of “print-capitalism,” or the wide-spread proliferation of daily newspapers and books published in vernacular language rather than the archaic liturgical prose of pre-industrial printing. The new availability and accessibility of the printed word meant that large numbers of people began receiving the same information in a language that was easily

understood, “which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profound new ways” that manifested in national consciousness (Anderson 2006, 36). In Anderson’s account, the commodification of the printed word served as the primary mechanism that aligned social imaginations into the horizontal solidarities that define national communities. “Communities,” Anderson therefore argues, “are to be distinguished, not by their falsity-genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 2006, 6).

Others have expanded upon Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities” to demonstrate that nationalism is not merely a form of politics, as instrumentalists such of Breuilly have argued, but that it is a set of discourses that defines community in a particular way. Sociologist Craig Calhoun argues that discourses of nationalism are indeed the very thing that creates a nation, for there are no grounds for mobilization or solidarity without them. Calhoun identifies ten rhetorical elements that are frequently—but not always—present in discourses of nationalism:

- (1) Boundaries of territory, population, or both;
- (2) Indivisibility—the notion that the nation is an integral unit;
- (3) Sovereignty, or at least the aspiration of sovereignty, and thus formal equality with other nations, usually as an autonomous and putative self-sufficient state;
- (4) An ‘ascending’ notion of legitimacy—i.e. the idea that government is just only when supported by popular will or at least when it serves the interests of ‘the people’ or ‘the nation;’
- (5) Popular participation in collective affairs—a population mobilized on the basis of national membership (whether for war or civic activities);
- (6) Direct membership, in which each individual is understood to be immediately a part of the nation and in that respect categorically equivalent to other members;
- (7) Culture, including some combination of language, shared beliefs and values, habitual practices;
- (8) Temporal depth—a notion of the nation as such existing through time, including past and future generations, and having a history;
- (9) Common descent or racial characteristics;
- and (10) Special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory. (Calhoun 1998, 4–5)

Crucially, Calhoun argues that nationhood is not predicated upon the true presence of such characteristics, but merely that a collective understands itself in these terms, for “nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices” (Calhoun 1998, 5).

One of the most critical voices of those approaching nationalism from a constructivist perspective belongs to sociologist Rogers Brubaker, who has argued for abandoning the view that social categories such as ethnicity, nation, and race are stable and ontologically substantive. Indeed, as discussed above, Brubaker is critical of the basic assumptions underlying our understanding of groups in a very general sense, arguing that we reify groups by ascribing to them an inherent homogeneity, internal logic, or collective agency, and that this misguided approach fosters a view of “the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial, or cultural blocs” (Brubaker 2006, 8). Instead of reifying groups as a category of analysis—a practice that Brubaker labels “groupism”—Brubaker argues that social scientists must be attentive to “groupness” as “a contextually fluctuating conceptual variable” affecting the beliefs and actions of individuals belonging to putative groups (Brubaker 2006, 11). Accounting for “groupness” requires rethinking social categories such as nations not as stable entities, but rather

in terms of practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events. It means thinking of ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization as political, social, cultural, and psychological processes.  
(Brubaker 2006, 11)

Brubaker therefore emphasizes that ethnicity or nationality are not passive categories or labels that we can simply apply to a collection of people, but performative modes of thinking and

interacting. In other words, national identities must be *done* by those who claim them, for without the *doing* they lack any ontological substance.

In summary, the modernist approach to nationalism refutes the “primordialist” view of ethnic and national identities, instead maintaining that the concept of the nation emerged in Europe beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century in response to the rapid social and political changes brought about by industrialization. Malešević, for one, has criticized the “rigid emphasis on historical discontinuity” between the pre-industrial and industrial eras implicit in this view, instead arguing that a “steady increase in the organizational and ideological powers of new polities” that accompanied industrialization is a better explanation for the advent of nationalism rather than a sudden break from the past (Malešević 2013, 17). This criticism notwithstanding, the modernist view has gained wide acceptance among scholars of nationalism. However, this approach is divided into two distinctive schools: the *institutionalist* approach that treats nationalism as a form of politics manipulated by ruling elites to serve their own interests, and the *constructivist* approach that highlights the discursive, performative, and participatory nature of nationalism. I argue that both the *instrumentalist* and *constructivist* approaches offer valuable perspectives on the study of nationalism, and following Hobsbawm (2012, 10), it is important to consider how discourses of nationalism and national identity may emanate both “from above” and “from below”—or, in Ericksen’s (1993) formulation, how “formal” and “informal” sources of national discourses are balanced—and how nationalism is produced through the recursive interactions of elite and popular discourses.

Critically assessing discourses of culture and identity and attending to the structures of power and inequality through which they are produced are also among the primary objectives of postcolonial theory, and many scholars have examined the construction of national identities

through a postcolonial lens. It is vital to the study at hand to understand this critical perspective, and with this in mind, I now turn to a discussion of postcolonial theory and how it has informed the study of nationalism.

### **Postcolonialism and Anti-Colonial Nationalism**

Postcolonial theory represents a locus of multidisciplinary approaches to understanding the ongoing social, cultural, and political impacts of European colonialism in a variety of global contexts. However stylistically unconventional, the term *postcolonial* is often written deliberately without a hyphen to distinguish between a temporally delineated state of being that follows a period of formal colonization—i.e., *post-colonial*—and the transformational conditions created and implemented through practices of imperialism and colonialism that linger well beyond formal decolonization (Sharp 2008, 3–5).

Although both practices amount to some form of subjugation of one group of people by another, postcolonial theorists draw important distinctions between *imperialism* and *colonialism* that illuminate complimentary discourses and methods of subjugation. According to Young (2001, 25–27), *imperialism* denotes a form of political and economic domination by a hegemonic power over a subordinate “other,” typically achieved through direct territorial acquisition and control, and principally guided by an expansionist and self-aggrandizing ideology. *Colonialism*, by contrast, necessarily implies the physical occupation by embodied agents of imperialism—*colonizers*—of subjugated territories, i.e., *colonies*. Hence, imperialism and colonialism are often inextricable in practice, as one provides the ideological doctrine needed to facilitate the other. (Loomba 2015, 28) further suggests that a spatial distinction is a more useful way to understand the differences between imperialism and colonialism; imperialism is the discourse originating in

metropolitan Europe, while colonialism results when this discourse is put into practice within an occupied and subjugated territory beyond the metropole.

Theories of postcolonialism are grounded in the same anti-colonial political and literary movements that helped drive formal decolonization in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and elsewhere beginning in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Among the most influential anti-colonialist voices to emerge during this period were Mahatma Gandhi, the famed civil rights leader who advocated for Indian emancipation from British colonialism through non-violent civil disobedience, and Frantz Fanon, a French-educated Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist and philosopher who spent much of his adult life in French North Africa. The philosophies of Gandhi, Fanon, and their anti-colonialist contemporaries did not yet constitute a coherent body of critical theory, but their works were tremendously influential and helped lay the intellectual foundation for postcolonial theorist who would emerge elsewhere in the post-colonial world a generation later.

If postcolonial theory can be said to have a point of inception, it almost certainly lies in Edward Said's groundbreaking 1978 book, *Orientalism*. A western-educated Palestinian born in Jerusalem, Said's transnational and transcultural upbringing helped inspire his thinking about the construction of identities engendered by European colonialism and imperialism in the Middle East. In Said's treatment, "Orientalism" refers both to the study and depiction of non-European peoples and cultures within the Western academy, and to the imagined cultural dichotomies between the Occident (Europe) and a shifting non-European Orient that are reified by the academy and other Western institutions. Said suggests that the construction and maintenance of these discursive boundaries serve as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 1979, 416). Here, Said borrows from Foucault's theory of power-knowledge (Foucault 1980) to argue that European imperialism is predicated upon its



ability to construct knowledge of non-European “Others” through technologies and practices of documenting, describing, cataloguing, and defining. With these tools, Western intellectual authorities also constructed an essentialized representation of the Orient as “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, [and] remarkable experiences” (Said 1979, 415), while rendering cultural self-representations of Oriental subjects invisible. The crux of Said’s argument, however, is that Orientalism not only creates and projects negative meaning onto non-Western Others, but it also recursively ascribes a set of inverse meanings to the West itself. In other words, only when paired against a debased non-Western *Other* was the West capable of defining and centering itself as superior. Thus, Said makes the groundbreaking assertion that colonialism constrains identities and imposes order upon colonizers as much as it does upon the colonized.

Grounded both in radical anti-colonialist and poststructuralist theory, *Orientalism* and Said’s subsequent texts were instrumental in the emergence of a theory of postcolonialism aimed at exposing and subverting the epistemologies that perpetuate imperialist discourses and colonialist practices in an otherwise post-colonial era. In its cross-pollination with feminism and other bodies of critical theory, postcolonialism endeavors to decenter Western and masculine perspectives and empower historically subjugated and underrepresented groups to speak with their own voices. Accordingly, the vanguard of postcolonial theorists has come from the so-called “Third World” of former European colonies, particularly South Asia. Among the most important figures to advance postcolonial thought is literary theorist Gayatri Spivak, who is credited with developing and popularizing theories of the *subaltern* that have become foundational within postcolonial studies. Coined by early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, the term *subaltern* refers broadly to ethnic, racial, religious, economic, gender, and

sexual minorities whose voices have been historically marginalized or silenced by hegemonic forms of cultural representation. In her revolutionary essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (Spivak 2010), Spivak argues that even well-intentioned efforts of Western intellectuals to speak on behalf of the colonized subaltern ultimately reify the latter’s subordinate positionality, as this knowledge is still a product of Western epistemologies and intended for a Western audience. Subaltern self-representations are thereby sidelined and trivialized when they deviate from the intellectual orthodoxies established by the cultural hegemon, leading Spivak to conclude that the subaltern cannot, in fact, speak in its own voice.

Concern for the subaltern has remained at the forefront of postcolonial studies since the 1980s, and along with Spivak many of its leading theorists are associated with a loose collective of primarily South Asian academics known as the Subaltern Studies Group. Among the continuing objectives of postcolonial theorists is the deconstruction of perceived cultural hierarchies and binaries that position Western norms against their disparate and frequently delegitimized non-Western counterparts. In his seminal work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), literary critic Homi Bhabha addresses the historical demarcation of the Earth’s surface into discrete regional units with their own attendant cultural forms, a schema maintained through European imperial discourses. Bhabha advances the view that culture is socially (re)produced in ways that are fluid, malleable, and transcendent of the physical and cognitive boundaries imposed through imperial discourse and colonial praxis. Central to Bhabha’s work is the concept of hybridity, or the idea that cultural forms are not exclusively grounded in any particular place and time, but rather mobile, permeable, and perpetually inchoate. Bhabha argues that culture is made and remade through complex social interactions that are both translocational and transtemporal, particularly in the context of European colonialism where cultures are transmitted

between metropole and colony. Dipesh Chakrabarty, another associate of the Subaltern Studies Group, further challenges European cultural hegemony in *Provincializing Europe* (2007), in which he exposes how discourses of imperialism enshrine European experiences of modernization as a gold standard that all non-Western peoples should strive to emulate and against which their efforts should be measured. Chakrabarty undermines this view by arguing that the European experience must be viewed as one of many, and that alternative paths toward modernity espoused by non-Western peoples are equally valid.

Postcolonialism has become entrenched in recent decades as a vital framework for critical analysis across the social sciences and humanities, and the study of nationalism and national identities in particular have been interrogated from a number of postcolonial vantages. Much of postcolonialism's approach to nationalism is heavily indebted to Anderson's work in theorizing nations as communities "imagined" by their disparate constituents (2006), but Anderson also serves as an important point of departure for many postcolonial theorist interested in the construction of national identities.

Although he concurs with the general assessment that the nation is something imagined rather than innate, Chatterjee (1993) objects to the underlying assumptions in Anderson's theory regarding the forms and trajectories to which the imagining of a national community must adhere. Chatterjee criticizes Anderson for privileging certain processes implemented "from above" that contributed to the emergence of a national consciousness, most importantly the rise of print-capitalism, which, as it institutionalizes and circulates a standardized version of a national language, serves to homogenize national identities. In Anderson's formulation, this model was inaugurated in Europe and exported to the colonized world, bequeathing colonized peoples with the tools to "imagine" their own national consciousness into existence. Chatterjee

rejects the notion that national identities necessarily follow along this readymade path rooted in Western experiences and offered up for consumption by colonized subjects, for “[i]f nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine” (1993, 5)? For Chatterjee, this route toward national consciousness is an inherently colonialist paradigm, but nationalism itself need not be; he identifies “anticolonial nationalism” as a project aspiring to sovereignty for a community “imagined” through shared culture attributes and practices resting in the “inner,” “spiritual” domains of colonized peoples that often predate the “outer,” “material” domains imposed by colonialism (6). Similarly, political theorist Tom Nairn, while not working explicitly within the framework of postcolonialism, attributes the emergence of nationalism in colonized territories to the uneven social and economic development inherent in European colonialism. Nairn argues that cultural elites under colonialism sought to develop native versions of nationalism that mimicked the West on the one hand, but were also a pragmatic and self-serving response to the enormous shortcomings in economic development that colonization had promised (Nairn 1981).

The question of the subaltern, however, also underlies postcolonial critiques of nationalism, whether colonialist or anti-colonialist in spirit. Theorists such as Spivak (2010) argue that even anti-colonialist forms of nationalism are promulgated by a native elite who, by mimicking Western discourses of modernity and nationhood, claim to speak on behalf of the nation they imagine to exist, rendering their constituent masses incapable of self-representation and delegitimizing alternative claims to collective identity. Herein lies the primary thrust of the subaltern thesis; subalternity exists wherever the ability to represent oneself is denied or rendered incomprehensible by hegemonic discourses of political and social representation, wherever they

may be articulated. Nations, their postcolonial critiques proclaim, are an inherently elitist construct regardless of who imagines them, for they necessarily subsume the imaginations of others. This assertion leads Spivak to join Hobsbawm (2012), among others, in outright rejecting nationalism as an emancipatory discourse or movement.

Guha (1997) agrees that a domineering, elitist form of nationalism can lead to structural violence against subaltern modes of self-representation, yet he is unwilling to declare nationalism itself inherently devoid of the power to give voice to the subaltern as Spivak has. Echoing Chatterjee, Guha locates within the experience of Indian colonialism a type of native-born nationalism originating “from below”—an autonomous “politics of the people” (4)—that both paralleled and, at times, cross-pollinated with elite discourses of Indian nationalism. According to Guha, the primary actors responsible for initiating this alternative version of national consciousness were “the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the laboring population and the intermediate strata in town and country—that is, the people” (4). Along with Chatterjee, Guha joins other postcolonial thinkers such as Lazarus (1999), Gandhi (1998), and Loomba (Loomba 2015) in supporting anti-colonial nationalism as an important discourse of resistance and emancipation despite nationalism’s roots in and association with Western hegemony. More recently, the imperative to consider how nationalism emanates “from below” has taken root beyond the realm of postcolonial studies as part of a broader research agenda to consider how national identities are regularly represented and reproduced in everyday settings.

## **Banal and Everyday Nationalism**

While many of the leading scholars of nationalism have focused principally on the emergence and production of nations, nationalisms, and national identities, until recently far less attention has been paid to the reproduction and re-presentation of national identities once they have already taken root. Beginning from the now orthodox view that nationalism is a matter of discourse and/or politics, a new generation of scholars have begun investigating how nationalist discourses and politics play out in everyday life, continuously reaffirming the existence and meaning of the nation in both overt and subtle ways.

The idea that the nation requires continuous reproduction and reaffirmation is certainly not new; Ernest Renan referred to the nation as “a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life,” in his renowned 1882 lecture. However, the shift toward examining the reproduction of national identities did not begin in earnest until the mid-1990s with social psychologist Michael Billig’s groundbreaking work on “banal nationalism.” Billig is critical of the way nationalism is often portrayed in the West both by scholars and laymen, who tend to treat nationalism primarily as a dangerous and volatile phenomenon that drives most of the world’s violent conflicts—particularly in the developing and post-colonial world where national identities are viewed as underdeveloped. According to this understanding, nationalism is often framed as an emotional and irrational ideology persistent in the global periphery (Ignatieff 1995), while it is only ever enflamed within Western nation-states at times of great crises or in response to some perceived existential threat, after which “the temperature passes; the flags are rolled up; and, then, it is business as usual” (Billig 1995, 5). Billig contends that this view is extremely misguided both in its blindness toward nationalist discourses in the

West, and in its assumption that nationalism is only ever expressed in impassioned displays of loyalty or reactionary bursts of violence.

Billig argues that understanding nationalism requires that we consider not only those instances when nationalist sentiments are running “hot,” but also those innumerable and nearly invisible instances of “banal” expressions of nationalism that permeate our daily lives and reinforce narratives of national belonging. By way of contrasting “hot” and “banal” expressions of nationalism, Billig suggests that “the metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (1995, 8). Nationalism is an ever-present and deeply embedded component of our social realities, Billig argues, because of the mundane and taken-for-granted daily reminders of the nation-state and our belonging to it. Nationalism can be seen in banknotes and postage stamps (Unwin and Hewitt 2001; Raento and Brunn 2005, 2008; Penrose 2011; Penrose and Cumming 2011), in media and advertising (Öncü 2000), in the ubiquity of territorial imagery, and in everyday language, with words such as “we,” “us,” and “here” used casually to subtly reinforce mutual constituency in the (re)production of the nation. It is crucial to remain attentive to the banality of such national texts and discourses that pervade our daily routines and consciousness, for “the unwaved flag, which is so forgettable, is at least as important as the memorable moments of flag waving” (Billig 1995, 10).

Following Billig, Tim Edensor also underscores the importance of the seemingly trivial and quotidian ways that national identities are reproduced, but focuses specifically on the role of popular culture. While other scholars have theorized culture’s role in the production of national identities, particularly from an “ethno-symbolist” perspective (see Hutchinson 1994; Armstrong 2011; Smith 2009), Edensor rejects these approaches for focusing strictly on the primordial roots

of national cultures, and for ignoring those aspects of culture that are not considered “spectacular,” “traditional,” or “official” (Edensor 2002, 18). According to Edensor, everyday life is too often overlooked because “it is believed to be static: little changes during the playing out of repetitive acts necessary to sustain reproduction” (Edensor 2002, 18). However, “the everyday is far more dynamic than this complacent view suggests,” Edensor argues, “whilst at the same time it also contains enduring consistencies through which identity is grounded” (2002, 18). Edensor is also critical of the common trope framing nationalism as an ideology looking simultaneously to the past and toward the future—best exemplified in Nairn’s (1998) discussion of the “Janus-faced” nature of nationalism—while neglecting the present and, by extension, the everyday processes through which national identities are reproduced. Edensor employs the metaphor of a “cultural matrix” to underscore the complex, multifaceted, and multiscalar dimensions of national identity, and points to the performativity and materiality of daily life as the nodes of the matrix within which national identities are enmeshed.

While both Billig and Edensor have been instrumental in drawing scholarly attention away from the origins of nationalism and toward its reproduction, they have also faced criticism by those who claim that their approaches are too reductive and do not account for the dynamic ways that the nation or national identities may be experienced, interpreted, or subverted (see Skey 2009). Paralleling Brubaker’s (2006) critique of theories of nationalism more generally, the problem of focusing on the “banality” of nationalism or ethnicity lies in the accompanying tendency to treat the nation or ethnic group as a preexisting social category or analytical starting point, precluding the significance of other modes of identifying or ways of engaging with the social world that may be more salient in any given context. Critics have labeled this oversight “methodological nationalism,” and have argued that societies should not be reduced to an ethnic



or national descriptor, nor should nationality or ethnicity be treated as an inherent characteristic or variable that may account for social actions (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002a; Chernilo 2006; Fox and Jones 2013; Goode and Stroup 2015). Beginning with the methodological assumption that nationality is paramount to the ways people identify may obfuscate instances where nationalist sentiments or actions fail to materialize (Fenton 2007; Brubaker et al. 2008; Condor 2010). Furthermore, critics note that “methodological nationalism” often serves to privilege the study of ethnic or national identities among minority groups while neglecting to consider how national identities are reproduced or may be contested among national majorities (Skey 2011; Goode and Stroup 2015).

To address this and other problems associated with the “banal nationalism” approach, scholars have recently proposed a framework known as “everyday nationalism” (Knott 2015a) that does not presume ethnic or national identities to be salient, but instead, echoing Brubaker’s (2006) conceptualization of “groupness,” seeks to “specify the routine contexts of everyday life in which [they are] meaningfully enacted and reproduced” (Fox and Jones 2013, 389; see also Wodak et al. 2009). Drawing from established theorists’ work on the contested meanings of everyday life (Burkitt 2004; Certeau 2011; Lefebvre 2014), “everyday nationalism” remains attentive to many of the same quotidian discourses and practices that Billig and Edensor examine, but foregrounds human agency and the role of individuals in the everyday reproduction of national identities rather than official or institutionalized discourses (Thompson 2001; Antonsich 2016). “Everyday nationalism” is thus viewed as an effective framework for examining how nationalism is—or, conversely, *is not*—enacted and reproduced by “the masses” or “ordinary people” in the course of daily life (Goode and Stroup 2015). An “everyday” approach to the study of nationalism may consider how individuals embody national identities

personally (Cohen 1996; Hearn 2007), how nationalist sentiments may arise in response to personal experiences (Mann and Fenton 2009), how national identities are varyingly reproduced at different spatial scales (Antonsich 2016), or how individuals may subvert or resist top-down nation-building efforts or hegemonic discourses of identity (Seigworth 2000; Whitehead 2005).

“Everyday nationalism” must be viewed as both a theory and a methodology, as it holds that the reproduction of national identity cannot be understood without paying careful attention to the everyday experiences of individuals. In an effort to reconcile the role of everyday experiences with the hegemonic discourses of nationalism imposed institutionally “from above,” scholars such as Karner (2007) have looked to Anthony Giddens’ theory of structuration (Giddens 1984) to frame the tension between human agency and structural limitations in the daily reproduction of national identity. Proponents of “everyday nationalism” have also stressed that these experiences cannot easily be divided according to the “hot” and “banal” binary first proposed by Billig (1995), and furthermore, the “everyday” must not be equated solely with the banal and mundane. “In addition to being a place of banal and mundane processes,” Jones and Merriman (2009) argue that the everyday “may also incorporate a variety of hotter ‘differences and conflicts’ that affect people’s lives on a habitual basis.” The task of distinguishing the “hot” from the “banal” is a fraught and subjective one given the messiness of everyday life, and it may indeed overlook the ways in which “hot” expressions of nationalism may occur as habitually as the “banal.” Put differently,

Daily experiences of nationalism may well evince a mixture of acceptance and contestation amongst members of the nation. Different symbols of the nation are interpreted in different ways by different people: some in banal and unconscious ways; others in a more conscious and overt manner. It is impossible to make *a priori* judgements concerning the impact of everyday discourses of nationalism. All that can be said with confidence is that these are experienced by members of the nation every day. (Jones and Merriman 2009, 167)

Framing the reproduction of nationalism as an “everyday” process is thus meant to correct the misguided distinctions between the “hot” and the “banal.”

Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008) propose a useful methodological guideline that draws the researcher’s attention to four primary processes through which national identities are reproduced according to “everyday” regimes. The first is “talking the nation,” or how “ordinary people [talk] about themselves and their surroundings in ways that implicate and reproduce a national view of the world” (542). The second is “choosing the nation,” or the ways in which individuals chose to engage in activities that reinforce normative national identities or behavior. People’s choices are not always overtly nationalistic, but Fox and Miller-Idriss argue, for example, that “choosing (or approving) marriage partners or socializing with friends, while not necessarily explicitly national, can structure future choices in ways that reinforce nationhood as a salient idiom of belonging” (542). Next, “performing the nation” refers to how individuals mobilize symbols and activities with distilled and explicit national meaning—e.g., flags, landmarks, emblems, music, anthems, dance, etc.—to overtly reaffirm their membership and devotion to the nation. The everyday performance of national identity may fall towards either end of a hot-banal continuum depending upon how aggressively the flag is waved, to return to Billig’s example. Regardless, “[n]ational bonds don’t simply become transparent through their ritual performance,” argue Fox and Miller-Idriss, “they are constituted through the collective act of performance” (546). Finally, “consuming the nation” refers to the ways in which individuals act as consumers of products and media that are explicitly national in origin or production, but also to how people may “consume products nationally” (552), as patterns of consumption may “congeal within parameters that are explicitly defined as national” even if the product is not (553).

The “everyday nationalism” approach thus problematizes traditional conceptions of national identity by drawing attention to the specific ways it may or may not be experientially relevant to the practices and interactions of everyday life. Elsewhere, scholars have also begun to question both the salience of national identities and the durability of the nation-state itself as a relevant framework in theorizing spatial identities in the modern world.

### **Challenges and Alternatives to the Nation-State Model**

As discussed, national identities are predicated upon the perception of cultural, historical, and/or political bonds among a large-scale group of people who collectively inhabit and claim ownership over a piece of territory. Typically, nationalism is therefore framed as a political project aimed at achieving, maintaining, or bolstering national self-determination by bringing the corpus of the nation into alignment with the territorial state, within which the nation is sovereign. According to this view, nations are assumed to be more or less homogenous units of humanity, neatly distinguished from one another by unique cultural and social characteristics, with each maintaining—or striving to achieve—territorial sovereignty in the form of a nation-state. In fact, this idealistic melding of the nation and the state effectively exists nowhere in the modern world; virtually every state contains ethnic or cultural minorities within its borders, while members of every state-bearing nation are found outside its borders as well.

As Diener (2009, 23–26) notes, envisioning the homogeneous nation-state was an ideal that began with modernization, which sought to erase localized cultures and identities and subsume heterogeneous communities into a singular national body through the “nationalization of social space” within the fledgling nation-state. Williams and Smith (1983, 512–512) and Diener (2009, 23–26) argue that this is typically achieved through three interrelated processes.

The first is “manipulation of the environment,” referring to the “activation of both physical and social environments for service of the nation” (Diener 2009, 24), often at the expense of non-national minorities. Second, the “hardening of space” involves both entrenching the presence and power of the state throughout its territory, and by manipulating the demographics of the state to render the population more homogenous. This latter component may be achieved through campaigns of “territorial cleansing” (Egbert et al. 2016), or physically removing from the national space the peoples who are perceived not to belong within it, either through forced expulsion or, in extreme cases, genocide. Third, social space is nationalized through the “abstraction of the land,” whereby cultural and historical meanings of state territory and the nation’s relationship to it are reimagined to legitimize national political-territorial regimes and bolster claims of exclusivity. This process often relies on narratives that root the primordial nation within the land, or valorize and mythologize the nation’s struggle for it. Abstraction may also include the construction of “internal others” that exist within the national space, but which are deemed foreign or deviant and thus provide a discursive foil against which proper national forms may be contrasted and defined (Jansson 2003; Johnson and Coleman 2012).

Identifying the rhetorical processes through which social space is nationalized underscores the social constructed-ness of the nation, and exposes nation-state as anything but a natural or organic system of spatial organization. Indeed, in recent decades, scholars—particularly geographers—have challenged perceptions of the nation-state as a rigid container of identities and the supremacy of state-centric geographic imaginations in the construction of socio-spatial identities. Agnew (1994) touches upon these problematic tendencies with his critique of the “territorial trap,” or the reflexive and uncritical reliance upon the nation-state as a default spatial frame in the study of social phenomena. According to Agnew (1994, 59), the

territorial trap is set by three basic geographic misconceptions: (1) that nation-states are spatially and temporarily static, requiring no consideration for the specific historical contexts in which they emerge; (2) that there exist fixed dichotomies between the inner workings of the state and all that lies beyond it—e.g., “domestic” versus “foreign,” or “national” versus “international”—which obfuscate complex processes operating at different spatial scales; and (3) that nation-states preceded the appearance of the societies supposedly contained within them. Agnew asserts that, “[e]ach of these assumptions is problematic,” for “[s]ocial, economic, and political life cannot be ontologically contained within the territorial boundaries of states through the methodological assumption of ‘timeless space’” (1994, 77). With this critique in mind, geographers have urged attentiveness to a variety of spatial scales beyond the nation-state when theorizing relationships between space and identity (Charron and Diener 2015).

### **Institutions and Regionalism**

One way geographers and other social scientists have reconceived socio-spatial identities is by focusing on the role of institutions within shifting territorial structures. Jenkins (2008, 157) defines an institution as “a pattern of behavior in any particular setting that has become established over time as ‘the way things are done,’” while Scott (2008, 48) notes, in more explicit terms, that “institutions are comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life.” In broad terms, institutions represent “the collectivized, codified, and normalized sets of behavior, interactions, policies, attitudes, beliefs, and symbols that provide organizational structure to social existence in historically and spatially contingent configurations” (Charron and Diener 2015, 16). Scholars working within the perspective of Organizational Institutionalism

have theorized institution building as a fundamental social process, and consider the roles of institutions and institutionalization in less explicitly spatial terms (Galvan and Sil 2007; Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca 2009; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012; Greenwood et al. 2017). Elsewhere, scholars have applied institutional frameworks to concepts including religion (Boyan 1968; Levine 1986), language (Port 2010), and ethnicity (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004; Brubaker 2006; Penn 2008).

One common application of the study of institutions is the role they play in social identity formation. Jenkins (2008, 158) argues that social identities necessarily rely on institutional frameworks, since,

Institutions – much like identities, in fact – are as much emergent products of what people do, as they are constitutive of what people do. They don't "exist" in any sense "above the action." Institutions are perhaps best understood as our collective ideal typifications of continuing processes of institutionalization.

Powell and Colyvas (2008, 277) contend that "[i]nstitutional forces shape individual interests and desires, framing the possibilities for action and influencing whether behaviors result in persistence or change," while Glynn (2008, 424) suggests that "the process of identity construction becomes the process of institutional bricolage, where organizations incorporate cultural meanings, values, sentiments and rules into identity claims," making "social institutions ... implicit in meanings of role identities" (MacKinnon and Heise 2010). Catt and Murphy (2002) point to the role of institutions in the construction of both national and regional identities in several English-speaking countries, while Greer (2007) focuses on political institutions as a key component of discourses concerning regional autonomy and minority nationalism in Scotland and Catalonia. Moreover, institutions play a central role in studies of social identity in countries such as Mexico (Klesner 1997), Germany (Checkel 1999), Belgium (Lecours 2001),

England (Bond and McCrone 2004), Canada (Bourgeois and Bourgeois 2005), and the Czech Republic (Murphy 2014).

Geographers have also fruitfully engaged with theories of institutions and institutionalization, particularly in the study of regions, regional identities, and the alternative spatialities to the nation-state system that they represent. The study of regional identities has a long history within the field of geography (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977), but since the late 1980s a number of geographers have critically examined the processes of regional identity formation as part of a broader paradigm known as “new regionalism.” Largely in response to the acceleration of globalizing processes and the rise of supra-national organizations such as the European Union, “new regionalism” emphasizes the power of global capitalism to reterritorialize political and economic structures, resulting in territorial actors within the global political economy that function at regional scales above, below, and across the nation-state. Whereas geographers once conceived of regions as spaces of ahistorical physical and/or cultural homogeneity, new regionalism posits that regions are the product of (re)emergent political, economic, and social discourses and practices that are embedded within multiscalar and astatic territorial frameworks (Pred 1990; Keating and Loughlin 1997; Hettne and Söderbaum 2000; Agnew 2001; MacLeod 2001; Keating 2004; Deas and Lord 2005; Harrison 2006; Paasi 2009). One key element of new regionalism is the role of territorial institutions in the formation of regions and regional identities. The emergence of institutional actors – be they public or private, formal or informal – inscribed within and engendered by territory plays an important role in the establishment of regions and regional identities within a globalizing world (Keating 1988; MacLeod 1997; Giordano 2001; Raagmaa 2002; Halkier 2005; Antonsich 2010; Terlouw 2012).



Amin and Thrift (1994, 9) draw attention to the “continued salience of places as settings for social and economic existence, and for forging identities, struggles, and strategies of both a local and global nature,” and suggest that territoriality remains the “basis for living in, assimilating, and making sense of the world.” With these points in mind, Amin and Thrift argue that emergent regions require relatively “thick” institutionalization, or a wide range of institutions that have become integral to the social, political, and economic function of a territory. The authors here define institutions as those formal agencies, organizations, and bodies that facilitate the social and administrative functions of territory, such as:

Firms; financial institutions; local chambers of commerce; training agencies; trade associations; local authorities; development agencies; innovation centers; clerical bodies; unions; government agencies providing premises; land, and infrastructure; business service organizations; [and] marketing boards ... all or some of which provide a basis for the growth of particular local practices and collective representations. (1994, 14)

Through these types of institutions, cultural, political, and economic differences are spatially structured and reified, and normative spatial identities may be collectively (re)negotiated. The hierarchical “nesting” of administrative territories can then create uneven topographies of institutional thickness, wherein certain territorial scales—e.g., the nation-state—emerge as venues for thicker institutionalization than others, along with a corollary nesting of territorial identities (Herb and Kaplan 1999).

Several geographers present compelling counterarguments against theorizing regions in strictly territorial terms, viewing regions instead as “complex and unbounded lattice[s] of articulations with internal relations of power and inequality and punctuated by structures of exclusion (Allen, Cochrane, and Massey 1998, 65). Elsewhere, scholars have cautioned against conflating regions defined territorially or administratively with those defined culturally or historically (Royle 1998). However, others remind us of the unique roles of territory and

territorial institutions in shaping and normalizing collective perceptions of region and the regionalization of identities. Paasi (1986, 1991, 1996) theorizes the interrelated processes of institutional thickening and regional identity formation with what he labels the “institutionalization of regions,” which refers to “the process during which specific territorial units—on various spatial scales—emerge and become established as parts of the regional system in question and the socio-spatial consciousness prevailing in society” (1996, 32). In other words, Paasi argues that regional consciousness requires that institutional networks be established and inscribed within territorial frameworks, and social engagement with these institutions plays a crucial role in the crystallization of regional identity, up to and including attachment to regional “homelands” that do not correspond to state-centric discourses of homeland.

Institutionalized regionalism, particularly as a facet of a sub-state or trans-state ethno-national identity among a group lacking a nation-state of their own, is often upheld as erosive to the prevailing system of nation-states. The demands of regionally concentrated minorities for self-determination—achieved through arrangements ranging from regional autonomy to independent sovereignty—are typically perceived as threatening to the established principle of states’ territorial integrity, and in many cases separatist or irredentist demands are suppressed in order to preserve the existing territorial organization of the nation-state system. Indeed, while “self-determination of peoples” has been a guiding principle of international relations since the end of World War I (Carley 1996) and was enshrined as a fundamental right with regards to decolonization in 1960 with UN Resolution 1514 (United Nations General Assembly 1960), states have also sought to ensure that the principle of self-determination does not conflict with the principle of territorial integrity, as agreed upon by 35 European and North American governments in the 1975 Helsinki Accord (Final act of the conference on security and

cooperation in Europe 1975). The subordinate position of the principle of self-determination to that of territorial integrity had largely held until 2008, when many states, citing the Kosovar Albanians' right to self-determination, recognized Kosovo's independence from Serbia without the latter's consent. This so-called "Kosovo Precedent" emboldened the Russian Federation and a handful of other states to unilaterally recognize the independence of separatist regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008 following a brief war with Georgia, just six months after the recognition of Kosovo's independence (Nielsen 2009). The events of 2008 serve to demonstrate the threat that regionally-centered ethnic identities may pose to the extant system of nation-state when they lead to demands for greater autonomy or outright secession (Fabry 2012; Dugard 2013).

However, while secessionist movements may threaten the territorial integrity of the specific states from which regional groups seek to secede, they do not, in fact, represent a fundamental disruption of the nation-state system. As Murphy (2010, 771) notes, "many sub-state and extra-state identity communities seek to carve out their place in a world of nation-states, not to change the nature of the system itself." In other words, regional minorities who pursue self-determination through secession still adhere to the principles of the nation-state system, framing their ambitions within an entrenched geopolitical ideology that imagines a state for every nation (Jeffrey 2008). Moreover, Roeder (2007) suggests that the institutionalization of sub-state regional identities is in fact responsible for the creation of the vast majority of modern nation-states. With his "segmental institutions" theory, Roeder argues that 153 of the 177 independent nation-states established during the 20<sup>th</sup> century began as regional "segment-states" of larger states, federations, or empires, within which crucial bureaucratic and social institutions bolstered sub-state ethnic and regional identities, facilitated the transition to independence, and

legitimized statehood. Thus, instead of undermining the nation-state system as they appear to do on the surface, regionalist movements often serve to extend the same state-centric regime of territoriality imposed by the nation-state system—albeit with demands for adjusted borders—and are therefore constrained by the “territorial trap.”

### **Civic and Multicultural Nationalism**

It is reductionist, however, to assume all sub-state or trans-state regional identity communities are politically oriented toward secession and seek to establish a nation-state of their own. Regional identities and regionally concentrated ethnic minorities can be found in virtually every nation-state, and in many cases they coexist peacefully with national majorities and do not threaten the territorial integrity of the state. Hennayake (1992) proposes that majority and minority ethnonationalisms are “interactive” and responsive to the ebb and flow of ethnic politics within the state. The nation-state, being ideologically paired with the ethno-national majority located within it, is nevertheless responsible to those who, as citizens, are members of the state but not necessarily of the ethnically-defined nation, and so “[t]he hegemony of the nation-state and thus the majority nation is maintained through the consent of the minorities” (Hennayake 1992, 527–528). Exclusionary policies alienate ethnic minorities and will likely agitate minority ethnonationalist claims against the state, Hennayake argues, and so the continued hegemony of the nation-state rests in its ability to successfully include minorities in state- and nation-building projects.

Many modern nation-states exhibit wide degrees of ethnic and cultural diversity, resulting in discourses of national identity and belonging that are still state-centric but not necessarily ethno-centric. Theories of nationalism that distinguish between ethno-centric and state-centric

visions of the nation date at least to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with German historian Friedrich Meinecke's discussion of the *Staatsnation* and *Kulturnation* as competing models of nationhood (1919). In modern terms, the idea that national identity is predicated upon pride and support for the territorial state as a set of civic institutions and a commitment to universal equality for all citizens rather than upon exclusionary discourses of ethnic belonging is often referred to as *political or civic nationalism*. The traditional relationship between the nation and the state is essentially reversed under this paradigm; whereas the nation-state is ideally meant to be territorially fitted so that its borders are optimally coterminous with the distribution of a people already understood to constitute a national community, civic nations emerge only after a set of territorially boundaries have been established and state institutions begin to engender a sense of national community among its citizenry. Because of this important difference, the distinction between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism is often adopted as an analytic schema for categorizing different types of nationalism in the modern world.

Lending from the Enlightenment principles of individualism and equality, civic nationalism has most often been associated with liberal democracy as practiced in the West, while ethnic nationalism is viewed as inherently exclusionary, authoritarian, illiberal, and, ultimately, *Eastern*. The association of civic nationalism with the West and ethnic nationalism with the East first crystallized with Hans Kohn's 1944 book, *The Idea of Nationalism*, in which he ascribed the emergence of "political nationalism" to the struggles for liberty and equality within extant nation-states such as France, Great Britain, and the United States during the Enlightenment, a time when much of Eastern Europe and the Middle East remained subjugated by large multiethnic empires and embroiled in the politics of culture and ethnicity. Since Kohn, several other theorists of nationalism have continued to conflate Western/Eastern and

civic/ethnic dichotomies of nationalism (Smith 1991; Alter 1994; Ignatieff 1995), and others have expressed doubt that the newly independent states of Eastern Europe and Eurasia will truly be able to develop civic forms of national identity, given the ethnic politics and weak development of civic institutions that are the legacies of communist rule there (Brubaker 1996; Schopflin 1996). Subsequently, Western academics frequently extend the Western/Eastern dichotomy to depict civic nationalism as inherently *liberal* and *good*, while ethnic nationalism, therefore, is *illiberal* and *bad*.

In recent decades, these problematic approaches to distinguishing between civic and ethnic nationalism have come under harsh criticism. Shulman (2002), for one, analyzes data from a large, multi-state sociological survey to demonstrate empirically that there is little to no correlation between being from a Western European state and exhibiting a stronger sense of civic nationalism than of ethnic nationalism, nor is there a strong inverse correlation among citizens of Eastern European states. Others, including Brown (2000) and Gans (2003), challenge the assumption of civic nationalism's inherently liberal character, arguing that both civic and ethnic models of nationalism can exhibit liberal or illiberal tendencies. Brown (2000, 65), following Greenfeld (1992) and Alter (1994), suggests that the distinction between illiberal and liberal nationalism lies in the fact that illiberal nationalism is "articulated by insecure elites and which constitute *ressentiment*-based reactions against others who are perceived as threatening," while liberal nationalisms "begin as protest movements but do not develop their identity primarily in reaction to threatening others, and which are articulated by self-confident elites." According to Brown, either of these conditions may exist under the rubric of civic or ethnic nationalism. Critics including McCrone (1998) and Yack (1999) have also argued that the civic/ethnic divide and its corollary dichotomies of nationalism are too often employed to reinforce Orientalist

discourses of Western superiority over Eastern European and Eurasian peoples. Yack (1999, 104–106) further dismisses the common perception that civic national identities are always adopted voluntarily while ethnic national identities are necessarily inherited, pointing to his own Canadian identity as one he inherited despite Canadian national identity’s ostensibly civic character. Others have argued that the civic/ethnic dichotomy collapses far too many types of identity into the broad category of “ethnicity,” including race, ancestry, and culture (Nieguth 1999). Moreover, critics including Kymlicka (1999) and Nielsen (1999) point to examples, including Quebec and Flanders, where national movements are often depicted as “ethnic” but are better understood as “cultural,” and argue that *cultural nationalism* should be analytically decoupled from *ethnic nationalism*.

Another critique of the civic/ethnic nationalism binary accepts that there is indeed a qualitative difference between civic and ethnic discourses of nationalism, but rejects the notion that specific cases of nationalism must be sorted into either category. Instead, authors including Smith (1991, 13) argue that nationalisms often contain both civic and ethnic elements, with both discourses coexisting dialectically, waxing and waning in their relative salience to rhetoric of national identity. Similarly, Calhoun (1998, 89) contends in regard to French and German nationalism—typically upheld as exemplary cases of civic and ethnic models, respectively—that both are influenced by “international discourses of nationalism” that include both civic and ethnic ideologies, and, furthermore, this is true throughout both Western and Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, Brubaker (2006, 136) is unsatisfied with the simple concession that civic and ethnic elements comingle in the production of nationalist discourses, arguing that such claims merely “constitute a kind of theoretical ‘common sense,’” and ultimately help perpetuate the civic/ethnic dichotomy as an analytical device. Following Kymlicka (1999), Nielsen (1999),

and Nieguth (1999), Brubaker is concerned that the terms “civic” and “ethnic” are too ambiguous for use in a normative classification system, particular with regard to the role of culture and how it should be treated within this framework. Brubaker therefore recommends dispensing with the civic/ethnic binary and reframing nationalism as a tension between *state-framed* and *counter-state* visions of nationhood. Under this rubric, a state-framed model of the nation "is conceived as congruent with the state, and as institutionally and territorially framed by it," while counter-state nationalism imagines the nation “as distinct from, and often in opposition to, the territorial and institutional frame of an existing state or states” (Brubaker 2006, 144). While state-framed and counter-state discourses of nationalism in many ways parallel civic and ethnic discourses respectively, Brubaker’s schema shifts the emphasis from ethnicity to the territorial state as the primary point of reference around or against which national identities are constructed. Brubaker argues that either liberal or illiberal regimes may promote a national identity framed by the territorial state rather than ethnic inclusion, while counter-state discourses of national identity—whether separatist, revanchist, or expansionist—need not rely on visions of ethnic unification, but may lean on cultural memory of lost territory or the desire to control greater resources beyond a state’s borders (2006, 144–145). While the civic/ethnic dichotomy may be easily mapped onto a state-framed/counter-state dichotomy in many cases, the central role of the state in Brubaker’s formulation certainly makes it a more robust approach to the study of nationalism from a geographic perspective.

Viewing nationalism as a project that may be fundamentally state-framed does, on the one hand, leave theories of nationalism susceptible to the “territorial trap.” However, it also subverts traditional understandings of the nation and its relationship to the state by acknowledging that a plurality of ethnic, cultural, regional, and even separate national identities



may all coexist within a single state and collectively constitute a nation—a “state-nation” rather than a nation-state (Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2011). Taking this view reveals that nationalism is by no means a zero-sum enterprise, and indeed, recent scholarship has explored the myriad ways that different identities may be contemporaneously “nested” within a more broadly encompassing national identity tied to the territory and institutions of the state (see Herb and Kaplan 1999).

To reiterate a previous point, nearly every state contains ethnic, cultural, regional, or national minorities within its borders, and in certain cases state governments may implement policies aimed at integrating or assimilating minorities into a cohesive national unit. Assimilatory policies aim to erase ethnic and cultural differences within the state by subsuming minority identities into the majority ethno-national unit, and are therefore associated with ethnocultural models of nationalism. Integratory policies, on the other hand, aim not to erase minority identities within the state, but to ensure equal rights to citizens regardless of their status as a member of any majority or minority group, and are thus associated with civic nationalism. Both assimilation and integration are, in fact, state-framed approaches to national identity construction, but both see internal diversity fundamentally as an obstacle to overcome in pursuit of national cohesion. Even the more liberal and civically-minded approach of integration seeks to neutralize diversity through policies that strengthening loyalty to the state and seek to ensure equal rights for *individuals* by weakening the cultural and political agency of minority communities. Hence, even under the rubric of state-framed nationalism, critics argue that neither ethnocentric/assimilatory nor civically-minded/integratory models of nationalism can adequately accommodate and safeguard the diverse ethnic, cultural, regional, and national identities that coexist in many states.

In response to these problems, advocates of minority rights have promoted the alternative model of multicultural nationalism, which strives to support and accommodate the diverse identity communities located within a single state while also promoting loyalty to the state as a whole. Fleras (2009) identifies three general approaches to state-framed multicultural governance: conservative, liberal, and plural. Conservative multiculturalism, Fleras argues, is “culture-blind,” (2009, 17) “[proposing] treatment before the law for everyone regardless of who they are or what they look like” (2009, 14–13), and viewing multiculturalism as a “belief that governance of many cultures is possible ... *as long as cultural differences are dismissed for purposes of recognition or reward*” (2009, 14 stress in original). In upholding the classic liberal notion of individual rights and treating diversity as a potential inhibitor of national cohesion, this approach is essentially identical to the integrative model of the civic nation. In contrast, liberal multiculturalism may be defined as “culture-tolerant” (2009, 17) as it takes “*differences into account when necessary to ensure equality, belonging, and participation,*” (2009, 15 stress in original), and holds that “[d]ifferences are permissible but must respect human rights, obey laws, and be grounded on the rights of individuals rather than group rights” (2009, 15). Finally, Fleras defines *plural multiculturalism* as a “culture-conscious” approach (2009, 17) that holds “a governance of many cultures is possible *if differences are taken seriously by taking them into account as a basis for living together differently – up to and including the creation of parallel institutions, competing value orientations, and separate communities*” (2009, 16 stress in original). Kymlicka (1995, 6) further emphasizes that a pluralistic approach to multiculturalism involves granting *group rights* to minority communities, which exist alongside the universal *individual* rights for all citizens but ensure the institutional means for minority groups to preserve and develop separate collective identities.

A multicultural framework may appear counterproductive to the formation of a broad state-framed national identity; however, advocates view the principles of ethnic and cultural pluralism as sufficient for rallying a sense of solidarity across diverse groups within a single state. As Brown (2000, 124) notes,

Proponents of multiculturalism do not see themselves as closet ethnocultural nationalists, simply seeking political barricades behind which to defend the integrity of their ethnic minority. They seek, rather, to establish an encapsulating social justice community which is bound together by common values relating to the celebration of ethnic diversity, and the commitment to inter-ethnic equity. They seek a national community within which the diverse ethnic communities can flourish, and within which disadvantaged ethnic minorities can be guaranteed the rights and resources necessary for the attainment of their full development.

Multicultural nationalism encourages the development of sub-state national communities within the larger state-inscribed pluralistic nation, accommodating and institutionalizing the ethnocultural identities of national minorities through group-differentiated rights without threatening the territorial integrity or common institutions of the state. The corollary argument to a theory of multicultural nationalism, therefore, is that a “post-Westphalian” model of international relations—in which it is no longer viewed as necessary for state boundaries to cohere to the distribution of historically or culturally defined nations—is not only possible, but, in many respects, more just. To this end, many scholars have examined the nationalisms of ethnic and cultural minorities who maintain their identities within multiethnic states through various systems of group rights and power-sharing arrangements with the central government. Examples of ethnic and/or cultural national minorities with group rights guaranteed through territorial autonomy within larger multicultural states—including Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque country of Spain, Scotland and Wales within the United Kingdom, Flanders within Belgium, and Quebec within Canada—have been widely studied, often comparatively (Guibernau 1999; Gagnon and Tully 2001; Greer 2007; Beland and Lecours 2008).

Looking beyond these well-known examples, it is imperative to recognize the different types of minority groups obfuscated by the ambiguous concept of “multiculturalism.” Although any taxonomy is inherently imprecise and limiting, Kymlicka and Norman (2000) offer a useful framework for understanding important categorical differences between types of minorities. The first category is *national minorities*, which the authors define as groups who “think of themselves as a nation,” but more accurately “tend to be historical communities, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, and sharing a distinct language and mass culture” (2000, 19). This category includes both “stateless nations”—or “nations without a state in which they are the majority” (2000, 19)—and indigenous peoples, whose “traditional lands were overrun by settlers and then forcibly, or through treaties, incorporated into states run by outsiders” (2000, 20). The second category is “immigrant minorities,” or those who have uprooted themselves—often voluntarily—to join a political community where they are a national or ethnic minority, resulting in states that the authors characterize as “polyethnic” rather than “multinational.” Included in this category are *refugees*, for whom ethnic or religious persecution at home have compelled them to migrate to other states where their rights may be protected. The third category is “religious groups,” whose group membership is typically defined by their common belief system rather than ethno-national criteria. This category includes both the rare “isolationist” religious groups who “voluntarily isolate themselves from the larger society and avoid participating in politics or civil society” (2000, 22), and the more common “non-isolationist religious groups,” whose “faith differs from either the religion of the majority, or the secular beliefs of the larger society and state institutions” (2000, 22), but who seek to participate in the civic institutions of the state. The final category is the grab-bag *sui generis*

groups, which include those whose circumstances are unique and do not easily fit into any of the other categories.

Kymlicka and Norman's system of classification is certainly useful for understanding the nuanced meanings of multiculturalism, yet in their attempt to differentiate between types of minorities they unwittingly expose a key shortcoming in theories of multicultural nationalism. In re-imagining nations as being potentially composed of many different identity communities inscribed by the territory and institution of the state, theories of multiculturalism nevertheless tend to treat the state itself as a fixed container of the specific multicultural amalgam found within it. This oversight is perhaps clearest in Kymlicka and Norman's designation of immigrant communities—i.e., those that have migrated from outside the state—as inherently distinct from those minorities located within the state itself, necessitating the use of a different term (“polyethnic” instead of “multiethnic”) to describe the type of diversity that they engender. Employing fixed dichotomies between those peoples and processes that are “internal” and “external” to the state is one of the fundamental pitfalls of the “territorial trap;” moreover, methodological nationalism is unavoidable when those dichotomies are used to predetermine the role that different minority communities may play in the production of multicultural nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002b; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). Additionally, limiting discussion of migrants in multicultural societies only to immigrants overlooks the crucial role played by internal migrants who, despite never leaving the confines of the state, may nonetheless find themselves “outsider” within the specific regional, ethnic, or cultural milieu to which they migrate, and thus their experiences of adapting may not differ significantly from those of international migrants. A more critical theory of nationalism in multicultural states is attentive to questions of mobility and belonging without relying on this internal/external methodological

binary. To flesh out these problems, I will now discuss the related concepts of transnationalism and translocality as they pertain to migration and identity, and how they may help us understand and re-conceive a theory of diaspora.

### **Migration, IDPs, Transnationalism, Translocality, and Diaspora**

Kymlicka and Norman are by no means the only authors to perpetuate the problematic dichotomy between internal and international migrants when theorizing migration. Indeed, international/internal remains one of the fundamental analytical binaries—along with forced/voluntary and permanent/temporary—that researchers of migration tend to employ reflexively (King and Skeldon 2010, 1620). International and internal migration are typically treated as fundamentally distinct processes, and, accordingly, holistic approaches to the study of migration that account for both sides of this dichotomy are rare. As King and Skeldon note (2010, 1620), internal migration was once the focus of early theories of migration (see Ravenstein 1885; Stouffer 1960; Sjaastad 1962; Wolpert 1965; Lee 1966; Todaro 1969), while attention has shifted primarily to international migration in recent decades, to the point that “international” is often assumed or implied when “migration” is under discussion (see Cohen 1995; Weiner 1995; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2013; Brettell and Hollifield 2014). In particular, international migration has recently come to the fore as part of a larger trend within geography and related social sciences, often referred to as the “new mobilities paradigm” or “mobilities turn” (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007; Adey 2010; Cresswell 2011, 2012; Cresswell and Merriman 2011). Advocates of the mobilities turn seek in part to theorize the eroding relevance of the nation-state and state borders in a globalized world increasingly characterized by the movement of people, goods, capital, and ideas across borders, enabled

through rapidly accelerating processes of time-space compression (Warf 2008). However, as noted by Pries (2005) and Kalir (2013), many authors who frame migration within the mobilities paradigm paradoxically reify the nation-state by limiting the scope of their research to international migration and overlooking the mobilities of internal migrants.

To be sure, estimates of the total number of international migrants worldwide—including refugees—has increased sharply in recent decades, from around 153 million in 1990 to roughly 244 million in 2015, a nearly 60% increase in 25 years (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015). However large this increase may be, international migrants are nonetheless far outnumbered by internal migrants worldwide; the UN similarly estimates that, as of 2005, approximately 723 million people were living outside their region of birth but within the same state, a number nearly three times larger than the 2015 estimate of international migrants (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2013). If these estimates are accurate, they indicate that there are around one billion total migrants in the world today, or roughly one seventh of the current global population; yet the more remarkable statistical conclusion is that three out of every four migrants in the world today are internal migrants. Put differently, according to these estimates internal migrants made up about 11.1% of the global population in 2005, while international migrants only represented about 3.6% of the global population in 2015. While international migration is certainly a crucial geographic, economic, and sociological subject that demands scholarly attention, the body of literature focusing on international migration has grown wildly disproportional to that focused on internal migration, which serves to further calcify the epistemological binary between the two.

The dichotomy between internal and international migration is largely maintained through the perception that international migrants face an altogether different and more daunting set of obstacles compared to internal migrants, such that

international migration is a ‘distinctive social process’ in which the container of the state has fundamentally different functions from a region or census tract within a country. Immigration controls and regulations have major implications for migrants in terms of the right to enter a country (with a visa for instance), to reside for a given length of time, and to access citizenship rights such as education, employment, healthcare, or political participation. Linguistic and cultural barriers often characterize international migration, although this is by no means always the case. (King and Skeldon 2010, 1621)

This argument is predicated on the assumption of social, cultural, and political homogeneity and stasis within nation-state borders that makes internal migration a painless and hassle-free endeavor. Aside from the problematic views of the nation-state inherent in this logic, it ignores the reality that internal migration can also be fraught with difficulty, danger, or trauma, particularly in the case of Internally Displaced Persons, or IDPs. IDPs are a particularly vulnerable category of migrant (Jacques 2012, 185), often facing the same struggles and desperate conditions as refugees but distinguished only by the fact that they remain within the same nation-state where they have been displaced. Internal displacement was first brought to the fore as a distinctive type of migration and “special category of concern” (Mooney 2005) only in the early 1990s, with IDPs first being defined in a 1992 UN Human Rights Commission report as “persons who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who are within the territory of their own country” (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 1992, 5).

The urgency and desperation with which IDPs are compelled to migrate—often under conditions of violence and warfare—can lead to sexual violence (Amowitz et al. 2002), post-



traumatic stress disorder (Roberts et al. 2008), or other mental health issues (Porter and Haslam 2005), and may result in “the break-up of families, loss of identity, home, and belonging” (Rajput 2013). Moreover, IDPs may also encounter intolerance and discrimination within the communities that host them despite their origins within the same nation-state, creating barriers to their integration and/or assimilation (Haider 2014). Highlighting IDPs as a distinctive type of internal migrant who resemble refugees in virtually every way except for the precondition of displacement across international borders helps illuminate the critical similarities between internal and international migration rather than their perceived differences.

To this point, others have suggested that international and internal migration are more similar than they are dissimilar; looking specifically at Africa, Adepoju (1998) argues that internal and international migration are both driven by the same uneven processes of development within and among states, and migration between states should therefore be understood as an extension of migratory processes within states. Even though internal migrants never leave their state or origin, they may still be subject to policies that restrict their access to housing, employment, or government services after migrating. This is perhaps best exemplified in China’s *hukou* system of household registration, which strictly limits the rights of rural Chinese migrants living in urban areas (Cheng and Selden 1994; Chan 2009; Fan and Chen 2016). Moreover, internal migrants may be just as likely to encounter the same kinds of linguistic and cultural barriers to integration as international migrants, as differences of race, ethnicity, language, and culture may vary as much within states as they do between them (see Kymlicka 2007). Looking critically at the experiences of migrants thus reveals the false dichotomy between internal and international migration and the extent to which migration studies are stuck in the “territorial trap.”

A handful of scholars have developed an integrative approach to the study of migration that aims to dissolve the internal/international binary. One early attempt to formulate a holistic theory of migration is credited to Wilbur Zelinsky (1971), whose “hypothesis of the mobility transition” places the volume of different migratory flows—including both international and various forms of internal migration, such as rural-urban, urban-urban, and “frontierward”—in a transitional continuum linked to the different stages of the demographic transition model. More recently, King and Skeldon (2010) address the problematic internal/international binary directly by exploring the many piecemeal paths that migrants may follow—including movement both within their country of origin and across international borders—and argue that migration often involves both internal and international components. King and Skeldon develop a schema that outlines that potential complex routes that a migrant might follow on their way too—and sometimes back from—their migratory destination, including internal movement both within their states of origin and within a foreign state. Following King and Skeldon, Kalir (2013) compares the mobility of rural Chinese migrant workers in China’s urban centers and those who emigrate to Israel, and concludes that both routes often involve multiple migratory steps within China, both are driven by the same socio-economic imperatives, and neither necessarily results in greater economic opportunities than the other. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) argue that overcoming the internal/international binary is one key component of a research agenda aimed at problematizing “regimes of mobility” that privilege mobility over stasis while also marginalizing certain types of human mobility, namely, “the co-dependent but stigmatized and forbidden movement, migration and interconnection of the poor, powerless and exploited” (2013, 188).

From a cultural perspective, the term *transnationalism* has also come under criticism for privileging migration across international borders and sidelining internal migration. Closely

related to the concept of multiculturalism but pertaining specifically to the cross-cultural encounters produced through migration, transnationalism has emerged in recent decades as a popular analytical framework for understanding how migrants forge and experience “multi-stranded social relations that [link] ... societies of origin and settlement” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992, ix). As it has been theorized, however, the “national” in transnationalism adheres strictly to classical definitions of the nation as a historically and/or culturally distinguished group in possession of an associated nation-state. Indeed, migration across international borders is a prerequisite component of transnationalism according to virtually all definitions; transnationalism “necessitates a *crossing of borders*, both literally and epistemologically” (Mitchell 1997, 101), and encompasses “sustained *cross-border* relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning *nation-states*” (Vertovec 2009, 2), while the “sketching [of] ‘transnational’ cartographies of cultural circulation, identification and action” is engendered by “social and cultural processes [that] regularly *exceed the boundaries of individual nation states*” (Crang, Dwyer, and Jackson 2003, 439) (all emphases added). Whether the focus is placed on “transnational communities” comprised of individual migrants (Vertovec 2009), or on the “transnational spaces” produced through migratory processes and practices (Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer 2004; Blunt 2007), that the agents of transnationalism are international migrants is implicit or, more often, explicit in nearly every case.

While a handful of authors express uneasiness with the reification of the nation-state inherent in this understanding (Hannerz 1996; Khagram and Levitt 2008), until very recently attempts to problematize transnationalism’s glaring omission of cross-cultural encounters that may be produced and sustained through internal migration have been conspicuously lacking. One

fruitful strategy for correcting this oversight is to rescale the social and cultural interactions produced through migration as *translocal* rather than *transnational*. Although closely related to transnationalism, the concept of *translocality* represents a concerted effort among scholars to deterritorialize discourses of transnationalism by looking beyond the scalar constraints of the nation-state, instead grounding movement and the production of relational space in the loosely defined *local* scale and localized processes of place-making (Oakes and Schein 2006; Brickell and Datta 2016). Freitag and von Oppen (2010a, 5) define translocality broadly as “the sum of phenomena which result from a multitude of circulations and transfers,” which, however vague, presupposes no territorial restrictions on the origins, destinations, or intermediary obstacles associated with any particular movement or circulation. The authors add that translocality, “designates the outcome of concrete movements of people, goods, ideas and symbols which span spatial distances and cross boundaries, be they geographical, cultural or political” (Freitag and Von Oppen 2010a, 5). Here, as with transnationalism, “boundaries” and movement across them play a significant role in the production of translocal phenomena; but unlike transnationalism’s strict adherence to geographies of the nation-state, the boundaries between disparate localities may exist at any spatial or even cognitive scale.

Despite its more critical treatment of geographic scale, translocality is often understood as a type of “grounded transnationalism” (Brickell and Datta 2016, 3) that aims to disrupt state-centric epistemologies of migration and exchange by shifting focus to the many localities embedded in transnational assemblages and flows of people, capital, and information (see Smith 2000; Ma 2002; Grillo and Riccio 2004; McFarlane 2009). Translocality is therefore often subsumed into larger debates about transnationalism, still concerned with sustained linkages and relationships that span international borders. However, translocality is also frequently employed

to frame studies that examine patterns of movement, migration, exchange, and interaction that link locations at sub-state geographic scales, for example, in China (Cartier, Castells, and Qiu 2005; Oakes and Schein 2006; Smart and Lin 2007), the United Kingdom (Tolia-Kelly 2008), Namibia (Greiner 2010), Portugal (Miguel do Carmo and Santos 2012), and Romania (Guran-Nica and Sofer 2012).

Yet remarkably, the need to further develop translocality as a tool for disrupting the state-centricity of transnationalism by focusing explicitly on migration at sub-state scales has been clearly articulated only very recently. Viewing it as problematic that “translocality as a form of local-local relations exists primarily within the debates on transnationalism,” Brickell and Datta (2016, 3–4) argue that “there is a need to understand translocality in other spaces, places and scales beyond the national.” Maintaining the translocal imperative to ground theories of migration and exchange in localities and the various types of movement between them, Brickell and Datta argue the need to “retrieve translocality from within the confines of transnationalism to examine local-local connections in their own right and without privileging the national” by examining translocality at sub-state scales of movement such as inter-urban, rural-urban, and inter-regional (2016, 10). Moreover, the authors point to internal migrants as a category that is often overlooked when translocality is framed as a transnational phenomenon:

These [internal] migrants are not transnational; rather translocal, but they also move across different places and equally take a range of decisions around moving. But these migrants often fall under the rubric of other forms of migration such as rural-urban or regional migration, which are often located within the discipline of development geography. (2016, 10)

There remains a need to further develop theories of translocality that effectively situate the translocal experiences, connections, and identities of internal migrants alongside those of

international migrants in order to sidestep the methodological nationalism and pitfalls of the territorial trap that undercut strictly transnational approaches to translocality.

Crucially, the concept of *diaspora* stubbornly remains stuck in the state-centric paradigm of transnationalism. Historically, the term “diaspora” was reserved for a handful of ethnic groups—namely Jews, Greeks, and Armenians—that had been dispersed from an original homeland and formed close-knit communities elsewhere in the world while maintaining close social and emotional connections with their place of origin. In recent decades, the field of diaspora studies has been critically interrogated and broadly expanded beyond these classical examples to include a multitude of migrant groups and displaced peoples throughout the world. As an instructive example, works by Malkki (1995); Al-Ali, Black, and Koser (2001); and Wahlbeck (2002) apply the label and terminology of diaspora specifically to refugee communities.

Several authors, including Safran (1991), Vertovec (1997), Van Hear (1998), and Cohen (2008), have developed varying sets of criteria for defining and classifying diasporas and diasporic narratives in sites around the world. While their criteria for defining a migrant community as a “diaspora” vary, a few key components appear consistently: (1) diasporas are distinguished from other types of migrant communities by a sustained relationship with a real or imagined homeland, from which members have been estranged, to which they attribute their true territorial belonging, and to which, often, they imagine returning; (2) diasporas form among displaced *ethnic* enclaves in two or more locations outside of their ascribed homeland, and it is the bonds of ethnicity and culture that sustain diasporic identities and provide a means of resistance to assimilation in the host-state; and (3) diasporas are inherently *transnational*, i.e., they emerge exclusively through international migration and exist only beyond the borders of a

state from which a diasporic community originated. This third element is critical; studies of diasporas are routinely couched within wider discussions of transnationalism (for examples see Karim 2003; Kokot, Tölölyan, and Alfonso 2004; Patterson 2006; Bauböck and Faist 2010; Quayson 2013). Indeed, the association with transnationalism is so strong that diasporas are typically understood as “the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991, 5).

Attempts to codify diasporic experiences in such ways have been criticized as too essentializing from a variety of disciplinary vantages. Sociologists such as Brah (1996), Anthias (1998), and Soysal (2000) argue that these discourses often serve to homogenize the experiences, solidarities, identities, and ambitions of groups and individuals assumed to be united under the banner of a common diaspora. Instead, they argue that cleavages rooted in gender, class, race, ethnicity, and contrasting experiences of displacement and resettlement can and do persist within diasporic populations, resulting in heterogeneous and intersectional identities that undermine the cohesion of diasporic communities. Moreover, while the term is often used descriptively, scholars such as Gilroy (1993), Clifford (1994), and Butler (2001) have crucially advanced an understanding of diaspora as both an analytical concept and a set of heuristic discourses bound up within experiences and practices of displacement, resettlement, integration, and attendant identity construction.

However, only a handful of geographers, including Nagel (2001), Dahlman (2004), and Carter (2005), have problematized the framing of diaspora as an inherently transnational phenomenon, as this reifies the role of the nation-state to establish and define spatialized categories of difference and inclusion, thereby landing transnational theories of diaspora squarely in the territorial trap. To avoid this pitfall, Dahlman (2004, 497), using the example of the

Kurdish diaspora, suggests that it is more fruitful to approach diasporas “as sites of cultural and political negotiation over the social and geopolitical terms of what it means to be Kurdish and what or where a Kurdish homeland ought to be.” Richardson (2015, 15) further refines this more critical approach to diaspora that does not privilege the role of the nation-state, arguing that “diaspora can be both evoked and revoked as a response to precarity, to the fraying of norms, to the dissolving coherence of forms of national and ethnic attachment that are historically constituted but seemingly no longer produce a coherent collective consciousness.” In short, these works call for a reframing of diaspora as a *translocal* discourse and phenomenon rather than a strictly *transnational* one. While these critical approaches point the way toward a more nuanced understanding of diaspora that may be applied to wider range of migrant communities, others caution against stretching the term too thin and applying it reflexively to any and all migrant communities (see Dufoix 2008)—a phenomenon that Brubaker (2005) cheekily dubs the “‘diaspora’ diaspora.” However, rather than devaluing the utility of “diaspora” as a label or analytical concept, efforts to expand our understanding of the term and the nuanced ways it can help us understand the experiences of migrants is ultimately beneficial to the study of migration, diaspora, transnationalism, and translocality.

While this trend toward a translocal reframing of diaspora is encouraging, there remains a dearth of literature concerning the diasporic experiences of specific translocal communities that do not fit the traditional transnational definition of diasporas, namely internal migrants. Some primarily historical examples may be found that apply the label of “diaspora” to communities of internal migrants; these include the “internal diasporas” of ethnic minorities in the Byzantine Empire (Ahrweiler and Laiou 1998), African-American migrants from the southern United States during the period known as the “Great Migration” (Gregory 2005), the Georgian diaspora within



the Soviet Union (Scott 2016), the Okinawan diaspora within Japan (Rabson 2012), and most recently, the “Katrina diaspora” of those displaced by Hurricane Katrina (Weber and Peek 2012). Works such as these demonstrate that communities of internal migrants need not be excluded from studies and discourses of diaspora, yet none of them employ the term critically in an effort to unsettle traditional understandings of diaspora or problematize the territorial and transnational paradigms that so often constrain them.

What is needed—and what this dissertation attempts to do—is to ground translocal theories of diaspora in specific sites and communities where groups of internal migrants are bound up in translocal assemblages of movement, exchange, and interaction between locations and regions located within a single state, and to examine the complex processes of identity (re)construction that emerge within these assemblages. Jettisoning the traditional transnational definition of diaspora in this way, however, does not mean ignoring the role of homeland. Scholars including Tölölyan (2005), Blunt and Dowling (2006), Cohen (2008), and Diener (2009) have recently reasserted the central role of homeland to the experience of diaspora, whether that homeland is real or “imaginary” (Axel 2002). However, as I have discussed, spatial identities and the construction of homeland are not exclusively tied to the nation-state; understandings of homeland may be more saliently grounded in sub-state or trans-state regional scales. Accordingly, migrants need not travel beyond the boundaries of the state in order to maintain an enduring connection with an estranged homeland. As Diener (2009, 38) notes, the processes of constructing and “recreating homeland at sub-state scales of place [are] highly understudied and [have] vast potential to problematize traditional conceptions of diasporas.”

Furthermore, a more critical view of diaspora is attentive to the multiplicities of diasporic perspectives, experiences, and identities, and to the complexities of territory and place-making

that inform them. Applying these imperatives to communities of internal migrants, we must then account for the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, gendered, and experiential differences among peoples who migrate from and to the same regions within a single state, and how they may or may not coalesce as a singular community under the banner of a diaspora. Finally, if we are to view internal migrants through the lens of diaspora, the question of their multiple “nested” identities must play a central role. The relative salencies of local, regional, and national (i.e., state-framed) identities are likely to be thrown into flux through the processes of migration and the new social interactions that accompany them. Whether and how regional identities may inform national identities, national identities may inform regional identities, or entirely new ways of identifying may emerge, are vital to consider here. Specifically, the question of how viewing internal migrants through the lens of diaspora may help us better understand discourses of state-framed national identity is the central concern of the following study.

### **Chapter Three: Historical Perspectives**

Occupying the land at the nexus of Northern Europe's deciduous forests, the western edge of the Eurasian steppe, and the Black Sea littoral, for millennia the territories of Ukraine and Crimea have been important sites of migration, conquest, and interaction for a diverse range of peoples. For much of its history, the territory of modern Ukraine fell to the conquest and colonization of expanding empires centered elsewhere, punctuated by periods during which power was centered within and projected from Ukrainian or Crimean territory itself. Portions of what now makes up Ukraine have, at various times, been under the influence of Slavic, Germanic, Baltic, Hellenic, Latin, Turkic, Persian, and Mongol groups, all of which have left some lasting imprint upon the peoples and cultures that comprise Ukraine today. Given its history of conquest and colonization, especially at the hands of Russia and the Soviet Union, contemporary Ukraine and the identities embodied within it are best understood within the framework of postcolonialism, although the unique postcolonial condition of Crimea and its indigenous Crimean Tatars demands separate consideration from that of mainland Ukraine. In this chapter I sketch a broad overview of Ukrainian and Crimean history that underscores the country's diverse cultural lineage and the recurring trend of subjugation by outside forces, both of which are essential to an understanding of Ukraine and Crimea's postcolonial experiences.

#### **The Pontic Steppe and Crimea: Crossroads of the Ancient World**

Well before proto-Slavic tribes first began forming agrarian communities in the wooded marshlands near the modern borderlands between Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland, the fertile soils of the Ukrainian steppe to the southeast supported waves of early pastoralists for millennia.

Between 1500 and 1000 BC pastoralism gradually gave way to nomadism as tribal groups began mastering the art of horseback riding, allowing them to swiftly conquer and settle large portions of the open Eurasian steppe that stretches from the Carpathian Mountains to Manchuria.

Occupying a zone of both ecological and cultural transition between the nomadized Eurasian steppe and the forests and uplands of Eastern Europe, the Pontic Steppe north of the Black Sea emerged as a vital site of early cultural contact, exchange, and hybridity between ancient European and Asiatic peoples.

The first known group of equestrian nomads to descend upon the Pontic Steppe—including much of Crimea—were the Cimmerians, who, according to some historians, first appeared within the Pontic Steppe itself and therefore represent one of the earliest peoples autochthonous to the territory of Ukraine (Subtelny 2009, 9). By 700 BC the Cimmerians were absorbed and/or displaced by the Scythians, a powerful and prosperous Iranian civilization that conquered a vast area that included parts of the Middle East, Central Asia, Southern Russia, and the Caucasus, with the Pontic Steppe representing the western edge of their vast empire. On the heels of the Scythians came the Sarmatians, a confederation of Indo-Iranian tribes originating in the areas north of the Caspian Sea, who conquered and largely assimilated the Scythians of the Pontic Steppe around 200 BC. What remained of the Scythian leadership and civilization was driven south into the Crimean Peninsula around 200 BC, where they encountered the Tauri people inhabiting the mountains and coasts along the southern edge of the peninsula. Possibly the vestiges of Cimmerian tribes driven from the steppe by Scythians invaders centuries earlier (Grinevetsky et al. 2014, 202), the Tauri are generally regarded as the original inhabitants of Crimea, and it was from the Tauri that the ancient Greeks derived their name for the peninsula—*Taurica*. The Scythians conquered and assimilated the Tauri, establishing a small but wealthy

kingdom that covered much of Crimea and small portions of the Ukrainian steppe beyond the *Perekop*, the narrow isthmus that connects Crimea to the Ukrainian mainland.

The Crimean Scythians shared the peninsula with several Greek colonies that dotted the coastline and predated the rise of the Scythian kingdom in Crimea by centuries. These distant outposts of ancient Greece first appeared along the northern Black Sea littoral in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC as competing Greek city-states expanded their trade networks beyond the Mediterranean Sea. Some of these colonies were located outside of Crimea where the rivers of the Ukrainian steppe empty into the Black Sea, but the Crimean settlements— included Chersonesus (near present-day Sevastopol), Kerkinitis (now Yevpatoria), and Theodosia (now Feodosia)—proved the most lasting and influential of the Greeks' Black Sea colonies. As depicted in Euripides's fifth century BC drama, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Crimea was a mysterious and terrifying place to the ancient Greeks, and for centuries Greek communities along the Crimean coast lived in tense coexistence with their "savage" neighbors, the Tauri. The Greeks' relations with the Scythians were far more productive, and where they came into contact with each other their cultures and economies began to intertwine (Plokhy 2015, 7).

Indo-Iranian nomads dominated the Pontic Steppe for nearly a millennium, but their reign ended with the invasion of the Germanic Goths, who undertook the first major migration of any northern tribes into the Pontic Steppe, thus establishing a civilizational axis connecting the Black and Baltic Seas through the territory of modern Ukraine. Originating in southern Sweden, the Goths crossed the woodlands of northern Europe and poured into the steppe, overwhelming and displacing the Samarians before reaching Crimea in the third century AD, bringing down the Scythian Kingdom and severely weakening the remaining Greek colonies, which were by that point ruled over by the Bosporan Kingdom, a Roman client kingdom. The Goths reigned over

most of Crimea and large portions of the steppe to the north for roughly a century until about 375 AD, when both they and the Bosporan Kingdom were decimated by the Huns, a fierce band of equestrian nomads likely composed of various Central Asian tribes (Kent 2016, 15). Like some Tauri and Scythians before them, communities of Goths sought refuge from the Huns in the isolated cave dwellings of the Crimean Mountains, stimulating a process of ethnic and cultural interfusion that would become a hallmark of Crimean civilizations.

The arrival of the Huns ushered in a period of great migration and upheaval on the Pontic Steppe. Consolidating their power further west, the Huns remaining in the steppe were overrun and likely assimilated during the sixth century AD, first by Avars and later by the Bulgars, the earliest Turkic speakers to arrive in the territory of modern Ukraine. The Bulgars were subsequently subsumed by another Turkic group, the Khazars, who gradually expanded their control over an area stretching from Ukraine to the Aral Sea and south beyond the Caucasus beginning in the mid seventh century AD. The Khazars are noted for having adopted Judaism during their period of rule over the steppe, and while some scholars dismiss their Jewish conversion as a myth (Stampfer 2014), two small Turkic Jewish minorities that remain in Crimea to this day—the Karaites and Krymchaks—generally look to the Khazars as their ethnic and spiritual forbearers (Blady 2000, 113–130). The Khazars maintained a vast empire well into the eleventh century, but the territory over which they reigned already resembled an ethnic and cultural palimpsest of the numerous nomadic and sedentarized peoples to come before them; the legacies of Indo-Iranian, Hellenic, Germanic, Turkic, and other tribes lived on in the lineages of the peoples who occupied the future territory of Ukraine during this early period.

As nomads continued traversing the steppes during the Early Middle Ages, the south coast of Crimea remained linked to Mediterranean civilizations both politically and

economically. Sacked during the Hunnic invasion, the former Greek colonies of Crimea were recolonized in the fifth century by the newly minted Byzantine Empire following the break between Rome and Constantinople. Crucially, the Byzantines were the first to bring Christian rule to the territory of modern Ukraine, setting the stage for the spread of Orthodox Christianity to the steppes and woodlands of Eastern Europe some centuries later.

### **The East Slavs, the Varangians, and Kievan Rus'**

Living for centuries just beyond the northwestern fringe of the Pontic Steppe, tribes of early agrarian Indo-Europeans were sheltered from the destructive waves of nomadic conquest in the woodlands and marshes of the Prypyat and Vistula drainage basins, now split between Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland. In the sixth century AD, during the early period of Khazar rule over the steppes, these proto-Slavic peoples began to migrate and expand their territorial influence, pushing northeast towards the upper reaches of the Volga River, west toward the Elbe River and the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, and southward into the Balkan Peninsula (Subtelny 2009, 19–21). Through this process of slow dispersal across Eastern Europe, the proto-Slavs gradually diverged into three distinct cultural branches: the West Slavs, from which Polish, Czech, Slovak, Kashubian, Sorbian, and Silesians ethnicities would later emerge; South Slavs, who would eventually splinter into Bulgarians, Serbians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Croats, Bosniaks, and Slovenes; and East Slavs, who would later split into Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarusians.

By the eighth century—long before these distinctive ethnic identities began to crystalize—the East Slavic tribes had begun organizing into loose confederations across a vast territory that stretched from Carpathian Mountains to the edge of the taiga forests in

northwestern Russia. The southernmost of these tribes, inhabiting the territory of modern Ukraine and regarded today as proto-Ukrainians, included the Polianians, Derevlians, Siverians, Volhynians, Dulibians, Ulichians, Tivertsians, and White Croats (Magocsi 2010, 49). Those tribes who settled in the ecotone between forest and steppe inevitably came into contact and began trading with the Khazars, who also demanded tribute from their Slavic neighbors. This economic relationship likely represents the beginnings of a Slavic-Turkic cultural encounter in the territory of modern Ukraine that would reappear as a trend throughout much of Ukraine's history. Sitting on the right bank of the Dnipro River<sup>1</sup> where the forests gradually give way to steppe, the city of Kyiv first rose to prominence sometime in the ninth century AD, although a settlement likely existed in this location as early as the sixth century AD (Subtelny 2009, 25). Its location between the forest and steppe meant that Kyiv became an important center of commerce and exchange between the Khazars and the East Slavs—particularly the Polianians—but as a prominent settlement along the Dnipro, the city also became a vital outpost along an emerging trade route between the Baltic and Black Seas.

Known to Western Europeans as Vikings or Normans, the Varangians were a Germanic people of Scandinavian origin who had begun settling among northern Slavic tribes in the territory of present-day Russia beginning in the eighth century AD. They built an expansive trading network that reached the Arab and Persian worlds by way of the Volga River and Caspian Sea, and to the Byzantine Empire via the Dnipro River and Black Sea. In the early 9<sup>th</sup> century AD the Varangians seized control of Kyiv—a strategic outpost along the lucrative southern trading route—and began extracting tribute from the Polianians while occasionally

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<sup>1</sup> The Dnipro—the largest and most historically significant river in Ukraine—flows south from its headwaters west of Moscow and through the Ukrainian steppe before draining into the Black Sea. Counterintuitively, the Right Bank of the Dnipro refers to the western edge of the river as it flows through Ukraine, i.e., the bank to the right if one is traveling downriver.



leading them in raids against Constantinople. Although the precise nature of the relationship between the East Slavs and the Varangians remains murky, the influx of Varangian influence in Slavic lands almost certainly played some role in stimulating the political coalescence of the East Slavs beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in the rise of the great Slavic confederation known as Kievan Rus'. Some historians argue that Varangian leadership drove the process of economic and political cohesion among disparate East Slavic tribes, and that the very name *Rus'*—from which *Russian* would later derive—originated with the Varangians as well. Others, including many Russian and Ukrainian historians, postulate that Varangian influence among the East Slavs was superficial, and that both the name *Rus'* and the political entity that came to bear that name were wholly Slavic in origin (Magocsi 2010, 56–50). At the very least, the Varangians likely helped accelerate the process of integration across East Slavic lands that laid the foundation of Kievan Rus', and it was the Varangian prince Rurik who founded the political dynasty that would rule over Kievan Rus' and later the Russian Empire until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Rurik seized control of the northern Slavic settlement of Novgorod in 862, and in 882 his successor Oleg captured Kyiv, proclaiming it the “Mother of Rus' cities,” and officially marking the birth of what was retroactively dubbed Kievan Rus'.

Kievan Rus' would continue to expand its territory and influence over the course of the next three and a half centuries, becoming one of the largest and most powerful entities in Europe at that time. Organized as a confederation of principalities governed by extended members of the Rurikid clan, the loosely-defined boundaries of Kievan Rus' sprawled across Northeastern Europe from the Carpathians to the shores of the White Sea at its greatest extent, but Kyiv remained its center of power. Although the rulers of Kievan Rus' originated from Varangian stock, the Rurikid bloodline and its cultural trappings rapidly came to resemble their East Slavic

subjects. Led by Grand Prince Sviatoslav of Kyiv, around 968 the Rus' swept through the Volga basin where they defeated the Khazars and the associated Bulgars, effectively ending centuries of Khazar domination in the Pontic Steppe, allowing Kievan Rus' to expand its influence deeper into the territory of modern Russia and control the lucrative Volga trading route. Removing the Khazars from the steppe also meant the loss of a crucial bulwark against nomadic tribes from further east, and in 972 Sviatoslav and his troops were ambushed and killed on their return to Kyiv by the Pechenegs, an Oghuz Turkic tribe from Central Asia that seized the Pontic Steppe after the Khazars' defeat.

The Pechenegs had replaced the Khazars as Kyiv's rivals on the steppe, and Sviatoslav's son and eventual heir, Grand Prince Volodymyr, set about building a network of defensive towns and fortresses along the city's southern flanks to defend against them beginning around 980 AD. Volodymyr's most enduring legacy, however, was his decision to adopt Christianity as the official religion of Kievan Rus'. Christianity had already spread to East Slavic lands before Volodymyr, both by way of Rome and Constantinople, but well into the 10<sup>th</sup> century the rulers of Kievan Rus' and most of their subjects still practiced a form of paganism influenced both by early Slavic and Norse traditional religions. According to the famed *Primary Chronicles*—a history of Kievan Rus' compiled by Kievan monks in 1113 that is the source of most knowledge of this period—Volodymyr believed the people of Rus' must embrace one of the modern world's great religions, and sent envoys to the great centers of Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic, and Jewish worship to help inform his decision concerning which he should choose. Legend states that Volodymyr rejected Islam because of its restrictions on consuming pork and alcohol, and that he was drawn to the descriptions of awe-inspiring architecture that his envoy to Constantinople

reported, but Subtelny (2009, 33) argues that his choice of Eastern Orthodoxy was ultimately a pragmatic political move aimed at strengthening an alliance with the Byzantine Empire.

Volodymyr is generally believed to have been baptized into the Orthodox church in the former Crimean Greek colony of Chersonesus in 988, following which he set about converting his subjects beginning with the mass baptism of Kyiv's residents in the Dnipro River. From there, Orthodox Christianity gradually spread throughout the East Slavic realm, where it remains the dominant faith today. The supposed fact that Volodymyr's baptism occurred in Crimea would forever mark the peninsula as a territory of deep cultural and spiritual significance in Eastern Orthodoxy, and beginning roughly eight centuries later the imperative to control this sacred territory would become a driving ideology behind Russian imperialism.

As the center of power within Rus' lands, Kyiv continued to expand its territory and influence under successive Rurikid princes through the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, clashing continually with the Pechenegs and other Turkic tribes who swept through the Pontic Steppe. But Kyiv began to wane as a center of power around 1125, and numerous princes began jockeying for and consolidating power within their individual principalities. The northern principality of Novgorod effectively broke free of Kyiv's influence in 1136 to become the Novgorod Republic, a precursor to the Russian Empire. As Kyiv gradually lost its influence and prestige, separate ruling hereditary lines became institutionalized within different principalities—including Chernihiv, Pereiaslav, and Halych-Volhynia, in the territory of modern Ukraine—and each began developing its own separate political and cultural characteristics in these early stages of ethnic fracturing among the East Slavs. By the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, Kievan Rus' had splintered into a disparate collection of competing territories ruled by various branches of the Rurikid dynasty, and Kyiv itself was hardly more than one among equals.

Kievan Rus' had been a dominant European power for nearly four centuries, and the legends surrounding it would later prove crucial to Ukrainian, Russia, and Belorussian ethnic mythologies. However, the East Slavic lands also became much more culturally diverse and economically dynamic during the period of Kievan Rus'. As Subtelney (2009, 45) notes,

[Kyiv's] rapid expansion brought Varangian trade-warriors, Finnic hunters, Turkic mercenaries, Greek artisans, and Armenian and Jewish merchants into the Slavic midst. Moreover, with the rise of cities, merchants and craftsmen proliferated. Finally, a completely new class—the clergy—appeared with the introduction of Christianity. In short, the inhabitants of Kievan Rus' became culturally more cosmopolitan, ethnically more diverse, and socially more differentiated and stratified.

Nevertheless, with its center in Kyiv and the heartland of the future Ukrainian state, the legacy of Kievan Rus' would serve as a vital source of ethnic and political legitimacy to Ukrainians in their struggles for sovereignty many centuries later. The boundaries of Kievan Rus' did not, however, correspond to anything resembling the territory of modern Ukraine, as the steppe which today covers much of central, southern, and eastern Ukraine remained the realm of Turkic nomads throughout the history of Kievan Rus'. The shifting relationships that the Rus' maintained with their Turkic neighbors—sometimes amenable and mutually beneficially, other times violent and confrontational—would be reflective of the Slavic-Turkic encounter within the Pontic Steppe some centuries later, becoming an important recurring theme throughout much of Ukraine's history.

### **The Mongol Empire, the Golden Horde, and East Slavic Vassal States**

By the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, much of Kyiv's authority over Rus' lands had been devolved to the various principalities, with the combined western principalities of Galicia-Volhynia emerging as a powerful entity. The Turkic nomads of the Cuman-Kipchak Confederation controlled the

Pontic Steppe, and successors to the Byzantines still clung to provinces along Crimea's southern coast. Far to the east in Mongolia, however, a powerful new force was emerging. After subjugating all the Mongol and Turkic tribes of the Mongolian Steppe to his authority in 1206, the Mongol warrior Temujin took the name Chingiz Khan and declared himself the Khan of a rapidly expanding empire that would eventually incorporate Siberia, Manchuria, China, Korea, Central Asia, Persia, the Caucasus, Anatolia, and ultimately the Pontic Steppe, Crimea, and most of Kievan Rus'. During the 1220s and 1230s, the Mongols—led by Chingiz Khan's son Batu following the former's death in 1227—systematically conquered and subjugated the peoples of the Pontic Steppe and various northern and eastern Rus' principalities, but sparing Novgorod. Absorbing many conquered Turkic peoples of the Pontic Steppe into their armies along the way, the Mongols finally conquered Kyiv in 1240, followed by Galicia and Volhynia to the West a year later.

Although the initial raids that brought down the principalities of Kievan Rus' were typically violent and destructive, by contrast life under the Mongol yoke was generally peaceful and prosperous for those who were willing to submit to Mongol hegemony. In many of the territories that they conquered across Eurasia, the Mongol leaders largely kept pre-existing political, social, and economic structures in place. While the Mongols exerted more direct control over the steppes, the East Slavs were merely subjected to a system of vassalage wherein the principalities each retained extensive autonomy but were required to pay annual tribute in their most valuable resources. Most of the Rus' princes were quick to bow to their new Mongol overlords and therefore allowed to retain their title and authority over their principalities. Famously, the Mongols were also highly tolerant of religious differences within their empire, and they left intact the liturgical hierarchy of the Orthodox church rather than impose their

shamanistic beliefs upon their East Slavic vassals. In fact, Magocsi (2010, 115) argues that the strength and importance of the Orthodox Church greatly increased during the period of Mongol rule because it remained the primary social institution that continued to bind the Rus' principalities while Mongol vassalage further drove their political atomization.

While the power and influence of some Rus' principalities, including Kyiv itself, withered during the period of Mongol hegemony, it proved to be a time of growth and opportunity for others. Particularly, the principality of Galicia-Volyhnia emerged as a prosperous center of power and resistance to Mongol hegemony in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, maintaining a much greater degree of autonomy than most other Rus' principalities. Notably, in the 1240s Prince Danylo of Galicia-Volyhnia founded the city of Lviv, the namesake of his son Lev who, as Danylo's successor, would later move the capital of Galicia-Volhynia from Halych to Lviv. Danylo also managed to forge temporary alliances against the Mongols with Catholic neighbors Poland and Hungary, giving him a lifeline to Rome. Appealing to Pope Innocent IV for assistance in the struggle against the Mongols, Danylo offered to submit his principality to Rome's ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Danylo was crowned king of Galicia-Volhynia by papal decree, and the principality's close association with Rome and proximity to the Catholic Poles and Hungarians helped stave off further incursions by the Mongols. Moreover, Danylo's ecclesiastical submission to Rome helped lay the foundation for what would later develop into the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church—a sort of Orthodox-Catholic hybrid faith—that would later predominate in regions of western Ukrainians.

The principality of Vladimir-Suzdal, located in the northeasternmost reaches of Kievan Rus', would also become an important center of power and resistance in the waning decades of Mongol rule. Under the vassalage of the Mongol Empire and later the Golden Horde, the

principality began to splinter into individual city-states and duchies as its nobility vied for control, and by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century three of these cities—Tver, Nizhny Novgorod, and Moscow—had emerged as the most powerful. Until this period Moscow had been little more than a small backwater compared to the other cities within the same principality, but its isolated and protected location deep in the woods along the navigable Moskva River proved advantageous during the period of the Mongol yoke. In 1283 Prince Daniel I declared the city and its hinterland the Grand Duchy of Moscow (also known simply as Muscovy), and by conquering and absorbing the surrounding duchies and principalities over the next two and a half centuries, Moscow would gradually ascend to the position of primary power within East Slavic lands, transforming into the tsardom of Russia in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.

While the Mongols stopped short of completely annexing the principalities of Rus', their conquest of Crimea was far more definitive. Northern portions of the peninsula fell easily along with the rest of the steppe, but the Mongols pushed further and seized the mountains and coasts of southern Crimea as well during their campaigns in the 1230s. By the time the Mongols arrived, this part of Crimea had been controlled for a few decades by the Empire of Trebizond, a successor to the crumbling Byzantine Empire centered in northeastern Anatolia. These Trapezuntine Greeks had also granted special rights to merchants from the increasingly influential Republics of Genoa and Venice, allowing them to maintain trading outposts along the southern Crimea coast. Virtually all of Crimea ultimately fell to the Mongols, effectively ending millennia of Greek/Byzantine authority in Crimea but bringing only a temporary setback to the Genoese and Venetian presence in the peninsula.

The Mongol Empire was already showing its first signs of fracturing in 1227 when the sons and grandsons of Chingiz Khan assumed authority over its far-flung domains following his

death. Divided into four distinct realms, the empire remained nominally intact for another three decades until the collapse of the empire's central authority in 1259, resulting in its formal disintegration into four separate Khanates: the Yuan Dynasty, incorporating Mongolia itself and most of China; the Chagatai Khanate, located in Central Asia; the Ilkhante, centered in Persia and Anatolia; and the Golden Horde, covering the vast steppe territories once bequeathed to Chingiz Khan's son Batu, who had died in 1255. The vast majority of peoples within the territory of the Golden Horde—not including the Slavs living under its vassalage—were Turkic Cumans, Kipchaks, Tatars<sup>2</sup>, and the vestigial descendants of earlier Turkic and Iranian steppe peoples of centuries past, reflecting the multiethnic character of the sprawling Mongol Empire as a whole. With time, the cultural influence of the Mongolian leadership began to wane as Tatars and Kipchaks took on a more prominent role, resulting in a gradual Turkification of the Golden Horde.

Under the authority of the Golden Horde, Crimea also remained ethnically diverse and culturally dynamic; Kipchaks and Tatars predominated in the northern Crimean steppe, while communities of Greeks, Armenians, Slavs, Goths, Alans, Karaites, Krymchaks, Genoese, Venetians, and others continued to cohabit and intermingle within the Crimean Mountains and along the southern coast. Indeed, after being pushed out by the Mongol invasions in the 1230s, by 1266 the Genoese and Venetian merchants were once again granted administrative rights in key Crimean ports under the vassalage of the Golden Horde. By the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century the Genoese managed to squeeze their Venetian rivals out of Crimea, assuming administrative

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<sup>2</sup>“Tatar” here should not be confused with the Crimean Tatars, who did not emerge as a distinctive ethnic community until some centuries later. Historically, “Tatar” has been a catch-all term used in Russian and other European sources to describe various Turkic peoples of the eastern Eurasian steppe and Siberia, particularly those who were drawn deeply into the ranks of the Mongol Horde. In fact, the term was often applied indiscriminately to both Turkic and Mongolic peoples by many contemporary sources. The use of “Tatar” here refers to Turkic peoples originating in areas east of the Kipchaks and Cumans.



control of virtually all lucrative ports and trading outpost in southern and eastern Crimea. Known collectively as Genoese Gazaria, colonies including Caffa (Feodosia), Soldaia (Sudak), Vosporo (Kerch), Cembalo (Balaklava), and Caulita (Yalta) emerged as vital centers of commerce, trade, and manufacturing at the crossroads of European and Asian empires and civilizations. Famously, it was in the bustling city of Caffa—the primary port of Genoese Gazaria—that the Bubonic Plague passed from nomadic carriers to traders who unwittingly transmitted the devastating disease to Europe in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century.

A rival to the Genoese also emerged in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century within the southernmost portion of the Crimean Mountains, in an area inhabited predominantly by descendants of the Goths but influenced culturally by the Byzantines. The Principality of Theodoro was centered in the imposing mountain fortress of the same name (now known as Mangup), which controlled a small territory wedged between the southern coast and the northern steppe, including a short coastline along the western edge of Crimea to the north of Chersonesus. As a nominal successor to the Byzantine Empire, the princes of Theodoro were Orthodox Greeks, but their diverse subjects represented a mixture of all those peoples who had for millennia taken refuge from the turmoil of the steppe within the Crimean Mountains. Like the Rus' principalities, Theodoro paid tribute to the Khan of the Golden Horde and thus maintained a peaceful co-existence with its powerful northern neighbor, but for much of its existence it was locked in political and economic competition with the Genoese to the south.

The early 14<sup>th</sup> century also marked the apex of the Golden Horde's power, particularly under the leadership of its longest reigning khan, Öz Beg, from 1313 to 1341. A Muslim convert, Öz Beg declared Islam the official state religion of the Golden Horde and forbade the practice of Buddhism and Shamanism, permanently establishing Islam as the predominate faith of the

Turkic and Mongolic nomads of the Pontic and Caspian Steppes. However, Öz Beg continued to tolerate the practice of Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism<sup>3</sup> in the vassal states of Rus' and southern Crimea, first establishing the precedent of Christians and Muslims coexisting in large numbers within the territory of modern Ukraine.

### **Lithuania, Poland, the Crimean Khanate, and the Decline of the Golden Horde**

Occupying a relatively small region between Kievan Rus' and the Baltic Sea, the Lithuanians and other Baltic tribes had traded and quarreled with the East Slavs for centuries but remained linguistically and culturally distinct, even resisting Christianization until 1387, making them the very last peoples in all of Europe to embrace Christianity. The Lithuanians still practiced a form of polytheistic paganism when, along with a coalition of other Baltic tribes, they established the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1236. With the principalities of Rus' serving as an effective buffer between Lithuania and the steppe, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania largely escaped Mongol subjugation and was well positioned to expand its influence and territory into the Rus' principalities weakened by Mongol vassaldom. Either through force or diplomacy, beginning around the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Grand Duchy of Lithuania began annexing western and northern Rus' principalities located in modern-day Belarus, including Polotsk, Vitebsk, and Minsk. But beginning in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century the Grand Duchy of Lithuania pushed deeper into the heart of Kievan Rus' and absorb much of the territory of modern Ukraine. Kyiv itself fell under direct Lithuanian rule in 1362, and although the city had already long since lost its status as the center of power in East Slavic lands, its annexation to Lithuania marked the end of the Rurikid dynasty's nearly 500-year grip on the once mighty city. By the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century,

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<sup>3</sup> Orthodoxy was by far the predominant form of Christianity practiced within the vassal states of the Golden Horde, but the Genoese and Venetian merchants of Crimea had also introduced Roman Catholicism to the peninsula.

Lithuania and Poland had also split the Principality of Galicia-Volhynia between themselves, with Lithuania absorbing most of the former principality of Volhynia, and Poland taking Galicia.

With the exception of Polish Galicia and the still nominally independent former principalities of Vladimir-Suzdal and Novgorod, by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania had absorbed essentially all of the Rus' lands. The Lithuanians mostly kept intact the extant boundaries and separate ruling structures of the former principalities, but placed princes of the ruling Gediminid dynasty on each of their thrones. Having successfully wrestled the Rus' lands away from the Golden Horde, The Grand Duchy of Lithuania now stood at the Khan's doorstep and confronted the Golden Horde with its first legitimate threat in Europe since the Mongols' arrival. Facing another threat to their hegemony over the steppe from the expanding Timurid empire in Central Asia, by the early 15<sup>th</sup> century the Golden Horde entered a period of rapid decline.

The Kingdom of Poland had been a formidable political rival to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania even before the two fought for control of Galicia-Volhynia, but by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century they had turned to each other in hopes of forging a mutually beneficial alliance (see Magocsi, 2010, 137–140 for details surrounding the complicated situation that drove the Polish and Lithuanians into a partnership). In what became known as the Union of Krewo, in 1385 Jogaila, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, was wed to Jadwiga, the reigning Queen of Poland. The marriage bound Poland and Lithuania in a personal union that brought the two entities together under a single head of state, but which allowed them to maintain separate ruling structures. In exchange for accepting a Lithuanian as their head of state, the Polish nobility insisted that Jogaila accept Catholicism both himself and on behalf of his pagan Lithuanian subjects, and that he commit to annexing remaining Rus' lands of which the Polish crown claimed ownership. Thus

began a partnership that would bring Christianity to Europe's last pagan holdouts, which would preside over the majority of Ukrainian lands for several centuries.

Having already lost its Rus' vassal states to the ever-encroaching Lithuanians, the Golden Horde was confronted with an even stronger and more unified threat to its waning hegemony with the union of Poland and Lithuania. Also contending with its increasingly powerful neighbors in Moscow and Central Asia, by the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century the Golden Horde began to crumble from within. In 1438 a former Khan of the Golden Horde, Ulugh Muhammad, successfully seized control of the city of Kazan near the Golden Horde's frontier with Muscovy, carving out the independent Khanate of Kazan from large portions of the Golden Horde's northern territory along the Volga River. Meanwhile, in the province of Crimea where the ethnic Tatar population had grown largely sedentarized during two centuries of Mongol-Tatar rule, local clan leaders were also growing eager to break away from the fledging Horde. In the late 1430s Crimean clan leaders sent a request to Haci Devlet Giray—a Chingizid prince descended directly from Chingiz Khan himself—to serve as khan of an independent Crimean Khanate legitimized by Giray's dynastic pedigree. The Crimean Khanate successfully broke away from the Golden Horde in the late 1440s, controlling a large territory that included most of the Crimean Peninsula<sup>4</sup> and vast tracks of steppe beyond the Isthmus of Perekop in what is now southern Ukraine, and to the east of the Sea of Azov in present-day Russia. The territory of the Crimean Khanate extended roughly to the lower Dnipro River and thus butted up against the land controlled by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, essentially squeezing what was left of the Golden Horde from Ukrainian territory entirely.

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<sup>4</sup> The Principality of Theodor and the Genoese holdings along the southern coast of Crimea remained independent of the Crimean Khanate at the outset of its existence.

By 1502 the Golden Horde had finally disappeared entirely, its territory divided among separate Khanates or otherwise picked off by the Grand Duchies of Lithuania and Moscow as they expanded into the steppe. Thus, at the outset of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the territory of modern Ukraine was split between the Kingdom of Poland in the far western region of Galicia, Polish-aligned Lithuania in most of the western and central regions, the Islamic Crimean Khanate in the south, and the growing Duchy of Moscow along its northeastern fringe.

### **The Crimean Khanate, the Ottoman Empire, and the Emergence of the Crimean Tatars**

Like the Golden Horde before it, the Crimean Khanate shared the Crimean Peninsula with Genoese Gazaria, which still controlled the southern Crimean coast and nearly all of its ports, and the Principality of Theodoro, which still controlled a narrow region of the Crimean Mountains. Before long, however, these rivals would be removed from Crimea not by the Khanate itself, but by the powerful Ottoman Empire across the Black Sea. Growing from an embryonic state first founded in 1299 in a small region of northwestern Anatolia, the Ottoman Empire struck the final death knell against the Byzantine Empire in 1453 when it captured the Byzantine capital of Constantinople. From his new capital in that hallowed city, the ambitious Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II set his sights on further expansion, turning his gaze to the shores of the Black Sea, which he envisioned as an “Ottoman lake” under his full control. After first sweeping through the Balkans, in 1475 the Sultan launched an assault on the shores of Crimea, where his armies captured and annexed both Genoese Gazaria and the Principality of Theodoro, placing them into a single province under direct Ottoman rule. Split between the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate, the Crimean Peninsula now fell entirely under Islamic authority, but the relationship between the Khanate and the Ottomans was complex.

Sultan Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire imagined himself the leader of the Turkic people at large, and therefore claimed authority not only over the Crimean Khanate, but all those Turkic peoples spread across Eurasia. However, the Giray Dynasty of Crimea descended directly from Chingiz Khan himself, and so rather than supplanting its authority through direct annexation, the Sultan placed the Crimean Khanate under a unique form of vassalage in 1478, effectively legitimizing his claims over territories of the former Mongol Empire by subjecting its heirs. The Crimean Khanate therefore served an important purpose to the Ottoman Empire, and the Sultan allowed it special privileges that were not extended to other Ottoman vassal states (Magocsi 2010, 180). The Crimean Khans were largely free to pursue their own foreign policy, often extracting tribute from neighboring Poland, Lithuania, and Muscovy, but partnering with them when advantageous. The Khanate even maintained its own system of vassalage over the Turkic Nogais living in parts of the steppe north of Crimea. While some may point to the Crimean Khanate's status as an Ottoman vassal state in an attempt to undermine Crimean Tatar claims to the peninsula, the Khanate retained a wide degree of authority vis-à-vis the Sultan and is perhaps better understood as a client state of the Ottoman Empire rather than a vassal (see Fisher, 1978).

Although Islam had been practiced in Crimea much earlier (see Yakubovych 2016), the period of joint Islamic rule over Crimea by the Khanate and the Ottoman Empire was decisive to the emergence of the modern Crimean Tatar ethnic nation. Some Soviet and Russian authorities have attempted to diminish the role of Crimean Tatars in the region's history and undermine their claims to the title of indigenous people of Crimea, (Sasse, 2007, 74), while others, including Vozgrin (1992) and Votovich (2009), have sought to prove that Crimean Tatars are not merely the decedents of Crimea's invading Mongol and Turkic tribes, but rather are formed from a

unique blend of the myriad ethnic groups that have settled in the peninsula. Over the course of millennia, a diverse population of refuge seekers, traders, nomadic herders, and sedentary agriculturalists had accumulated within the various environs of the Crimean Peninsula, and uniquely Crimean peoples had already begun to emerge through their interfusions well before the advent of the Crimean Khanate or the Ottoman Empire. However, it was only during the period of rule by the Crimean Khans and Ottoman Sultans that a singular Crimean ethnos began to coalesce. Crimea's population had long been multi-religious—including distinctive communities of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others—and despite functioning under Islamic law, both the Ottoman Empire and Crimean Khanate were tolerant of non-Muslim communities. Although some retained their religious identities—notable groups include the Jewish Karaite and Krymchak ethnic communities—many non-Muslims in Crimea eventually adapted the state religion and converted to Sunni Islam beginning in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the Islamic faith serving as a primary catalyst for the coalescence of a cohesive Crimean Tatar ethnos (Williams 2001, 23–25).

Williams (2001) accounts for the fact that the Crimean peninsula's three distinct geographical regions—the northern steppe, the southern mountains, and the southern coast—provided the setting for the formation of three distinct cultural-linguistic groups which, united under Islam, became known collectively as the Crimean Tatars. Spoken in the northern Crimean steppes and even beyond the Perekop was a Turkic dialect belonging to the nomadic Kipchak and Nogai clans, who had intermarried and intermixed with other Turkic and Mongolic clans that had arrived with the Mongol Horde. Coastal dwellers of southern Crimea spoke a language very similar to the Oghuz Turkish of the Ottoman Empire, but which was also influenced by the Genoese, Greek, and Armenian communities remaining in the area after Ottoman annexation,

who also formed a diverse ethnic stock for the sub-region's population. Those who lived in the Crimean Mountains descended largely from the Goths and various nomadic peoples who had once sought refuge there, and spoke a dialect heavily influenced by both Oghuz Turkish and the language of the Cuman and Kipchak peoples—the most recent groups to settle in the mountains during the Mongol invasions. It was from these three cultural-linguistic groups that three distinctive Crimean Tatar sub-ethnic identities gradually calcified: the Nogais of the steppe<sup>5</sup>, the Tats of the Crimean Mountains; and the Yalibouys of the southern coast. The Tats emerged as the most populous and influential sub-group within the nascent Crimean Tatar ethnos, becoming the primary dialect of the Khanate's ruling elites and of the capital, Bakhchisarai. The Tat dialect would therefore form the basis of the standardized Crimean Tatar language that would later be codified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though distinct in their lineages, these three groups “formed the foundation of a new people who gradually internalized a vague sense of ‘*Kırım Tatarlık*’ (‘Crimean Tatar-ness’) in spite of their variegated ethno-linguistic backgrounds” (Williams 2001, 29).

Although it was Islam that ultimately united the different groups of Crimea into a single ethnic community as the Crimean Tatars, Williams (2001, 29) contends that “[t]here are grounds for believing ... that the Crimeans of this [early] period did have a vague identification with the Crimean Peninsula in a larger sense, identifying themselves with the Tatar term *Kırımlı* (Crimean).” In other words, a sense of territorial identity was beginning to prevail alongside religious and cultural identity among Crimean Tatars. Furthermore, many Crimean Tatars today have argued for the removal of “Tatar” from their ethnonym, stating that it disproportionately and negatively associates them with a Mongol heritage (35). The Tatar ethnonym was first used

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<sup>5</sup> Although they share a common heritage, the Nogai sub-ethnicity within the Crimean Tatar ethnos is distinctive from the ethnic Nogais who had come to inhabit steppe regions north and east of Crimea.



by Christians as a broad term for Turkified Mongols found throughout the Eurasian steppe, and is believed to have been derived from the Latin word *tartarus*, meaning “hell” or “underworld” (Williams 2001, 12). Those who take issue with the “Tatar” element in the Crimean Tatar ethnonym have advocated for the simple use of “Crimean” to distinguish their ethnic group, claiming that this more appropriately conveys the fact that it was formed on Crimean soil and is therefore intrinsically Crimean (35). Ironically, however, it was from the Mongol word for “fortress,” *kirim*, that the name “Crimea” first originated (12).

### **Russia, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Cossack Hetmanate**

The nominally unified Poland and Lithuania still possessed the vast majority of territory of present-day Ukraine during the early decades of Tatar and Ottoman rule in the south, but the Grand Duchy of Moscow to the east was rising as a formidable rival to all three entities. With the Golden Horde fast declining and no longer posing a threat to Moscow, the Grand Duchy was poised to fill the political vacuum and make vast territorial acquisitions. The Grand Duchy of Moscow embarked upon a campaign now referred to as the “gathering of the Russian lands” in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, annexing the Republic of Novgorod in 1478, the Grand Duchy of Tver in 1485, and the Republic of Pskov in 1510. Both the Grand Duchies of Moscow and Lithuania—together with the Kingdom of Poland—laid claim to all former Rus’ lands, and Moscow posed a growing threat to Lithuania’s control over much of the territory that it had acquired over the course of the previous centuries.

Moscow’s imperial ambitions continued to grow throughout the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, reaching a critical turning point in 1547 with the Grand Duchy’s formal transformation into the Tsardom of Russia under Grand Prince Ivan IV, more commonly known as Ivan the Terrible.

Following the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the notion took root within the Grand Duchy of Moscow that it was now the center of the Orthodox Christian world and defender of Christianity itself, with Moscow assuming the title of the “Third Rome.” Moscow’s status as the center of Orthodoxy was seemingly validated with the emigration of many Orthodox Christians from Rus’ lands controlled by Catholic Lithuania to those controlled by Moscow, citing religious oppression for their exodus (Magocsi 2010, 140). Favoring this view, Ivan IV adopted the title of Tsar—a Slavicization of the Roman title of Cesar—and declared himself Tsar of all the Russias, a term that had come into use in the 15<sup>th</sup> denoting the Rus’ lands. Emboldened by his new title and assumed role, Ivan set about on an aggressive campaign to grow the Tsardom’s territory, marking the beginning of centuries-long period of near continual Russian expansion. Ivan focused much of his efforts on remnants of the Golden Horde to the southeast, but he also contended with Poland and Lithuania for control over the lands of southern Rus’, commonly referred to as Ruthenian lands by this period. Russia’s increasingly aggressive imperialism was cause for alarm among the ruling classes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Kingdom of Poland, who remained strategic partners but were ultimately vulnerable to attack because they did not share a unified military or singular system of rule. Under pressure, Lithuania’s ruling elites agreed to a consolidation that would unite Polish and Lithuanian lands into a common confederated republic (*Rzeczpospolita*) known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, formalized with the Union of Lublin in 1569.

As part of the new Commonwealth, Polish lands now stretched far east into the Pontic Steppe in regions it had annexed from Lithuania, which the Poles gradually began to refer to as the *Ukrajina*, or “borderland.” With its renowned rich soil—often referred to as the *chernozem*, or “black earth”—the Poles heavily expanded agricultural production deep into its newly

acquired steppe lands, but a large portion of its Ukrainian territories remained sparsely populated since the Mongol invasions centuries earlier. This so-called “wild steppe,” though officially claimed by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, functioned primarily as a territorial buffer between the Commonwealth, the Crimean Khanate, and the Tsardom of Russia. It was essentially a no-man’s land, foraged by parties from Poland and Russia but subject to frequent raids and incursions that prevented any large centers of population from taking root. The area was most vulnerable to the Crimean Tatars, whose economy was based largely on the trade of slaves captured from Polish and Russian lands. The Crimean Tatars, in partnership with the Nogai Horde still settled in areas north of the peninsula, led regular incursions through the wild steppe and deep into Polish and Russian territory, plundering villages and cities alike and capturing peasants to be enslaved within the Khanate itself, or to be sold at the slave markets of Crimea’s port cities.

Facing considerable threats from Crimean Tatar raids, the Poles, Lithuanians, and Russians were eager to fortify their defenses in the wild steppe. With no fortresses and little to no defensible settlements in the region, Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian rulers resorted to hiring independent warriors and mercenaries to patrol the steppe and prevent incursions deeper into their respective territories beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. These hired hands came both from the ranks of Poles, Lithuanians, and Russian soldiers themselves, but often included Tatar and Nogai defectors from the armies of the Crimean Khanate or other Turkic peoples from clans further east. With time, these bands of mercenaries became known as Cossacks, likely derived from *qazaq*, a Turkic word for bandit that is also the root of word Kazakh (Magocsi 2010, 191). Together, these freemen began organizing into semi-nomadic clans living outside of the law, serving as a protective frontline against Crimean Tatar raids to their respective employers, but

also launching their own periodic attacks and raids against the Crimean Khanate and further afield.

Two distinct centers of Cossack society began to emerge during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, one centered around the Don River and primarily serving as a line of defense for the Tsardom of Russia, and another centered along the lower reaches of the Dniro River in southern Ukraine, in service of the Polish and Lithuanian crowns. As opposed to the Don Cossacks, this second group is generally referred to as the Zaporizhian Cossacks, a term that refers to the location “beyond the rapids” (*za porohamy*, in modern Ukrainian) of a section of the Dniro River where they established their first stronghold—known as a *Sich*—in the 1550s. In addition to the Zaporizhians, there were many others who adopted the Cossack title but who lived outside of the *Sich* in the fortified cities of old Kievan Rus’ now located within Polish territory on the fringes of the steppe, including Kyiv, Pereiaslav, and Bratslav. These so-called Town Cossacks mostly embodied the same free-wheeling lifestyle of their Zaporizhian counterparts, but were generally more loyal to the Polish crown and the local magnates whom they served.

The *Sich* became a magnet for many hoping to break free of Polish rule or that of other nearby states. Some were simply adventurers or those attracted by the Cossack lifestyle, but many who came to join their ranks were Orthodox peasants from Poland’s Ukrainian lands with affinities for the staunchly Orthodox beliefs of the Cossacks and an aversion to Polish Catholicism. The proto-Ukrainian Ruthenian dialect was the lingua franca of the Zaporizhian Cossacks, although it was a very multicultural society that welcomed virtually anybody willing to join their ranks. Although still employed as a defensive bulwark for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the *Sich* had gradually become a center of power in its own right by the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As a nominally democratic society of freemen loyal to their

elected leader, known as a *hetman*, the Zaporizhian Cossacks frequently rebelled against Polish authority during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, attempting to force the creation of a special autonomous status for the *Sich* within the existing Commonwealth (Magocsi 2010, 196). In an effort to rein in the Cossacks, in 1578 the Polish king introduced a system of registration that codified their loyalty to the Crown and guaranteed their payment. Not recognizing the separate authority of the *Sich*, only Town Cossacks became registered, further driving a wedge of distinction between them and the Zaporizhians.

Led by their hetmans, the Zaporizhian Cossacks abided by their own foreign policy, frequently leading raids against both the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire, but also coming to the aid and defense of the Commonwealth in their military struggles with the Crimean Tatars, the Ottomans, the Russians, and others. There were also periods of reproach between Polish authorities and the Zaporizhians, particularly during the period of Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi from 1616-1622. In exchange for leading the Zaporizhians in a combined effort with the Polish Army to stop an Ottoman-Tatar invasion at the Battle of Khotyn in 1621, the Polish King granted Sahaidachnyi's request for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Orthodox Church in Ukrainian lands. During the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Kyiv also experienced a revival as an important political, cultural, and religious center within Ukrainian lands, and Hetman Sahaidachnyi even made the city into his center of administration. Despite periods of continuing partnership, the gulf between the government of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Zaporizhians continued to grow into the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century as the Cossacks grew evermore independent-minded.

Lead by the defiant hetman and champion of the proto-Ukrainian Ruthenian peoples, Bohdan Khmel'nitsky, the Zaporizhian Cossacks led a rebellion against the Polish Crown to

demand greater autonomy within Ukrainian lands beginning in 1648, which became known as the Khmelnitsky Uprising. Overcoming nearly two centuries of mutual antagonism between the Cossacks and the Crimean Tatars, Khmelnitsky persuaded the Crimean Khan to assist in his rebellion, promising the Crimean Tatars free reign to raid tracts of Cossack-controlled land for their lucrative slave trade. The alliance marked a significant moment in the history of interaction and cooperation between Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, and gave the rebellion an initial advantage over Polish armies, but the Khan would later withdraw his support for Khmelnitsky and the rebellion. After some initial triumphs, the uprising suffered a great setback with large numbers of Cossack casualties at the 1651 Battle of Berestechko, causing Khmelnitsky to turn to Russian Tsar Alexis I in hopes of forming an alliance against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The two parties formed a military alliance in 1654 with the Treaty of Pereiaslav, in which the Tsar pledged to defend Cossack lands in exchange for the Hetman's declaration of allegiance. This treaty is generally viewed—especially by Russian historians—as the moment when Russian and Ukrainian lands were first united under a single authority, and figures prominently in narratives of East Slavic unity and “brotherhood” between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples.

### **Russian and Austrian Expansion into Ukraine and Ukrainian National Revival**

The Treaty of Pereiaslav opened the door for extensive Russian expansion into Ukrainian lands over the following century and a half. The alliance triggered the Russo-Polish War, which ended in 1667 with Russia's acquisition of Polish-controlled land in Left Bank Ukraine, along with Kyiv on the Right Bank. Poland resumed control of the rest of Right Bank Ukraine for the time being, while the Cossack Hetmanate to the south fell under Russian

suzerainty according to the terms of the Treaty of Pereiaslav. Between 1772 and 1795, the Russian Empire expanded further into Polish lands in Right Bank Ukraine and farther north as it participated in the piecemeal dismantling of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth along with Prussia and Austria in the three Partitions of Poland. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, all Polish and Lithuanian lands had been absorbed by their expanding neighbors, with the Russian Empire's western border now reaching deep into the territory of modern-day western Ukraine. However, Ukraine's contemporary western border would not be defined until the formation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, which divided portions of Eastern Europe between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich.

In the century following the signing of the Treaty of Pereiaslav, the Cossack's nominal autonomy under the Tsardom of Russia—officially redubbed the Russian Empire in 1721—would be slowly curtailed, while their lands were gradually integrated into the expanding empire and organized into Russian provinces. Initially employed as defensive units against Tatar and Ottoman foes along the Empire's new southwestern flank, the Cossacks and their way of life were gradually removed from the Ukrainian lands now under Russian control, and many Cossacks migrated to the still wild steppe regions of the Kuban, lying to the east of Crimea. The diminishing role of the Cossacks and the slow Russification of their territory also meant a roll-back in the nascent development of the Ukrainian language and early Ukrainian identities, which had already begun to diverge considerable from their Russian counterparts under centuries of Polish influence and interaction with Crimean Tatars and Turks. The nominal authority of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had resulted in the Polonization of the Ruthenian elites in modern-day Ukraine, but also impacted the development of vernacular languages within the Polish-controlled lands inhabited by East Slavs, spurring the codification of separate Ukrainian

and Belarusian languages with strong Polish influences. The partitioning of Poland also meant that the early Ukrainian peoples were split between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, with the western Ukrainian region of Galicia—including the city of Lviv—occupied by the latter beginning in 1772.

With Ukrainian lands effectively colonized by the Russians and Austro-Hungarians and left without a local center of power after the decline and displacement of the Zaporizhian Cossacks, the development of Ukrainian cultural and linguistic identities was stunted during this period relative to their more powerful neighbors. Although the term had been applied to various East Slavic territories for several centuries, “Little Russia” (*Malorossiia*) reemerged during this period to define the Ukrainian lands colonized by the Russian Empire, and was used by Russian authorities and Russified Ukrainian elites to discursively obfuscate Ukrainian identities by subjugating them under a single hegemonic Russian identity. With the Russian institution of serfdom extended into “Little Russian” territories as they were incorporated into the Empire, Ukrainian peoples were economically and politically subjugated under Tsarist systems of governance and bondage.

But paralleling contemporaneous trends across much of Europe in the wake of the French Revolution, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a revived Ukrainian national consciousness and emancipatory movement began to awaken both within the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, expressed through various strains of Ukrainophilism that romanticized both the Cossacks and the Ukrainian peasantry (Yekelchuk 2007, 39). Societies of Ukrainophile cultural elites and members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia began to form around the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century within the Ukrainian lands of the Russian Empire, with one of the earliest and most prominent founded in the city of Novhorod-Siverskyi, located in the far north of modern-day



Ukraine. Perhaps the most influential of these groups was the short-lived Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius—named after the Greek monks responsible for spreading Christianity to the Slavs and creating the Cyrillic alphabet—a secret society founded in Kyiv in 1846 but eradicated by Russian authorities in 1847. The society was opposed to Tsarist rule over Ukrainian lands, and advocated for an end to serfdom and the formation of a pan-Slavic union based on the equality of Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians. Among the society’s members was Taras Shevchenko, a revered political, literary, and artistic figure who championed Ukrainian identities in his work and activism and helped crystalize the modern Ukrainian language through his poetry, placing him among the most important national figures within modern Ukrainian historiographies. Contemporaneous to these developments within the Russian Empire, Ukrainian national consciousness was also ascendant within Austrian-controlled Galicia during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as nationalist movements throughout the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire were forcing political reforms. At the height of this nationalist revolutionary moment, the Supreme Ruthenian Council—the first Ukrainian political organization within the Austro-Hungarian Empire—was founded in Lviv in 1848.

Ukrainian national consciousness continued to grow and expand within the Russian Empire during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Ukrainophiles throughout “Little Russia” and elsewhere within the empire began forming local communities known as *hromadas*—including one founded by Taras Shevchenko in the Russian imperial capital of St. Petersburg. Wearing the traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt known as a *vyshyvanka* became a trademark display of Ukrainian pride among *hromada* members during this period. Wary of growing Ukrainian consciousness and the potential separatist threat it posed, in 1876 Tsar Alexander II banned the publication of materials in the Ukrainian language and forbade the use of Ukrainian

in official capacities within the Empire, thereby driving Ukrainophilism back into the underground.

But as Ukrainian identities were increasingly suppressed in the Russian Empire, they continued to evolve and flourish within Austrian Galicia during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with at least two of modern Ukraine's most exalted national figures emerging here during this period. Ivan Franko, a renowned author, scholar, and political activist who espoused socialism and Ukrainian nationalism, was active in the scholarly and political circles in Lviv during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although he was a subject of the Russian Empire, Ukrainian historian and politician Mykhailo Hurshevsky spent much of his early career working in Lviv, where he began publishing the 10-volume *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, the first comprehensive Ukrainian-language history of the Ukrainian peoples and lands. Thus, at a time when Ukrainian national identities were stifled under the weight of Russian imperialism, the province of Galicia under Austrian control emerged as the center of Ukrainian intellectualism and national development.

### **The Annexation and Russian Imperial Perceptions of Crimea**

The Russian Tsars had their sights set on the Crimean Khanate from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and Tsarist-Cossack forces had made failed attempts to capture its lands north of the peninsula in 1687 and 1689. The Russo-Turkish War of 1735-1739 saw Russian forces briefly capture the Khan's capital of Bakhchisarai before retreating due to plague, but the war ended with an increased Russian presence on the Sea of Azov. A second Russo-Turkish war in 1768-1774 resulted in a decisive victory for Russia as it gained more lands along the north of the Black Sea and access to the strategic Kerch Strait. That war ended with the 1774 Treaty of Küçük

Kaynarca, in which the Ottoman Sultan relinquished authority over the Crimean Khanate and the peninsula ostensibly became a Russian vassal state. After nine years of political turmoil in Crimea while it remained under Russian influence, Russian Empress Catherine II ordered the formal annexation of the Crimean Khanate in 1783, officially marking the beginning of Russian rule over the peninsula. In 1802 the peninsula and lands to the north were joined with the Governorate of Novorossiia—formed from former Cossack lands—to become the Governorate of Taurida, taken from the old Greek name for Crimea (Fisher 1978).

Possessing Crimea afforded Russia a crucial geopolitical advantage, giving the expanding empire a prominent new presence in the Black Sea region and crucial access to ports. Following the annexation, Russian colonizers established the port city and strategic naval base of Sevastopol along a well-protected deep-water bay near the ruins of the ancient Greek colony of Chersonesus, at the far southwestern tip of the peninsula. But more than just a strategic outpost, Crimea represented Russia's first conquest of the "Orient," and was intended to bolster the Russian Empire's status as an imperial power and help establish its place alongside Europe's imperial powers (Dickinson 2002). Furthermore, Russian perceptions of Crimea were that of an exotic and substantively different place from the rest of the empire, and early imperialist discourse surrounding Crimea even presented it as Russia's own Garden of Eden (Zorin 1998; Schönle 2001). Dickinson (2002) suggests that the early period of Russia's colonization of Crimea represented a "preliminary process of 'otherization,'" characterized by "the production and circulation of images and stereotypes that expressed the region's 'otherness' or ontological difference from the norms of the dominant culture, in this case those of Western Europe" (4). Schönle (2003) also points out that Crimean orientalist tropes were less a reflection of Russian perceptions of Crimea's natural state of being, but rather an expression of Crimea's symbolic

potential under the proper stewardship. In other words, only within the Russian Empire itself did Catherine II and the Russian ruling class believe that Crimea could realize its full potential and flourish as a true “Garden of Eden.”

As Crimea became integrated into the Russian Empire (O’Neill 2017), its unique cultural and ecological status became more deeply ingrained and exoticized through the works of numerous poets, authors, painters, and other creative members of the Russian intelligentsia. For example, Alexander Pushkin, arguably Russia’s most beloved poet, wrote several poems about his travels in Crimea in 1820. One of his most famous poems, “The Fountain of Tears,” was inspired by a tragic tale of the Crimean Khan and two members of his harem, and is written in a way that deeply exoticizes and feminizes the Crimean landscape, depicting it as being “there for the pleasure of the male traveler ... to shelter him, cool him, beckon to him” (Hokanson 1998, 147). Following Pushkin, Crimea became a destination and muse for numerous Russian poets and authors throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekov, Pyotr Vyazemsky, Ivan Bunin, Marina Tsvetaeva, Anna Akhmatova, and Osip Mandelstam. Notably, Russian poet and artist Maximilian Voloshin established a residence and artists’ colony in the Crimean village of Koktebel in 1916, which served as a retreat and important center of culture and creativity for many writers during the “Silver Age” of Russian poetry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Walker 2004, 84–104). Sasse (2007, 53) notes that a distinctive, largely orientalist Crimean literary tradition emerged in the century and a half following Russia’s initial annexation of the peninsula, wherein “[t]he literary symbols and myths about Crimea share an emphasis on the geography of the peninsula, the beauty of its landscape, its diversity, its special atmosphere, its distance from the mainland, and its distinct path of development.”

But along with the imperialist and orientalist narratives that would continue to evolve under Russian rule, Crimea's Greek heritage and the desire to incorporate it into Russia's cultural lineage served as a driving ideological force behind the initial annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 1783. Some of the earliest Russian claims to the region were tied to the Greek colonization of Crimea beginning as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Such claims emerged during the period of Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the popularity of Greek culture was experiencing a renaissance among the European elite. Engaging with this trend, many within the Russian aristocracy began actively linking Russian culture and civilization via Byzantine Orthodoxy to ancient Greece and thus to the very hearth of Western civilization (see Kozelsky 2010).

According to Russian mythology, the history of Crimea's eventual drift toward the Slavic realm began in the year 988, when Prince Volodymyr of Kyiv allegedly accepted Orthodox Christianity in the old Crimean Greek colony of Chersoneses, following which the Orthodox faith spread throughout the Rus' lands and eventually developed into the Russian Orthodox Church, among other branches of the faith. The supposed fact that Russian Orthodoxy itself essentially began in Crimea thus became the lynchpin of Russia's imperial claim to the peninsula and the northern Black Sea littoral. As a distinct brand of religious nationalism began to predominate in Russia under Catherine the Great, Chersoneses' and Crimea's significance in Russian history became a critical narrative in the era of Russian imperialism (Kozelsky 2010, 49). As Schönle (2001, 2) notes, Catherine and those close to her believed that given Chersoneses' legacy as the birthplace of Russian Orthodoxy, "restoring Christian rule over the Tauric region ... would confer a fitting closure to historical evolution." Indeed, Catherine's close advisor Grigory Potemkin expressed in a letter to the Empress immediately following Russia's

annexation of Crimea that “Tauric [Chersoneses]—the origin of our Christianity and hence our humanness—is already in the arms of its daughter. There is something mystical in this” (quoted in Schönle 2001, 2).

Kozelsky (2010) argues that the legend of Prince Volodymyr’s reception of Christianity at Chersoneses conveniently appealed to proponents of two distinct threads of philhellenism popular among the Russian aristocracy of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, helping build support for the annexation of Crimea. To Graecophiles in the Western European model of the Enlightenment—for whom ancient Greece represented the very pinnacle of democracy, artistic expression, scientific achievement, and sophistication to which they aspired—absorbing Crimea and its Hellenistic roots into the empire would help reify the genealogical bond between Russian and Greek civilizations they wished to promote (2010, 43–45). To adherents of the so-called “phil-Orthodox” movement—who looked to the Byzantine period of Greek history and the birth of Eastern Orthodoxy as the true forbearer of Russian civilization—Crimea was considered sacred territory as the very grounds where Orthodoxy was believed to be first transmitted to the Eastern Slavs. Viewing herself and Russia to be the inheritors of Greek and Christian civilization, Catherine believed she was “the savior of a Greek culture that had unjustly suffered on the shores of the Black Sea at the hands of Scythians, Goths, Huns, and other barbarians,” including the Turks and Crimean Tatars (Dickinson 2002, 11).

Russian efforts to symbolically “re-Hellenize” Crimea and “recover” its early Christian and Slavic heritage began immediately following the peninsula’s annexation. Dozens of toponyms with Turkic origins throughout the region were abandoned in favor of older Greek variants with a Russian twist: Crimea, known prior to the annexation by its Crimean Tatar name *Kirim*, reverted back to the name by which it was known to the ancient Greeks—*Tauris*, or

Tavrida in its Russified variation; the port city of Kefe regained its original Greek name Theodosia (Feodosia after Russification); the city of Kezlev (formerly Kerkitis) was renamed Eupatoria (Yevpatoria); and the Crimean Tatar village of Aqmescit (White Mosque) was chosen as the new capital of the Crimean Peninsula and given the name Simferopol, Greek for “city of usefulness.” During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, archeology also became an important tool used to bolster Crimea’s Greek, Russian, and Christian lineages, with the peninsula’s ancient Scythians even being hypothesized as both proto-Slavs and early adopters of Christianity in Crimea (Kozelsky 2010, 55–56). Russian academics and clergymen in this period also attempted to draw geophysical and spiritual parallels between the Crimean Peninsula and peninsular Mount Athos, a site of deep holy meaning to Orthodox Christians located in northern Greece (Kozelsky 2010, 84). Kozelsky thus argues that the early Russification of Crimea was first and foremost a “Christianization,” ensuring through historical re-interpretation that “[t]his Muslim territory acquired a Christian past” (2010, 51). Russian nationalist narratives have therefore identified Crimea as the holy grounds upon which the Russian nation was first imbued with Orthodox Christianity, thereby depicting it as part and parcel to Russian national identity.

### **The Crimean War, World War II, and the “Sevastopol Myth”**

While Russian intellectual, religious, and political elite spent much of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries retroactively constructing Crimea’s Russian and Christian roots, it was not until the Crimean War from 1853-1856 that the peninsula truly became a popular and powerful symbol of Russian national identity. The “Sevastopol Myth” that was born of the events surrounding the 349-day siege of the eponymous city would become a tool of national propaganda both in the Tsarist and Soviet periods and would later become even more deeply

entrenched in the Russian and Soviet psyche following the events of World War II, when Sevastopol and the rest of Crimea came under siege once again. Sevastopol's wartime exploits and their significance for the Russian people and state have become heavily mythologized, creating "some of the inmost mental shrines of Russia," and the feeling among Russians that "Sevastopol can never be cut out of Russia" (Ascherson 1995, 42).

The Crimean War pitted the Russian Empire against an alliance of Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire, and the Republic of Sardinia for influence in the Black Sea region as the Ottomans' power in the region was beginning to wane. Although the theater of war extended to the Caucasus, the Baltic region, and even the North Pacific, the vast majority of warfare took place on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula, lending the war its name. The Siege of Sevastopol lasted from September of 1854 to September 1855, as British and French troops blockaded the city with only a few Russian army and naval units to defend it from within and little reinforcement from the outside. For nearly one year the defenders of Sevastopol endured unrelenting bombardment, numerous battles along the fringes of the city, limited supplies, and thousands of casualties before the British and French managed to break through the defenses and seize the city. The defeat would ultimately herald Russia's surrender from the war five months later; but while the loss was humiliating, Russian elites and subjects alike quickly latched onto the stories of bravery and heroism of the defenders of Sevastopol, believing they demonstrated the Russian spirit of honor and courage. The siege was even viewed as something of a minor victory, as the consequences for Russia might have been much graver had the city fallen earlier (Plokhy 2000, 375). The so-called "Sevastopol Myth" was first born from these events, which Plokhy (2000, 377) aptly notes was the first such myth to emerge from a Russian military engagement occurring in a colonized territory:



The Sevastopol Myth was the first to be based on the events of a war conducted on previously non-Russian territory, which had been annexed to the empire over 70 years before the outbreak of the Crimean War. From that perspective, the Sevastopol Myth presents a new type of Russian mythology, one that justified and glorified the defense of new imperial possessions acquired by the Tsars during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The “Sevastopol Myth” grew in the decades following the war both through popular and state-sponsored discourses. Renowned author Leo Tolstoy, who served as a second lieutenant in the Siege of Sevastopol, published a collection of short stories in 1855 based on his experiences, entitled *Sevastopol Sketches*. Presenting the defense of Sevastopol as “a story of the suffering, sacrifice and heroism of the common people—rank-and-file sailors, soldiers, and civilians,” the collection was wildly popular, even becoming the subject of the first feature film produced in the Russian Empire—1911’s *Defense of Sevastopol*—and remaining a part of school curricula well into the Soviet period (Plokyh 2000, 376). Some of the defense’s leading figures were lauded as heroes by Russian officials and laymen alike in the years following the war, with Admiral Pavel Nakhimov receiving the highest praise. Killed by a sniper’s bullet toward the end of the siege, Nakhimov’s name became synonymous with Sevastopol, Russia’s sacrifice, and the glory of its naval forces. The Nakhimov Medal would later be introduced in the Soviet period to honor distinction among Soviet sailors and naval commanders, and the Nakhimov monument still stands at the center of Sevastopol’s main square (375-376).

The valorization and glorification of Sevastopol became important Russian nationalist themes in what Smith (1996, 453–454) refers to as the “territorialization of memory,” through which “certain kinds of shared memories are attached to particular territories so that the former become ethnic landscapes (or ethnoscapes) and the latter become historic homelands.” Smith argues that “perhaps the most important of the sites of territorialized memory are the various fields of battle which [mark] critical turning-points in the fortunes of the community” (454), in

which case Sevastopol and Crimea have indeed become hallowed ground in Russian nation-building narratives. Accordingly, Sevastopol was rebuilt into something of a living monument to the defense of the city following its annihilation during the war, in a process that Sasse (2007) relates to Anderson's (2006) notion of "museumization" of memory and imagination. Dozens of monuments commemorating both achievements and losses suffered during the siege were erected around the city, including the previously-mentioned Nakhimov monument, and the Monument to the Sunken Ships of Sevastopol—which commemorates the Russian ships intentionally sunk during the siege to block enemy ships from entering the harbor, and which has become a *de facto* symbol of the city. However, the grandest of all the monuments commemorating the Defense of Sevastopol is the Panorama of the Great Defense, an enormous life-sized panoramic fusion of mural and tableau depicting the siege and defense of Sevastopol in all its glory, which serves to demonstrate that "the Crimean defense became a defining moment for Russian military and political power [and] identification" (Qualls 2009, 165).

The Sevastopol Myth was later revived anew and fundamentally altered when, during the German invasion of World War II, the city again fell under siege and became a crucial site of Russian—and now Soviet—defense of homeland. Hosting the Soviet Black Sea Naval Fleet as it had once hosted the Tsarist fleet, Sevastopol was once again targeted for bombardment by a Nazi air campaign lasting from October 1941 to July 1942, which was carefully orchestrated to take out all the city's military installations, social services, and infrastructure (Qualls 2009, 13–18). The city evaded capture long after the rest of Crimean had fallen to the Germans, but they finally managed to seize the city after its total destruction following eight months of bombing, with scant few inhabitants left who had not fled or perished. The Red Army found the city in almost complete ruin when they finally recaptured it in 1944.

Although Sevastopol's legendary status as a symbol of the country's strength and glory had already long been established in Russian and Soviet lore, the events of World War II served to amplify the Sevastopol Myth to an unprecedented degree. Even before the war had ended, the parallels between the events of the Crimean War and World War II were never lost on Soviet leadership or the public (Qualls 2009, 31). Indeed, as Sasse notes (2007, 70), following World War II, "Sevastopol became a 'double' myth, a Tsarist and a Soviet one that was unified in the Russian consciousness." In 1945, Sevastopol became one of the first cities to be given the title of "Hero City" for its role in the defense of the Motherland during the war—a prestigious distinction which would eventually be granted only to 13 cities across the Soviet Union, and which would later include the eastern Crimean city of Kerch as well. Twice decimated in heroic defense of the Russian/Soviet Motherland, Sevastopol emerged from World War II as one of the most potent and enduring symbols of Soviet national identity.

In again rebuilding Sevastopol, much of the city's original character was recreated and its many monuments to the first siege reconstructed. The Panorama, which had been completely leveled during the German bombardment and occupation, was meticulously restored to its original state and symbolically complemented by the new Diorama Museum, which similarly depicted the second defense of Sevastopol. Following a trend observed throughout the Soviet Union, several new monuments commemorating the events of World War II were also constructed throughout Sevastopol over the following decades. By far the most prominent of the city's monuments to the second defense is the Sailors and Soldiers monument; started in the 1980s and not fully completed until 2004, the towering statue perched on the edge of Sevastopol Bay stands at 40 meters and is visible from miles around. The urban landscape of Sevastopol is now punctuated with monuments to the city's two great moments of endurance in defense of the

Russian/Soviet Motherland, creating a continuity between these two events that reifies the “Sevastopol Myth” and the city’s hallowed place in Russian and Soviet national narratives. Sasse (2007, 73) aptly summarizes the evolution of this myth:

[T]he siege of Sevastopol originated as an imperial myth of the Russian people, was appropriated by the Tsarist state, was revived in its Soviet-Russian variant during World War II, and was gradually transformed by the Soviet state back into a myth of the whole “people.” The steady development of the myth over time allowed its powerful grip on the Russian imagination to tighten.

But Sevastopol and Crimea were being developed into a shrine to Russian glory and identity at the expense of the region’s non-Slavic peoples, chiefly the indigenous Crimean Tatars.

### **Demographic Changes in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Crimea and the Crimean Tatar National Revival**

While small numbers of Slavs had begun settling in Crimea following its annexation to the Russian Empire, it was not until after the Crimean War that they began to constitute a large portion of the region’s population. Before the war, Crimean land had been largely confiscated from Crimean Tatars and distributed among the Russian nobility, who in turn enlisted small numbers of agricultural landlords—*pomeshchiks*—to oversee the Crimean Tatars tending to the land. Many Crimean Tatars were either forced to pay exorbitant rent to their new landlords or compelled to leave the land they once owned and occupied (Kırımlı 1996, 5–6). Furthermore, the Crimean Tatars felt that the colonizers had little respect or tolerance for their religion and customs, or for their very connection to Crimea itself, and ultimately sought to remove them from the region. Crimean Tatar political leader Mustafa Cemiloglu [Dzhemilev] (1995, 88) argues that the Russian colonization of Crimea involved purposefully and aggressively driving the Crimean Tatars out of the peninsula to make way for incoming Slavic settlers, deploying methods that included

terrorism and systematic plundering of the civilian population; seizure of the most fertile lands by high tsarist officials; the displacement of Crimean Tatars to territories unsuitable for farming, thus depriving them of their means of existence; and the harsh violation of the Crimean Tatars' religious beliefs, which was painful for this deeply religious people.

This harsh and disrespectful treatment indeed precipitated a drastic reduction in the Crimean Tatar population within Crimea, as many began to emigrate to Anatolia or other regions still under Ottoman control, giving rise to the Crimean Tatar diaspora. While Russian authorities simply attributed this mass exodus of the Crimean Tatars to their "Islamic fanaticism" (Williams 2001, 107–108), Crimean Tatars maintain it was the colonizers' general lack of respect for their customs, property, and religious identity that drove them out of Crimea to regions more amenable to their way of life. Williams argues that Crimean Tatars identified primarily as Muslims at that time, as the perception of Crimea as a common homeland had not yet fully developed. Many Crimean Tatars therefore viewed Crimea merely as a land occupied by non-believers, choosing to emigrate to the Islamic Ottoman Empire out of religious piety. According to Williams (Williams 2004, 33), "[it] was allegiance to this religiously constructed community and its homeland that defined the 19<sup>th</sup> century Muslims' sense of territoriality, not a romanticized view of the Crimea as the Motherland of the Crimean Tatar nation."

An accurate number of Crimean Tatars who fled Crimea during the Tsarist period is difficult to determine, although Karpat (1985, 66) estimates the number of emigrants between 1783 and 1922 to be at least 1,800,000. While this figure is disputed, Kırımlı (1996, 7) maintains that the number of Crimean Tatars who left Crimea during the 19<sup>th</sup> century at least "far exceeds the number of those who stayed." The largest wave of emigration from Crimea came in 1860 following the Crimean War and Russia's deportation and genocide of the Circassian peoples of the North Caucasus, which sparked fear among many Muslim groups throughout the Russian

Empire that they may be target next (Williams 2001). This mass exodus left a gaping hole in the region's labor force, leading state authorities to sponsor the resettlement of ethnic Russian and Ukrainian peasants in Crimea to fill the void left by the depleting Crimean Tatar population. Crimean Tatars made up 73% of Crimea's population in 1858, while ethnic Russians and Ukrainians accounted for 12.6% and 4% of the region's population respectively, but by 1864 the Crimean Tatar population had dropped to 50.3% with Russians and Ukrainians together comprising 28.5% of the population (Vodarskii, Eliseeva, and Kabuzan 2003). By 1897, Crimean Tatars had become a minority in Crimea with only 35.6% of the population while Russians made up 33.1%, Ukrainians 11.8%, and the remaining 19.5% was made up of Jews, Armenians, Belarusians, and other minorities (2003).

Moreover, Fisher (1978, 81) contends that "throughout the nineteenth century, the [Crimean] Tatars experienced one of the most heavy-handed policies of Russification anywhere in the Empire." He also argues that because Crimea was not initially given the status of a separate administrative unit within the Russian Empire—but instead lumped into the larger *Tavricheskaia Oblast'* that included lands not previously under control of the Crimean Khanate—Russia displayed "a certain lack of interest in the Crimea as a special region different from the rest of the Russian southern frontier" (1978, 73). Because of this "territorial reorganization," Fisher argues, Crimea's Tatar population became largely diluted and the peninsula began to lose its Tatar character (1978, 73). This, combined with a steadily growing Slavic population, reduced the status of Crimean Tatars over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to that of a lowly minority group in their own native land with little sense of national cohesion.

Islam had long been an important aspect of Crimean Tatar society, informing their "moral, cultural, judicial, and societal framework and [shaping] their views of themselves and

their concepts of land and homeland” (Williams 2001, 120). However, during the Russian period, the Islamic faith became the central pillar around which Crimean Tatars constructed their identities, becoming a powerful marker to distinguish them from the Slavic Christians who were rapidly displacing them (Williams 2001, 122–123). This was a trend seen among Muslims throughout the Russian Empire during this period, with many clinging to religious identities as ethno-national identities were slowly eroded through the Russification of national elites. As Leroy-Beaulieu noted in 1893 (quoted in Williams 2001, 308), “locked in on all sides by Russians, the Russian Turks are no longer a people; religion has, for them, necessarily stepped into the place of nationality.”

But by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a new awakening of national consciousness was stirring among many Muslim groups throughout the Russian Empire, with Crimean Tatars at the forefront. In fact, it was a Crimean Tatar who famously led a movement that championed religious reform, education, and pan-Turkic nationalism among the Empire’s Turkic-speaking Muslim peoples. Born in 1851, Ismail Gaspirali—Gasprinsky in its Russified form, which he preferred—was a Crimea-born and Moscow-educated intellectual, publisher, and education reformer known throughout the Muslim world for fighting against conservative Islam’s stifling of scientific, social, and political progress, seeking to modernize Russian Muslim society (Fisher 1998, 43). Rather than resent Russian rule over Muslim lands, Gasprinsky believed that it was preferable to the hegemony of Western European powers, and could be mutually beneficial for both Muslims and Russians wishing to build a progressive society (Gasprinsky 1998). Despite his broader focus on pan-Muslim/Turkic identity, Gasprinsky helped revive a more secular form of social consciousness among his own Crimean Tatars after decades of retreat into Islamic identity, paving the way for the further development of national consciousness in the Soviet era.

During Gasprinsky's time, a number of contemporaneous Crimean Tatar social and political movements were more explicitly nationalistic, conceiving of the Crimean Tatars as a distinct nation with its homeland in the Crimean Peninsula. Abdureshid Mehdi, mayor of the Crimean city of Karasubazar (now Belogorsk) from 1907 to 1912, promoted the return of lands seized by Russian colonizers to the Crimean Tatar people, and founded the nationalist *Genç Tartarlari* (Young Tatars) movement along with the newspaper *Vatan Hadimi* (Servant of the Nation). Unlike Gasprinsky, Mehdi focused specifically on the plight of Crimean Muslims, and "unequivocally attributed the concept of the Fatherland ... to the Crimea (Kırımlı 1996, 85). Although his efforts to regain lost lands were ultimately unsuccessful, Mehdi's message contributed to the formation of a Crimean Tatar national consciousness and helped strengthen their association of Crimea with homeland. Another group, known as *Vatan Cemiyeti* (Fatherland Society), was founded in 1912 by a group of Crimean Tatar students studying in Istanbul. Inspired by the Young Turks movement and aided by members of the Crimean Tatar diaspora in the Ottoman Empire, *Vatan Cemiyeti* was critical of conservative Islam and pursued a Crimean Tatar nationalist agenda with the ultimate goal of Crimean independence, promoting a sense of unified "Crimean Tatar-ness" (Williams 2001, 332). With several cells located in towns and villages throughout Crimea, *Vatan Cemiyeti* achieved a fair degree of success in building a Crimean Tatar national movement in the years leading up to the Bolshevik revolution. Williams (2001, 331) attributes their success to the facts that "Crimea was a compactly defined 'island' homeland and easy to identify within the common imagination," and that "the Crimean Tatars had a collective memory of historical statehood to turn to in their search to legitimize their own aspirations for nationhood."



Thus, due to the efforts of Gasprinsky, *Genç Tartarlari*, and *Vatan Cemiyeti*, Crimean Tatars were “among the most nationally developed and unified Muslim ethnic groups in the Russian Empire” at the outbreak of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution (Williams 2001, 332). Although Crimean Tatar national identity would not develop on a large scale until the Soviet period and the policies of *korenizatsiya*, Crimean Tatars point to these turn-of-the-century leaders and movements as evidence of their historical unity and unique claims to Crimea as their homeland.

### **Ukraine and Crimea in the Late Russian Imperial and Early Soviet Periods**

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of modern-day Ukraine including Crimea was thoroughly integrated into the Russian Empire, while an influx of ethnic Russians and policies of cultural and linguistic Russification had hobbled the development of Ukrainian and Crimean national identities within their native territories. Ukrainians had also been encouraged to resettle along the Empire’s eastern fringes in Russia’s expanding colonization of Siberia and the Far East, depleting the ethnic Ukrainian population within historically Ukrainian lands by over one million between 1896 and 1905 (Yekelchuk 2007, 54). But like the Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians also experienced another revival in national consciousness in the waning years of the Russian Empire as Ukrainian lands began to industrialize. However, Russian was the primary language of Ukraine’s growing urban and industrial centers, while Ukrainian was mostly spoken by rural and agrarian populations. By the beginning of World War I in 1914, Ukrainian cultural and political elites in both the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires had a developed sense of national self-determination and a desire to see a united Ukraine with some semblance of sovereignty.

The outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917 plunged the Russian Empire into political turmoil, while Austro-Hungary's continued involvement in World War I left its Ukrainian regions susceptible to the chaotic developments across the border. A Ukrainian revolutionary movement quickly gained traction in the power vacuum left by the Bolsheviks' overthrow of the Tsarist regime, and for much of the period between 1917 and 1921 an independent Ukrainian Republic existed amidst the violence and confusion of the Russian Civil War—albeit with perpetually changing names, leadership, ideologies, centers of power, and territory that at times included Galicia and other Austrian possessions. A short-lived Crimean People's Republic also existed during this period; organizing a national council known as the *Qurultai*—an institution they would later reinstate at the end of the Soviet period—the Crimean Tatars declared independence and elected the lawyer and religious leader Noman Çelebicihan as the republic's president in December 1917. Çelebicihan was murdered by the Bolsheviks after their capture of Crimea and establishment of the short-lived Taurida Soviet Socialist Republic in January 1918, after which Crimea was briefly absorbed into the fledgling Ukrainian Republic. Crimea also became the site of the White Army's last stand against the encroaching Bolshevik Red Army in 1920, ending with the last remnants of Tsarist loyalists fleeing from the peninsula for Constantinople across the Black Sea.

Once the dust of the Civil War had settled at the end of 1922, Crimea emerged as an Autonomous Republic of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of the newly-formed Soviet Union, while most Ukrainian lands were organized into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, one of the four founding Union Republics of the Soviet Union. Galicia was temporarily incorporated into a reestablished independent Poland, while other regions now part of modern Ukraine ended up within Romania (Bukovyna and Budzhak) and the newly-created

Czechoslovakia (Transcarpathia). Each of these territories would be incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR a couple decades later as a consequence of World War II.

While the Marxist economic and social ideology espoused by the Bolsheviks viewed ethnic nationalism as a byproduct of bourgeois capitalism and an impediment to working class solidarity, they recognized even before the revolution began that they must reckon with the multitudinous national identities within the vast multiethnic Russian Empire if their mission to build it into a communist state was to succeed. Before replacing Vladimir Lenin as the foremost leader of the Soviet Union following his death in 1924, Joseph Stalin had served as the Commissar of Nationalities between 1917 and 1923, and was largely responsible for drafting Soviet policies regarding the “nationalities question,” or how to manage ethnic and national diversity within a socialist state. Stalin was critical of the Austro-Hungarian model that granted autonomous rights to members of national groups regardless of where they lived within the empire, favoring a system of territorially-based regional autonomy that guaranteed the right to language use and national cultural development within the geographic area inhabited by a specific national community (Stalin 1942, 76–85). This approach resulted in the Soviet Union’s hierarchical structure of territorial administration that included various tiers of ethnically-defined homelands ranging from Union Republics at the highest tier, to national Autonomous Republics and Oblasts embedded within them, to very small national *raions* and communes at the smallest territorial scale. Much of this territorial structure remains intact today within the Russian Federation and other post-Soviet states.

Scholars have debated whether the calculations behind Stalin’s policies on national territorial autonomy were more political or economic in nature (Pipes 1968; D’Encausse 1992; Suny and Martin 2001). While Martin (2001) argues that these early nationality policies

resembled a form of “affirmative action” meant both to appease national minorities and accelerate their modernization, others such as Hirsch (2005) maintain that they were primarily a transitory concession meant to wrangle the disparate peoples of the Soviet Union into a socialist whole. Regardless of how these policies may be interpreted retroactively, one of their key components was the program known as *korenizatsiya*, meaning “root-making” or “indigenization,” through which Soviet authorities promoted the formation of national elites and encouraged the development of minority languages, cultures, and identities within the ethnic Union and Autonomous Republics. But rather than allow them to develop organically, Soviet authorities imposed state-sponsored versions of national culture, and in some cases created and codified national identities in places such as Central Asia where ethnic nationalism had yet to develop fully on its own. In certain cases, authorities also established official versions of minority languages by collapsing dialectic differences into an approved grammar, vocabulary, and alphabet to be used within a given national territory. While policies of *korenizatsiya* encouraged Soviet citizens to embrace their national identities, such identities were mostly expected to be cosmetic and, in particular, devoid of religious associations, as they were ultimately intended to serve the cause of socialism and streamline the formation of a monolithic Soviet identity. Indeed, under *korenizatsiya* expressions of national identity were bound to follow the guiding principle of “national in form, socialist in content.”

But while *korenizatsiya* was intended to facilitate the integration of peoples under a broad Soviet umbrella, Kaiser notes (1994, 125) that it mostly had the opposite effect, increasing perceptions of national difference and raising national consciousness rooted within a prescribed, territorialized homeland. This was certainly the case in the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), where Crimean Tatars now made up only about 25 percent of the

population, but where the primary benefactors of *korenizatsiya* policies as the region's main indigenous nationality (Williams 2015, 70). During the 1920s and 1930s, Soviet authorities helped delineate a Crimean Tatar national identity defined by material culture, language, and belonging to the Crimean homeland, but absent its Islamic heritage in accordance with Soviet policies of secularization. Once written in the Arabic script, the Crimean Tatar language was given a new alphabet—first using Latin characters, then Cyrillic—that made old religious texts inaccessible to an increasingly literate population educated in the Soviet-approved version of the Crimean Tatar language (Williams 2015, 78). Although a Crimean Tatar national consciousness and the perception of Crimea as their homeland both predated the Soviet period, it was during the process of *korenizatsiya* that Crimean Tatar national identity—or Crimean Tatar-ness—truly began to resemble its modern form (Williams 2015, 86).

As the second largest ethnic group within the Soviet Union after Russians, Ukrainians played an immensely important role within Soviet nationality policies. With such a large population, an already well-developed national consciousness, and possible susceptibility to the outside influence of ethnic kin across the border in Polish Galicia, Ukrainian nationalists were considered potential threats to the Soviet state and its viability. In order to neutralize this threat, Soviet authorities implemented a specifically Ukrainian project of *korenizatsiya* known as *Ukrainization* aimed at promoting ethnic Ukrainians to many influential government positions at both the republic and federal level, and at encouraging the use of and education in the Ukrainian language within urban and industrial centers of the Ukrainian SSR, where Russian had long since taken root as the primary language of communication. By helping spread the Ukrainian language and folk traditions from rural to urban environments, Soviet authorities hoped to develop a more homogenous, state-approved Ukrainian identity yoked to Moscow and its socialist ideology (see

Martin 2001, 75–124). The 1920s and early 1930s thus saw a dramatic increase in the number and circulation of Ukrainian publications, and an expansion of Ukrainian-language education and cultural products within the Ukrainian SSR.

However, Martin (2001) argues that the push for Ukrainization ultimately failed to supplant Russian cultural and linguistic influences within the USSR. Moreover, by the early 1930s policies of *korenizatsiya* were being curtailed in favor of a homogenizing Sovietization, which often amounted to cultural and linguistic Russification. Under Stalin, strategies of national appeasement as a means of bringing minority peoples into the socialist fold gave way to brutal tactics of imprisonment and execution of perceived enemies of the Soviet Union from within, and Ukrainian nationalism once again reemerged as a supposed threat to the Soviet state.

Proactive measures to develop Ukrainian national identity were suspended by the early 1930s, but the more egregious and devastating blow to the Ukrainian population came with the Great Famine of 1932-1933, known in Ukrainian as the *Holodomor*. Implementing a new project of agricultural collectivization that required agrarian peasants to relinquish all harvested grain to the state for redistribution, Soviet authorities deprived them of basic sustenance, resulting in the death of millions<sup>6</sup> by starvation in a completely manufactured and preventable famine. Although the famine effected peasant populations in the RSFSR and Kazakh SSR as well, the Ukrainian SSR bore the brunt of the famine as the “breadbasket” of the Soviet Union, where agrarian peasant populations were made up almost entirely of ethnic Ukrainians. But there is also broad agreement among Ukrainian and Western scholars that Stalin specifically targeted Ukrainians through collectivization projects in order to deplete their population and eradicate the threat of

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<sup>6</sup> No accurate figures are available regarding the total death toll in the *Holodomor*, although most estimates range between 2.5 and 7 million within the Ukrainian SSR.

Ukrainian nationalism (Conquest 1986; Applebaum 2017). Many more Ukrainians within the Soviet political elite were also executed or imprisoned during the Stalinist purges of 1936-1938.

World War II brought further devastation to Ukraine, as it lied directly in the path of the German march toward Moscow and hosted many of the war's most catastrophic battles between the Soviet and Nazi militaries. The Germans occupied all of Ukraine during the course of the war, including Crimea, and the Ukrainian SSR saw an estimated 6.85 million military and civilian casualties (Kirosheev 2001). But alongside its devastating impacts, World War II also spawned a new movement of Ukrainian national identity and resistance that remains highly controversial today, but still resonates deeply among some contemporary Ukrainians. Formed from the ranks of the far-right Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) based in Polish Galicia, a Ukrainian nationalist partisan movement known as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA in its Ukrainian acronym) appeared in 1942 initially in an alliance with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union, although they would also come to fight against the Germans in pursuit of an independent Ukrainian ethno-state. Many in Russia, the West, and Ukraine itself have condemned the UPA and its leader, Stepan Bandera, for their association with the Nazis and participation in the extermination of Ukrainian Jews, but many Ukrainians still uphold Bandera in particular as a symbol of Ukrainian resistance to Russian/Soviet imperialism. However problematic their valorization has become, Bandera and UPA represent an important moment in the development of Ukrainian nationalism, helping calcify anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiments as common components thereof.

## **The Deportation of Crimean Tatars and the Loss of Homeland**

Although early Soviet nationalities policies helped strengthen and institutionalize Crimean Tatar national identity, Soviet authorities dealt a devastating blow to the Crimean Tatars following the German occupation of Crimea during World War II, from which they are still only beginning to recover. On May 18, 1944, shortly after Crimea had been liberated from German forces, all Crimean Tatars in Crimea were systematically rounded up, forced into cattle cars, and sent away to far-flung corners of the Soviet Union to be resettled and forever forbidden from returning to their native Crimea, by decree of General Secretary Joseph Stalin. The vast majority of the deported Crimean Tatars were sent to the Uzbek SSR, with smaller groups ending up in Siberia or other Central Asian republics. Some have hypothesized that the fear of an impending war with Turkey influenced Stalin's decision, compelling him to remove the Crimean Tatars as a likely Turkish ally and potential fifth column just across the Black Sea (Williams 1997, 237). However, the official pretense for their deportation was the accusation of Crimean Tatars' collective collaborationism with the German occupiers during the war, a treasonous act that supposedly demanded their collective punishment. While many have attempted to disprove or otherwise qualify these allegations (Fisher 1978; Williams 2001; Uehling 2004; Pohl 2010), this remained the official narrative for much of the Soviet period, and still shapes many Russians' and Ukrainians' understanding of the Crimean Tatars' deportation to this day.

Crimean Tatars remember the German occupation very differently, and vehemently deny the accusation that they acted treasonously against the Soviet Union. Most Crimean Tatars at that time "viewed the 'Great Patriotic War' as no more than a skirmish between two villains, neither of which promised any kindness or relief" (Cemiloglu [Dzhemilev] 1995, 93). According to this view, many Crimean Tatars simply acted in their own best interests during the war, which



inevitably meant that “some Crimean Tatars who were not sufficiently informed about the essence of German fascism entertained hopes, for a time, of deliverance from the hated Bolshevik regime which had succeeded in bringing so much suffering to their people within a short period of time” (1995, 92). Documents have since revealed that German forces actively courted the Crimean Tatars, hoping it would help them form an alliance with the Turks, but that ultimately the Germans planned to eliminate the Crimean Tatars like all other non-“Aryan” groups (Uehling 2004, 59). Crimean Tatars argue that in the confusion of the war, many were “unsure about just who the enemy was” (Uehling 2004, 56), leading some to assist the Germans but only on an individual basis and not as a coordinated effort. Largely ignored by Soviet sources but touted by Crimean Tatars is the fact many Crimean Tatars fought and died defending the Soviet Union during the war. One source (Bugai 1992, quoted in Uehling 2004, 52) contends that as many as 20,000 Crimean Tatars served in the Soviet military during the war, or 10% of their entire population at that time. Six Crimean Tatars who fought in the war were even decorated with the highly prestigious title of “Hero of the Soviet Union”—a very high number considering their small population—including most prominently the fighter pilot Amet-Khan Sultan, who completed over 500 flights and destroyed over 20 enemy planes (Uehling 2004, 53).

Crimean Tatars now understand the deportation as a Soviet attempt to deny them their national identity and erase any notion of a distinct Crimean Tatar nationality from the pages of history. Although exact figures do not exist, it is believed that roughly 46% (110,000 out of 238,500) of the Crimean Tatar population died in transit during their deportation due to disease, starvation, dehydration, and trauma in the unsafe and unsanitary conditions of the packed cattle cars used to transport them (Williams 1997, 238). However, removing them from their homeland was merely the first step; although mostly Crimean Tatars were resettled in Uzbekistan, their

dispersal throughout Central Asian and Siberia was intended to defuse the possibility of group solidarity and cohesion across vast distances and without means of communication. The official use of the Crimean Tatar language was banned, and the very existence of a distinct Crimean Tatar nationality was denied by Soviet authorities in the hope that they would eventually assimilate into other local national groups (Williams 1997, 238). Back in Crimea, ethnic Russians and Ukrainians came to occupy the former homes of Crimean Tatars, while mosques and Crimean Tatar cemeteries throughout the peninsula were destroyed and hundreds of Turkic toponyms were changed to Russian ones (Williams 1997, 238). In Williams' (1997, 238) assessment, "the totalitarian regime used its vast, Orwellian resources to obliterate more than five hundred years of Tatar presence in the Crimean peninsula" (238). Thus, it appeared in the decades following their deportation that the Crimean Tatars were doomed to dissolution and obscurity, but their national resilience and determination to reclaim their lost homeland would endure and eventually prevail against all odds.

### **Crimea's Transfer and Integration into the Ukrainian SSR**

After the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, Crimea was no longer home to a significant ethnic minority group and thus no longer met the requirements for the status of a Soviet autonomous republic. Hence, on June 30, 1945, Crimea's status was downgraded to that of an *oblast*—or non-autonomous province—of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), as its population was now predominantly Russian by nationality. Another more fateful change to Crimea's political status came nine years later on January 25, 1954 when Nikita Khrushchev—the Soviet Union's newly-appointed General Secretary following Stalin's death in 1953—ordered the administrative transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the

Ukrainian SSR, a territory to which it was physically attached but from which it had never previously been governed.

Justifications for the transfer were rather nebulous and poorly presented to the Soviet public at the time it occurred, adding to the debate over its meaning and significance in the post-Soviet era. Most accounts of the transfer now emphasize that it was meant as a symbolic gesture of “friendship” between the Soviet Union’s two largest ethnic nations. Significantly, the transfer of Crimea coincided with the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Pereiaslav that first brought the Hetmanate of the Zaporizhian Cossacks under the allegiance of the Russian Tsar, and which is often referred to as the moment when Russian and Ukrainian lands were officially united. To mark the anniversary, the transfer of Crimea was presented as a “gift” from one brotherly nation to another—even though Crimea was ironically an Ottoman client state that was often hostile toward both Russia and the Cossacks at the time of the treaty. Evidence suggests, however, that the connection between the anniversary of the Treaty of Pereiaslav and the transfer of Crimea was tenuously conceived at the time; despite the year-long fanfare and jubilee surrounding the anniversary, none of the official documents or media coverage pertaining to it make any mention of the transfer of Crimea as being connected to the anniversary (Kuzio 2007, 104). Sasse (2007, 97) even suggests that the Pereiaslav commemoration narrative behind the transfer of Crimea may be the creative fabrication of Western scholars who, for lack of documentation of the discussions surrounding the transfer, sought to correlate the decision with concomitant social and political events.

Alternatively, there is strong evidence that the transfer of Crimea was backed by sound and thoughtful economic considerations. Official deliberations over the transfer did emphasize economic development as a primary motivation, although they were often expressed in vague

and simplistic terms. In the official proceedings that initiated the transfer, several representatives emphasized the territorial continuity between Ukraine and Crimea as a facilitating factor in the peninsula's economic growth, which remained stalled following the destruction of World War II. One representative of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR involved with the transfer commented at the time that

the Crimean Oblast ... is territorially adjoined to the Ukrainian Republic, forming in some way a natural continuation of the southern Ukrainian steppe. The economy of the Crimean Oblast is closely linked with the economy of the Ukrainian SSR. For geographic and economic reasons, the transfer of the Crimean Oblast to the brotherly Ukrainian Republic is practical for the general interests of the Soviet Union. (quoted in Burov and et al. 2007, 372)

Economic development, still lagging in many regions of the Soviet Union since the war, was a central tenant of Khrushchev's mission as Soviet leader, and Crimea presented a particularly unique challenge. Its infrastructure devastated from the German occupation, Crimean agriculture and industry also suffered tremendously from a reduction in its workforce following the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944. According to one account, Khrushchev—who was himself an ethnic Ukrainian—made the decision to transfer Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR spontaneously upon observing first-hand its poor economic state, remaining wartime destruction, and impoverished population during a visit to Crimea in October of 1953 (Sasse 2007, 115). As the argument goes, the Ukrainian SSR was thus tasked with bringing Crimea's fledgling economy in line with broader Soviet standards, a charge in keeping with Khrushchev's goal of decentralizing the Soviet economy.

At that time, the transfer meant very little for the people of Crimea; it simply meant that the chain of command and administration now passed through Kyiv rather than directly from Simferopol to Moscow, and Crimea remained part of the highly centralized Soviet state regardless of which republic administered it. Crimea's inclusion in the Ukrainian SSR was a

sensible arrangement, as territories are not only contiguous, but Ukraine was better positioned within the Soviet federal hierarchy to carry the burden of Crimea's economic development. Regardless, the transfer of Crimea and its largely ethnic Russian population would have unforeseen and highly consequential repercussions after the Soviet collapse nearly a half century later.

Ethnic Ukrainians had already been migrating to Crimea for at least 170 years or so before its transfer to the Ukrainian SSR, beginning shortly after the peninsula's annexation to the Russian Empire in 1783, and reaching a population of 64,510—accounting for 11.8% of Crimea's total population—by 1897 (Vodarskii, Eliseeva, and Kabuzan 2003). But the growth of the Ukrainian population in Crimea was always outpaced by that of ethnic Russians throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944, Soviet authorities sponsored the relocation of tens of thousands of Slavs to Crimea in order to make up for the sudden labor shortage—although the repopulating of Crimea progressed rather slowly, with only 74,000 more people in 1959 than before the outbreak of World War II (Sasse 2007, 121). Most of the resettled population was ethnically Russian, although many Ukrainians from parts of the central and northern Ukrainian SSR also resettled in Crimea (117). Greater numbers of ethnic Ukrainians began resettling in Crimea following the 1954 transfer, but ethnic Russians continued to arrive in large numbers as well, and between 1959 and 1989 the relative proportions of ethnic Russians to Ukrainians in the Crimean Oblast remained more or less consistent at approximately 68% and 25%, respectively (Sasse 2007, 121, 275). But while ethnic Ukrainians have always remained a minority in Crimea, their overall population in the region did increase significantly during the mid and late Soviet period; Serhiichuk (2001, 239) points out the ethnic

Ukrainian population of Crimea increased by 113,000 between 1959 and 1970, reaching a total of 361,500.

Crucially, rural settlers accounted for a majority of the increase in Crimea's ethnic Ukrainian population following the transfer. In fact, with the exception of the Transcarpathian Oblast in western Ukraine, the Crimean Oblast was the only region of the Ukrainian SSR to see an increase in its rural population in the decades following World War II, even as the rural population of the entire republic fell by 2 million (Serhiichuk 2001, 239). Serhiichuk further argues that the increase in Crimea's rural population was largely the result of entire Ukrainian villages being specifically resettled in Crimea during the 1960s ahead of their flooding in the creation of the Kyiv Reservoir (Serhiichuk 2001, 239). The fact that ethnic Ukrainians bolstered Crimea's rural population in the post-war decades is significant, as it demonstrates that ethnic Ukrainians and the Ukrainian SSR "took on the burden of recovery for the war-devastated peninsula" by rebuilding its agricultural and industrial infrastructure, making Crimea an important part of early Ukrainian state-building processes long before Ukraine was even independent (2001, 238).

Economic, infrastructural, and social connections between Crimea and the Ukrainian SSR were further strengthened with the construction of the Northern Crimean Canal. Running through the Isthmus of Perekop, the canal was constructed between 1961 and 1971 and brought much-needed water from the Dnipro River to Crimea's northern steppe, as well as an influx of state investment to the oblast. The construction of the canal was centrally managed and therefore would have gone forward regardless of Crimea's place within the Soviet federal structure, but the canal did greatly strengthen Crimea's infrastructural link with and economic dependence upon the Ukrainian SSR. As Sasse explains (2007, 124),

The canal exemplified the new administrative relationship between Ukrainian and Crimean institutions in decisions affecting Crimea. The Central Committee of Ukraine had to submit measures to the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow. While, on the one hand, an additional step was thus inserted into an already complicated bureaucracy, on the other, a new level of administration – one in closer contact with the region – now bore at least some responsibility and proposed issues for Moscow’s agenda.

The canal also meant that Crimea now relied upon Ukraine for much of its water supply, and the fact that Crimea’s water came from the Dnipro River—which flows through the heart of Ukraine and has been central to much of Ukrainian history and culture—carries great symbolic meaning. Linking Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland via the Northern-Crimea Canal brought deeper integration in a functional sense that transcended mere territorial contiguity.

As Crimea’s population remained predominantly Russian and the processes of Russian/Soviet cultural homogenization continued throughout the Soviet Union, the institutionalization of Ukrainian language and culture in Crimea proved meager at best. Ukrainian language education in Crimea made inroads following the transfer, with the number of Ukrainian language teachers in Crimean high schools increasing from only two in 1950 to 345 by 1955 (Sasse 2007, 121). Ukrainian language classes had become standard in all second, third, and fifth grade classes by 1958, with a total of 19,766 students studying it that year (Serhiichuk 2001, 250). However, because Russian was already the lingua franca of Crimea and much of the Ukrainian SSR, the drive to promote Ukrainian language education eventually fizzled out by the early 1970s (Serhiichuk 2001, 256).

It was also after Crimea’s transfer to the Ukrainian SSR that the peninsula truly blossomed into the Soviet Union’s premiere destinations for tourism and health treatment. With its warm climate, extensive coastline, recreational opportunities, and supposed health-restoring properties, Crimea had attracted both domestic and foreign holidaymakers since at least the late

19<sup>th</sup> century, but its tourism infrastructure would not be fully developed until well after the devastation of World War II. As most citizens were prohibited from traveling abroad, Crimea was transformed into a workers' paradise within the Soviet Union's borders, a giant "workshop, the product of which is the health and happiness of millions of people" (Sirota 1980, 3). One of the most important aspects of Crimea's tourism industry became its numerous children's resorts and summer camps, most famously the renowned *Artek* camp for Young Pioneers—akin to Soviet version of the Boy Scouts—and children from Soviet-aligned states the world over. Crimean tourism numbers grew steadily throughout the Soviet period, from 4 million annual visitors in 1968, to 5.7 million in 1978, to over 8 million in 1988 (Bagrova, Bokov, and Bagrov 2001, 206). Indeed, vacations to Crimea became so commonplace during the late Soviet period that "it would be difficult to find a person who has not been [to Crimea] at least once" (Sirota 1980, 5). Romanticized memories of Crimean vacations later became an important component of Soviet nostalgia during the post-Soviet period (see Zorin 1998), and played an important role in Russian national narratives of Crimea once the peninsula became part of independent Ukraine.

### **The Rise of the Crimean Tatar National Movement**

As Crimea was drawn into the Ukrainian SSR, the status of the Crimean Tatars and other deported peoples within the Soviet Union began to change following the death of Stalin in 1953 and Khrushchev's subsequent political "thaw." In 1956, Khrushchev officially absolved these peoples of the supposed crimes for which they had been forcibly deported after World War II and allowed many of these groups to return to their homelands. However, along with the Volga Germans and Meskhetian Turks, the Crimean Tatars were not granted the right to return. Although they were allowed to move out of special settlements and publish a newspaper in their



native language, these meager conciliatory gestures did not satisfy the Crimean Tatars yearning to return to their Crimean homeland. This injustice ignited a national movement that was first of its kind in the Soviet Union, audaciously testing the Soviet regime's tolerance for dissidence and the right to air national grievances.

Crimean Tatars began organizing a decentralized network of "initiative groups" aimed both at preserving their language and culture, and at organizing petitions to Moscow for the right to return to Crimea. Large numbers of Crimean Tatars participated in and supported these campaigns despite their wide distribution across the Soviet Union, with some petitions gathering more than 100,000 signatures (Alexeyeva 1987, 140)—a number that included nearly the entire adult population of Crimean Tatars at that time (Williams 1997, 240). While many of the leaders of these campaigns were arrested for their activities, their message was eventually heard, and in 1967 a delegation of Crimean Tatars was invited to the Kremlin to meet with KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov and other high-ranking Soviet officials to address their grievances. Williams (1997, 241) captures the significance of this unprecedented meeting:

In one of the most unusual events in modern Soviet history, the representatives of this small "non-nation" of less than half a million souls confronted the most powerful men in the Soviet state and demanded redress for the wrongs suffered by their people over the previous 23 years.

In response, the Kremlin exonerated the Crimean Tatars of all accusations of treason during World War II, granting them a wider degree of freedom, but rejected their request for the right to return to Crimea. Adding insult to injury, the careful wording of the Kremlin's response did not refer to them as "Crimean Tatars," but instead the humiliating title, "citizens of Tatar nationality who had formerly been living in the Crimea [and] have taken root in the territory of the Uzbek and other Union Republics" (Guboglo and Chervonnaia 1992, 82). This defeat only served to strengthen the resolve of the Crimean Tatar activists for, as Williams (1997, 242) explains,

[b]y denying the legitimacy of the Crimean Tatars' claims to the Crimea and refusing to acknowledge the existence of their separate national identity, Soviet authorities may have actually strengthened this people's attachment to their land and their nation. A nation of activists was in fact created by the Kremlin's attempts to erase an entire people and deprive them of their territory.

Throughout their period of exile, the territory of Crimea itself remained the central focus of Crimean Tatar society and political activism, with the phrase, “homeland or death” became a common rallying call (Uehling 2004, 200). In the words of one Crimean Tatar deportee,

Not a single action, great or small, took place during visits to houses among friends and acquaintances, during the entire deportation period, without recollections of the Crimea, of the land on which our parents, grandfathers and great grandfathers lived and worked” (Finogeev and et al. 1994, 15, quoted in Williams 2004, 38)

Another Crimean Tatar who lived through the period of exile explained that “every Crimean Tatar child had it drummed into his head that he had a homeland... Most children say ‘mama’ or ‘papa’ as their first word. Our children said ‘Krym’ [Crimea]” (Popeski 1994). Because they typically shared many cultural and linguistic traits with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Siberia among whom they had been relocated, the Crimean Tatars’ connection to Crimea became the single most salient and galvanizing component of their national identity during this period of exile, and a bulwark against cultural assimilation. Through tight-knit networks of family and friends, the memory of the Crimea homeland was kept alive and passed along to younger generations of Crimean Tatars who had never even seen it for themselves, creating a trans-generational narrative of homeland and suffering for having been removed from it. In fact, several Crimean Tatars attempted to simply move back to Crimea of their own volition once they were allowed to move about the Soviet Union after 1967, but the vast majority were quickly expelled as this freedom of movement implicitly excluded Crimea (Uehling 2004, 208). Although they were permitted to live anywhere in the Soviet Union except Crimea, many

Crimean Tatars chose to resettle in regions just to the north and east of the peninsula, “positioning themselves to repatriate at the first opportunity” (Uehling 2004, 208).

The Crimean Tatars persistently waged their campaign for repatriation to Crimea throughout the 1970s and 1980s in spite of the state’s repressive policies against them, establishing a permanent lobby in Moscow maintained by rotating representatives who called themselves “representatives of the Crimean Tatar people in Moscow” (Reddaway 1998, 227). The Crimean Tatar national movement remained strictly non-violent throughout this period, although there were some high-profile cases of self-immolation—most famously in 1978 by Musa Mahmut, an illegal returnee to Crimea who set himself on fire rather than face re-deportation (Uehling 2004, 169–170). It was also during this time that the Crimean Tatars’ most influential activist political leader, Mustafa Dzhemilev, first rose to prominence. Deeply devoted to the cause of his people and to the principle of non-violent resistance in equal measure, Dzhemilev protested tirelessly throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s against the Soviet regime, demanding the right for his people to live in their historic homeland. His struggle drew the attention and admiration of human rights advocates the world over, and landed him in prison on several different occasions; during one stint in prison in the mid-1970s, Dzhemilev held a 303-day hunger strike—purportedly the longest ever by any human rights advocate—and was force-fed to be kept alive (Bekirova 2014; Musaieva and Aliev 2017)

By the late 1980s, with the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* affording the Soviet people a greater voice in politics and society, the Crimean Tatar national movement reached a fever pitch. Crimean Tatar activists brazenly held a large rally on Moscow’s Red Square in 1987, becoming, “the largest demonstrations in [these] sacred confines ... since the Russian Revolution,” having “a tremendous impact on the Kremlin” (Williams 2004, 40). In light of the

strength and persistence of this movement, the growing influx of Crimean Tatars illegally returning to Crimea, and the numerous national movements and conflicts surfacing throughout the Soviet Union, the Kremlin finally conceded the Crimean Tatars' demands at the end of 1989, officially allowing them to return to Crimea for the first time since their deportation 45 years earlier (Williams 2004, 40). The Crimean Tatars rejoiced, and thousands began flocking to their long-lost homeland, but hardships awaited them upon their return.

### **The Soviet Collapse, Ukrainian Independence, and the Return of the Crimean Tatars**

The end of the Soviet period brought great social and political turbulence to Crimea. In the rapidly changing atmosphere of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, many across the Soviet Union grew weary of the uncertain direction the country was heading. With the looming potential of Soviet disintegration and Ukrainian independence, the ethnic Russians who constituted a majority of Crimea's population began to understand the possible consequences of Khrushchev's 1954 transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR. Alarmed by the thought of being politically severed from Russian territory, many began to push for the reinstatement of Crimea's autonomous status, which could potentially "provide an exit from Ukraine, should it secede from the USSR" (Sasse 2007, 134). Sasse also argues that autonomy in Crimea was viewed as "an inherent part of the democratization process" (Sasse 2007, 135) during a time of political upheaval, but that it was also a preemptive measure against "exclusivist ethno-territorial demands" (Sasse 2007, 134) by Crimean Tatars, who had recently begun to trickle back into the peninsula.

The Crimean Supreme Soviet approved the proposal to hold an oblast-wide referendum on the reinstatement of autonomy in Crimea in November 1990. Such a referendum was unprecedented in Soviet history, as all policies regarding autonomy and territorial-administrative

structuring had been decreed by the Kremlin, but in the heady midst of *perestroika* and the march towards Soviet collapse Crimea was permitted to move forward with the referendum. Held on January 21, 1991, the referendum resulted in massive support for establishing the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) within the Ukrainian SSR, as well as for Crimea's inclusion in the Union Treaty—a document under negotiation at the time seeking to preserve the Soviet Union as it faced the increasing threat of disintegration. With a turnout of 81.4 percent of eligible voters, the referendum passed with 93.3 percent of the vote (Sasse 2007, 138). The Ukrainian Supreme Soviet confirmed the referendum results on February 12, and Crimea once again became an autonomous republic—albeit within the Ukrainian SSR and according to the preferences of the local population, which consisted almost entirely of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians at that time.

Upon the Soviet collapse in December 1991, Ukraine—including the newly re-established Crimean ASSR, renamed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in February 1992—became an independent state, leaving many of Crimea's ethnic Russians disillusioned by their exclusion from the newly formed Russian Federation. Thus began nearly a decade of difficult political negotiations that subsequently saw a Crimean separatist movement, the brief existence of a Crimean presidency, and numerous political parties struggling to maintain Crimea's Russian cultural and political heritage. This was compounded by the return of thousands of Crimean Tatars to their estranged homeland, creating serious disputes over property rights and access to land. While this period of political uncertainty inspired many observers to proclaim Crimea the next hotspot of ethnic or geopolitical conflict, serious conflict was ultimately averted—for the time being—through a protracted and often painful process of cooperation between Kiev,

Simferopol, and Crimean Tatar leadership to negotiate the terms of the autonomous republic's constitution, which was finally enacted in 1998 (Sasse 2007).

The matter of Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet was particularly difficult, emerging as one of the dominant issues in delineating the transfer of power and terms of sovereignty between Ukraine and the Russian Federation following the Soviet collapse. A complicated series of negotiations over the future of the fleet was not concluded until 1997, with Russia ultimately retaining the majority of its ships, armaments, and facilities, as well as a 20-year lease on the port of Sevastopol itself, while Ukraine retained a much smaller portion of the original fleet for its newly established navy. The decision of who among the fleet's personnel would serve in which navy was largely left to the individual officers and servicemen themselves (Simonsen 2000). In 1994, the city of Sevastopol was separated from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and given the status of Federal City within Ukraine, a distinction deemed necessary because of its status as both a Russian and Ukrainian naval base. Although initially set to expire in 2017, in 2010 Russia's lease on Sevastopol's naval facilities was extended another 25 years in exchange for lower prices on Russian gas.

Now arriving in large numbers, the returning Crimean Tatars were met with the grim reality that their homeland was no longer the place it had been before their deportation. Crimea had been thoroughly Russified in their absence, and what little remained of their once flourishing society had been sterilized and co-opted as tourist attractions depicting a lost culture. More troubling, the homes and lands once belonging to Crimean Tatars were now occupied by Russians and Ukrainians, many of whom viewed the returnees as invasive outsiders or continuing to begrudge them for their alleged treasons during World War II. Discrimination and harassment by government officials were rampant, and mainstream media discourses in Crimea

would continue to negatively portray the Crimean Tatars and downplay the atrocities of the deportation for decades after their return (Bezverkha 2017). Despite these hardships, hundreds of thousands ultimately chose to return to their homeland, with roughly half of the 500,000 Crimean Tatars scattered throughout the Soviet Union returning to Crimea by the mid-1990s (Williams 2004, 40).

From the very beginning of this period of repatriation, Crimean Tatars were extremely well mobilized and organized both socially and politically (see Izmirli 2008). It was typical for entire villages, collective farms, or extended familial networks to migrate in convoys from Central Asia to Crimea, where others who had already arrived were waiting to help place them into temporary settlements (Williams 2004, 440). Under the leadership of Mustafa Dzhemilev, in 1991 the Crimean Tatars formed a national assembly and hierarchical structure of representation known as the *Mejlis*. Including hundreds of local councils—or individual *Mejlises*—along with the central *Mejlis* comprised of officials elected every five years at the Crimean Tatar national assembly known as the *Qurultai*, the *Mejlis* encompasses thousands of individual members tasked with addressing issues of collective rights and shaping the national agenda at various territorial scales. Along with other informal organizations, the *Mejlis* proved vital in asserting Crimean Tatars' rights in Crimea during the 1990s by mobilizing resistance against violence and harassment suffered at the hands of local police, government officials, and mafia (Williams 2004, 442).

While Soviet and later Ukrainian authorities did offer some financial help in resettling returning Crimean Tatars initially, the assistance fell far short of what was needed due to a lack of funds and corruption (Uehling 2004, 211), and most returnees found themselves homeless upon their return. Requests for access to land and housing were roundly denied by the Soviet

and, later, Ukrainian and Crimean governments during these early years of repatriation. Uehling (2004, 209) even notes that “land was rapidly being given out to the Slavic population for gardens and *dachas* [vacation homes]” in order to prevent the returning Crimean Tatars from settling. Faced with few other options, the Crimean Tatars quickly began a campaign of *samozakhvat*’ (self-seizure) of unused lands belonging to the state, typically from abandoned communal farms. Entire communities of squatters quickly sprang up in the outskirts of Crimea’s cities and larger towns, with make-shift homes made from crude building material erected quickly in order to lay claim to the land. By 1999, only 20 percent of approximately 290 total Crimean Tatar settlements were supplied with electricity, 30 percent with running water, and 4 percent with gas, while none of them had a sewer system (Uehling 2004, 44). Many of these squatter settlements have since developed into sprawling neighborhoods more thoroughly integrated into the utility grids and transportation infrastructures of many large Crimean cities. While the situation has improved over the past decade, with many Crimean Tatars able to build newer homes with greater amenities, these settlements remain seriously underdeveloped and continue to mark their Crimean Tatar inhabitants as second-class citizens in their own homeland.

Whereas Islam had once been the primary marking of identity for Crimean Tatars, their current national identity has been couched primarily in the modern concepts of ethnicity and homeland. Islam does remain an important component of Crimean Tatar life, however, experiencing a strong revival since the collapse of the Soviet regime and its restrictions on religious practice (Muratova 2008, 2009). Crimean Tatars have also engaged in ongoing disputes with Crimean political and religious figures over the siting and construction of mosques throughout the peninsula. But their concept of homeland appears to be largely detached from their religious identity; as Williams notes (2004, 41), “for the newly-repatriated Crimean Tatars,



the Crimea is defined in purely secular terms that combine Western nationalism with a uniquely Soviet version of territoriality.” While Islam is certainly a vital component of identity for many Crimean Tatars, their national movement should not be understood as a religious one.

Despite their ongoing struggles, Crimean Tatars became a highly visible and integral component of Crimean society in the decades after their return. Crimean Tatars have served as deputies in the Crimean parliament (*Verkhkhovna Rada*), and two of its most senior political leaders—Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov—have served as members of the Ukrainian Parliament since the late 1990s. Crimean Tatars can be found living in virtually all parts of the peninsula, and not only in the squatter settlements where most initially settled upon their return. Crimean Tatar culture has once again become a vital component of daily life in Crimea, as evidenced by the many Crimean Tatar restaurants, craft shops, libraries, mosques, and other institutions found throughout the peninsula. Schools offering instruction in the Crimean Tatar language became more common during the 1990s, although only about eleven percent of Crimean Tatar school children were able to learn in their native language as of 2002 (Sasse 2007, 219). Although many Crimean Tatar toponyms were Russified following the deportation or earlier, many of Crimea’s most famous towns and physical features have retained their original names, including the towns of Yalta, Alushta, Gurzuf, and Sudak, and mountains such as Chatyr-Dag, Ayu-Dag, and Ai-Petri. Although some Slavic Crimeans have continued to begrudge the Crimean Tatars for their alleged wartime transgressions, interethnic relations in Crimea had become relatively stable and peaceful by the 2000s, although these conditions would deteriorate beginning with the events of 2014.

## **(Re)constructing Crimea's Ukrainian Past and Present**

Establishing a Ukrainian national narrative about Crimea similar to Russian or Crimean Tatar narratives has proven difficult since Ukrainian independence. Crimea has historically played a far less significant role in Ukrainian mythmaking, as its formal ties to the region date only to the peninsula's transfer to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954. As Jaworsky (1995, 138) notes, “[i]n historical terms, Crimea does not have the same symbolic importance for Ukraine that it has for Russia.” Furthermore, Sasse (2007, 58–59) points to the fact that “Crimea’s literary memory is by and large Russian or Soviet-Russian, extended by a separate Crimean Tatar tradition of storytelling and legends, a tradition that is still only partially accessible for non-Tatars,” and thus Ukrainians have found it difficult to assimilate these memories and traditions into their own national-cultural narratives. Ukrainian literary traditions are not completely bereft of Crimean themes; most notably, late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century writer Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi wrote several Ukrainian-language works on the lives and culture of the Crimean Tatars, to which he was inspired while working in Crimea as a horticulturalist. However, Sasse further comments (2007, 59) that some more recent Ukrainian-language sources have attempted to appropriate Crimea’s cultural legacy into Ukrainian cultural narratives, yet inevitably,

[t]he themes are typically Russian and Soviet: Crimea’s landscape, particularly the Black Sea and the mountains, a description of Bakhchisarai as an exotic place, the heroic struggle of Crimea against fascism in World War II, Crimea as a resort, or the military profile of Sevastopol.

Generally speaking, such sources rely heavily upon Russian and Soviet Crimean tropes, simply (re)presenting them in the Ukrainian language as a way to incorporate them into Ukrainian cultural narratives and claim them as their own.

For one, the delineation of an inherently Ukrainian historical narrative of Crimea has therefore emphasized the economic and demographic processes that helped stitch Crimea and the

Ukrainian SSR together after 1954, as the peninsula's cultural integration has had relatively little time to develop and must contend with deeply-rooted Russian and Crimean Tatar cultural narratives. The increase in Crimea's Ukrainian population—especially in rural areas—and projects such as the Northern-Crimean Canal have been key benchmarks of Ukrainian-Crimean integration, forming important components of a Ukrainian national narratives that tout Crimea as an essential part of Ukraine. But since independence, a number of more nationalist voices—including Lukiniuk (2000), Mindiuk (2000), and Serhiichuk (2001)—have also attempted to locate an essential, primordial Ukrainian past within Crimea in an attempt to further bolster and legitimize Ukrainian claims to the region and portray Crimea as an inseparable component of the Ukrainian nation-state in its modern incarnation. For example, Mindiuk (2000) dubiously proclaims a Ukrainian presence and, indeed, majority in Crimea dating back millennia, identifying the peninsula's ancient Tauri people as proto-Ukrainians. “[S]ince the Paleolithic period,” Mindiuk maintains (2000, 7), “the people of mainland Ukraine and its peninsula [Crimea] have jointly inhabited, settled, and defended this territory as its true and united indigenous people. Therefore, Crimea is our primordial and natural [territory].” Such revisionist claims are clearly problematic, and efforts like these to demonstrate Crimea's essential place within Ukraine exemplify the more extreme currents of the post-Soviet project of writing Crimea into the Ukrainian national narrative.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian scholars have looked to the time of the Zaporizhian Cossacks and the Crimean Khanate in an attempt to draw meaningful linkages between these two historical centers of power within the territory of independent Ukraine. As Kuzio (2007, 179) argues, “prior to the Russian conquest of the Crimea in the eighteenth century, Cossacks and Kyiv had long established contacts to, and ties with, the Tatars and the Crimea.” Although the history of

Cossack–Tatar relations is marked both by antagonism and cooperation, Ukrainian historians point to critical periods when the Cossacks—seen as the forbearers of the modern Ukrainian state—entered into strategic and mutually beneficial alliances with the Crimean Khanate (Chukhlib 2017). The project of recovering the political, social, and militaristic bonds between the Hetmanate and the Khanate—which often pitted them both against the Russian Empire—aims to establish a historic solidarity between Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in resistance to Russian imperialism as much as it is means to draw Crimea into historical narratives of Ukrainian statehood.

But because Crimea’s historical and cultural connections with Ukraine have been more difficult to establish and mythologize than those with Russia and the Crimean Tatars, Ukrainian narratives about Crimea and its importance to the Ukrainian state have been couched more frequently within a post-Soviet context. Despite—or perhaps because of—the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and demographic differences between it and the rest of Ukraine, Crimea became an important emblem in the struggle to assert Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity in the shadow of Russia’s regional hegemony and potential revanchism. While much of eastern and southern Ukraine is predominantly Russian-speaking, Crimea had been viewed as the region most vulnerable to Russia’s destabilizing influence due to its historical and cultural significance for Russia, its short-lived experience of political integration with Ukraine, its ethnic Russian majority, and the basing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. Post-Soviet Ukrainian narratives have thus stressed the importance of Crimea in terms of its meaning to the stability and legitimacy of the Ukrainian state as it struggles to shake its Soviet- and Russian-dominated past.

This drawn-out process of carefully establishing the place of the Autonomous Republic

of Crimea within the Ukrainian state polity during the 1990s (Sasse 2007) is reflective of a common narrative that Ukraine should be understood as a “state of regions.” Although some have rejected this regionalist approach to state-building in favor of a more universalizing and centralizing vision, the fact that Crimea did not devolve into ethnic or separatist violence in the 1990s as many predicted was considered a testament to the success of more measured approaches to statecraft that recognize and accommodate regional differences. Sasse notes (2007, 25), however, that Ukraine’s regional accommodation did not translated into outright federalism, as the strengthening of a unitary state was an important political goal during the 1990s. Because of its unique circumstances, Crimea was identified early on as a special case among Ukraine’s regions, where accommodations would be needed in order to promote political stability. On the importance of Crimea’s autonomy for Ukrainian state stability, Sasse (2007, 33) suggests that “it is not the inherent power of the Crimean autonomy per se that has been stabilizing, but the process of deliberation by which the autonomy was created.”

One important example of how a regionalist understanding of Ukraine has been institutionalized is the state holiday known as *Day of Sobornost’*; “*sobornost’*” is a word in both Russian and Ukrainian with no direct translation in English, meaning unification and collaboration for the sake of a common goal at the expense of the individual. Celebrated on January 22, the holiday was officially established in 1999 to commemorate the 1919 unification of the short-lived Ukrainian People’s Republic and the Western-Ukrainian Peoples during the Russian Civil War. *Day of Sobornost’* is a celebration of Ukraine as a country cobbled from separate regions to form something greater than the sum of its parts, and although Crimea was never a part of the territorial unification that the holiday commemorates, it has stood as a crucial component of Ukraine’s modern-day project of *Sobornost’* as “Crimea [has been] Ukraine’s

most immediate and most serious center-periphery challenge” (Sasse 2007, 2). For example, during one of Crimea’s last celebrations of the Day of *Sobornost’*, Crimean Prime Minister Anatolii Mogilev commented at an event in Simferopol that “written on the coat of arms of Crimea are the truthful words, ‘prosperity is in unity.’ When all are united we see a prosperous region and state, therefore we need to make every effort to make Ukraine into one large developed state” (“V Krymu po sluchaiu...” 2012). Such rhetoric underscores the role Crimea has played in Ukrainian state-building projects, and the important role of Crimea’s autonomous status in facilitating stability through regional compromise during the turbulent decades following Ukrainian independence. Indeed, Mal’gin (2005) notes the symbolism in the fact that Day of *Sobornost’* falls just two days after the anniversary of the 1991 referendum to reestablish Crimea’s autonomy.

Crimea has been so crucial to Ukrainian state-building processes as expressed through the idea of regional *sobornost’* precisely because it has posed the greatest potential threat to Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the political disarray of the 1990s, with the looming threat of Russian separatism in Crimea, effective diplomacy was required on the part of Kyiv if it hoped to avoid conflict while retaining the territory it had inherited with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, narratives of Ukraine’s regional diversity have emerged mostly in response to the threat of conflict, instability, and violation of territorial integrity that Crimea posed after independence, and in this way Crimea played a central role in the rhetorical strategy of defining Ukraine as a “state of regions.” Identifying Crimea as the likeliest site of potential conflict and violation of Ukraine’s territorial integrity proved tragically prescient in the third decade of Ukrainian independence, as the resurgent threat of Russian separatism and revanchism ripped the peninsula away from Ukraine in the fateful year of 2014.

## **The Orange Revolution, the Euromaidan, and the Struggle for Ukraine's Future**

Anxieties regarding the strength of Russian influence and identities in Crimea have been emblematic of Ukraine's broader political trajectory since independence. Although it has become cliché to refer to Ukraine or other states along the former Soviet Union's western fringe as being a "crossroads" between East and West, much of Ukraine's political struggles can be attributed to the tension created by the westward pull of European integration tugging against the country's resilient tether to Russia and its own Soviet past. While neighboring Belarus has remained firmly within Russia's orbit to the detriment of potential European integration, and the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have decisively renounced their Soviet pasts and reclaimed their place among the community of European states, post-Soviet Ukraine has embodied both drives, suffering from political stasis and economic stagnation as a result. Ukraine's population includes a significant ethnic Russian minority—about 8.3 million or 17.3% of the total population according to the last Ukrainian census in 2001—while an even larger minority of Ukrainian citizens (29.6%) consider Russian their native language. Although the relationship is not necessarily causal, support for pro-Russian political candidates and for maintaining closer ties with Russia have generally been highest in southern and eastern Ukraine where Russian ethnic and linguistic identities are more common, while larger Ukrainian majorities in central and western Ukraine have generally favored pro-European candidates and policies.

The struggle over Ukraine's social and political reins reached its first major boiling point in November 2004 when it emerged that Russian-assisted vote tampering had likely helped pro-Russian presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich beat the favored pro-European candidate Viktor Yushchenko in the run-off vote of that year's presidential election. Public outrage over the stolen election sparked mass demonstrations in the center of Kyiv and other cities around the

country in what became known as the Orange Revolution, named after the color used in Yushchenko's campaign. Pressure from the demonstrators—who counted in the hundreds of thousands and occupied Kyiv's central Independence Square (*Maidan Nezalezhnosti*) for roughly one month—forced lawmakers to hold a second vote between the two candidates, resulting in Yushchenko's ultimate victory. The revolution and the political outcomes it affected were viewed as a major victory by Ukrainians eager to strengthen the country's democratic institutions and expand its integration into European social, economic, and political structures. Crucially, the revolution was also a major setback for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his subversive efforts to keep Ukraine from drifting too far from the Kremlin's orbit.

In his five years as president following the revolution, Yushchenko proved an ineffective and combative leader unable to deliver on his promises of battling corruption and bringing Ukraine into closer alignment with Europe. Despite the enthusiasm that swept him into office, he rapidly became a deeply unpopular president, garnering only 5.45% of the first-round vote in his 2010 campaign for reelection in one of the most humiliating defeats of an incumbent president in modern history. Beating out Yushchenko's one-time ally Yuliya Tymoshenko in the second round of voting, Viktor Yanukovich made an unlikely political comeback to become Ukraine's next president, promising a middle ground between Russian and European influences but swinging the country's political pendulum back toward Russia nevertheless. Yanukovich also proved to be an unpopular leader over the next few years, criticized for his corruption, his thug-like demeanor, and, as a Russian speaker from the eastern city of Donetsk, his subpar knowledge of the Ukrainian language. Many of Yanukovich's policies were aimed at strengthening ties with Russia and Russian identities within Ukraine, seen most clearly in his law, enacted in 2012, allowing minority languages to be used in an official capacity alongside the state language of



Ukrainian in regions where they are spoken by at least 10% of the population—a law mostly benefiting Russian speakers in southern and eastern Ukraine.

Despite his pro-Russian outlook, Yanukovich did make overtures toward greater European integration as well, and in November 2014 he was poised to sign a landmark Association Agreement with the European Union that would help lay the groundwork for Ukraine's eventual entry into the organization. In a stunning last-minute reversal a week before the scheduled signing ceremony, Yanukovich announced that he would not sign the agreement, instead accepting discounted gas and an aid package from Russia, and signaling that he hoped to develop stronger economic ties with Russia and the burgeoning Eurasian Customs Union it had formed. The decision shocked and outraged millions of Ukrainians longing to break free of Russian hegemony and to set the country on a more European course of development. Inspired by one young activist and journalist's post on Facebook calling for demonstrations on the Maidan—the site of the Orange Revolution nine years earlier—hundreds of angry Ukrainians came out on the night of November 21 to protest Yanukovich's refusal to sign the agreement. Over the next few days, the crowds on the Maidan ballooned to the tens of thousands, setting off the monumental three-month period of continual protest that would come to be known as the *Euromaidan*, or, as it is often referred to within Ukraine, the Revolution of Dignity.

Even more so than the Orange Revolution, the Euromaidan was a watershed moment in Ukraine's post-Soviet history, bringing to the fore in a dramatic and violent display two contrasting visions for the county's future—that of a progressive democracy integrated into the community of European states, or that of Russia-aligned pseudo-democracy still reverent of its Soviet past. Yanukovich and his governing coalition largely stood for the latter, while millions of Ukrainian citizens on the Maidan and in satellite protests across the country stood firmly and

defiantly for the former. Although the Euromaidan did attract the participation of some far-right ethno-nationalist factions, the majority of demonstrators were Ukrainians of all ethnic, religious, linguistic, regional, and economic backgrounds gathered together in solidarity to promote a pluralistic and Eurocentric narrative of Ukrainian state- and nationhood, with “Ukraine is Europe!” as their common slogan. State authorities responded to the protesters with rounds of brutal attacks led by the *Berkut*—Ukraine’s notoriously ruthless special police force—and aided by paid agitators known as *titushky*. Demonstrators regrouped and built defensive barricades around the Maidan between assaults by government forces, while an army of volunteers provided them with food, shelter, medical assistance, information, transportation, support, and entertainment.

By late February 2014, after several attempts to subdue the protesters through violent raids, rescinded rights to assembly, and failed negotiations, the government response turned frighteningly deadly as special forces began firing live ammunition at crowds near the Maidan, and the Trade Union Building—which had been turned into a makeshift hospital adjacent to the Maidan—was set on fire, killing dozens inside. The escalation in violence only strengthened the protestor’s resolve, and they renewed their calls for Yanukovich’s resignation and a reduction in presidential powers. Facing ever-resilient protesters and dwindling support, Yanukovich secretly fled Ukraine for Russia in the early hours of February 22, and this *de facto* resignation officially brought the Euromaidan demonstrations to a victorious but bittersweet end. Nearly 150 people were killed during the three months of protests in Kyiv, including 18 officers of the *Berkut*. Although they numbered more than 100, the protesters who perished during the demonstration were given the collective title of the “Heavenly Hundred,” a modified reference to an old Cossack term for a combat regiment of 100 fighters that protestors had adopted during the

Euromaidan's violent episodes.

Despite these tragic losses and the larger traumas suffered during the protests, the Euromaidan proved a remarkable turning point for Ukraine and the aspirations of so many of its citizens to escape from under Russia's thumb and affirm once and for all that they are full-fledged Europeans. Ukraine's new leaders signed the EU Association Agreement just a month after the conclusion of the Euromaidan, paving the way for additional steps towards European integration that included visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens to the countries of the Schengen Zone beginning in June 2017—a major achievement for average Ukrainians eager for more convenient travel within Europe. Even more symbolically, the victory of the Euromaidan and the ousting of Putin's ally Yanukovich signaled a decisive break from Ukraine's Soviet- and Russian-dominated past. Indeed, many Ukrainians now view the Euromaidan as a moment of rebirth for the country, when it transcended the qualifier of "post-Soviet" to become a true European state. However, not all were pleased with the outcomes of the Euromaidan. Many Ukrainians, especially those located in southern and eastern parts of the country, still harbored affinities for Russia and/or their Soviet pasts, and were not supportive of the Euromaidan. The response to the Euromaidan was also extremely negative within the Kremlin; fearing that Ukraine was slipping away and eager to exploit the anxieties of Ukraine's pro-Russian stalwarts, Putin and his administration quickly hatched a plan of revenge that plunged Ukraine back into instability and turmoil before the celebrations on the Maidan were even complete.

### **The Annexation of Crimea and the War in the Donbas**

While thousands in Kyiv and across Ukraine were celebrating the cathartic victory of the Euromaidan, many in Crimea with pro-Russian sympathies grew anxious as the seemingly

violent overthrow of the Ukrainian president had set the country on an uncertain and unfavorable political course. Perpetuated by ever-present Russian state media, paranoid rumors began to swirl that the violent hordes from the Euromaidan were headed to Crimea to eradicate the pro-Russian stronghold. Other Crimeans—particularly the Crimean Tatar community and some Slavic youths—had supported the Euromaidan and held their own demonstrations in Simferopol and other Crimean cities in the preceding months. Tensions between these two camps and fears regarding the country’s and region’s future began to ramp up in the days following the Euromaidan’s conclusion, coming to a head on February 26 as throngs of pro-Russian demonstrators clashed with Crimean Tatars and others pro-Ukrainian groups in front of the Crimean parliament building in Simferopol, narrowly avoiding an all-out violent confrontation (see Vlashchenko 2017, 108–125).

Later that night, in the early morning hours of February 27, busloads of heavily-armed men bearing no national insignia arrived at the Crimean parliament building, forced their way inside, and demanded that all deputies be called in for an emergency vote. Once enough deputies had arrived, they were forced to vote on resolutions dissolving the Crimean government, installing the pro-Russian politician Sergey Aksyonov as the new Prime Minister, and announcing the organization of a referendum on expanding Crimea’s autonomy to be held on May 25. Over the course of the following days, these mysterious groups of armed men seized control of the roads leading to the Ukrainian mainland, the Simferopol airport, and other key government and military facilities around Crimea (Berezovets 2015; Golovko 2016). Thus commenced the Russian annexation and occupation of Crimea, and although Putin and other Russian officials initially denied reports that the armed occupiers—affectionately dubbed “Polite People” and “Little Green Men” by receptive locals—were operating under the direction of the

Kremlin, he later confirmed that they were indeed Russian special forces.

In Kyiv, Ukraine's new acting authorities were helpless to respond to the blatant seizure of Ukrainian territory in Crimea, though most understood that an attempted military response would prove catastrophic anyway. Along with much of the international community and the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People within Crimea, Kyiv strongly condemned the events unfolding within the peninsula, but were powerless to stop them. On March 6, the captive Crimean parliament voted to secede from Ukraine and become a part of the Russian Federation, and changed the terms of the upcoming referendum to put this decision to a public vote while also rescheduling the referendum for March 16, a mere 10 days away. Advertisements urging Crimeans to vote for joining Russia appeared throughout the region in the lead-up to the referendum, several associating Ukraine with fascism in an attempt to frighten any undecided voters into accepting the new Russian-dominated status quo. Manipulated by Russian state media and already predisposed to favoring Russia to Ukraine, many of Crimea's ethnic and linguistic Russians celebrated the impending vote and its already forgone conclusion, while the *Mejlis* declared a boycott of the referendum and demonstrated that the Crimean Tatar community remained a staunch defender of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The March 16 referendum was in every sense a sham, and in no way comported with international law or norms. It was organized at gunpoint by a hostile foreign power in the territory of another sovereign power in defiance of that state's laws and authorities. It was held in an environment saturated by propaganda dictating how the electorate was expected to vote. The only international observers invited to monitor the referendum were from a coalition of pro-Russian parties and organizations on the far-right fringes of European politics. The referendum ballot itself offered no option for maintaining Crimea's status quo; voters were presented with

the choice of either immediately acceding to the Russian Federation, or reinstating an obscure, short-lived Crimean constitution from 1992 that gave the region the right to secede from Ukraine unilaterally, and thus the choice was essentially between joining Russia now or doing so later. Many enthusiastic Crimeans did come out to vote for Crimea's "reunification" with Russia, while others refused to participate. To the surprise of nobody, official results showed overwhelming support for Crimea's ascension to Russia, with a suspect 96.77% of the vote, with voter turnout a dubiously high 83.1%.<sup>7</sup> Such results are hardly credible, and Russia's own Human Rights Commission released its own statistics from the referendum that showed far lower voter turnout and support for joining Russia (Bobrov 2014). Officially declaring its secession from Ukraine the following day, Crimean authorities issued an appeal to the Kremlin to accept the results of the referendum and annex Crimea into the Russian Federation, which it enthusiastically obliged a day later on March 18 to much ceremony and fanfare.

Although there is strong evidence to suggest strategic geopolitical and economic calculations played an import role (Biersack and O'Lear 2014), Russian authorities primarily leaned on two interwoven and complementary narratives to justify the annexation of Crimea: (1) that the events of the Euromaidan and the new Ukrainian government it brought to power posed a direct threat to Ukraine's ethnic Russian and Russophone populations, whose safety and interests Russia is bound to defend; and (2) that Crimea itself, and by extension its people, are inherently and eternally Russian, and their return to Russian control merely rights an historic wrong and satisfies the popular will of the Crimean people. In his speech officially marking the annexation on March 18, Putin outlined the Euromaidan's supposed threat that compelled the Kremlin to act in Crimea:

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<sup>7</sup> These results reflect the official reporting from within the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, while the vote in the Federal City of Sevastopol was 95.6% in favor of joining Russia with 89.5% voter turnout.

Those who opposed the coup were immediately threatened with repression. Naturally, the first in line here was Crimea, the Russian-speaking Crimea. In view of this, the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol turned to Russia for help in defending their rights and lives, in preventing the events that were unfolding and are still underway in Kiev, Donetsk, Kharkov and other Ukrainian cities. Naturally, we could not leave this plea unheeded; we could not abandon Crimea and its residents in distress. This would have been betrayal on our part. (Putin 2014)

He also delivered a bold message regarding Crimea's relationship with Russia, proclaiming that "[e]verything in Crimea speaks to our shared history and pride," and affirming that "[i]n people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia" (Putin 2014). Putin also invoked elements of specific Russian national mythologies of Crimea:

This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization, and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea. This is also Sevastopol – a legendary city with an outstanding history, a fortress that serves as the birthplace of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Crimea is Balaklava and Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Sapun Ridge.<sup>8</sup> Each one of these places is dear to our hearts, symbolizing Russian military glory and outstanding valor. (Putin 2014)

But Crimea is not an "inseparable part of Russia" to many Crimeans, and what some perceived as the "reunification" of the peninsula with Russia, others understood as the recolonization of a territory the Russian Empire had first seized and settled some two centuries earlier. This latest resurgence of the Russian national myth of Crimea once again stifled and obfuscated the far more deeply rooted national narrative of the indigenous Crimean Tatars, and flouted the basic principles of international law to summarily dismiss Crimea's legal and universally recognized status as a part of Ukraine's sovereign territory—which Russia itself had pledged to respect (Burke-White 2014; Catala 2015; Fabry 2015; Grant 2015; Vidmar 2015).

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<sup>8</sup> These are sites of decisive battles during the Crimean War (Balaklava and Malakhov Kurgan) and World War II (Kerch and Sapun Ridge).

The re-imposition of this Russian national myth upon Crimea was insulting enough for many of the region's residents, but the harshly repressive policies of the Russian occupiers along with the political, social, and economic repercussions of the occupation would prove unbearable for thousands of Crimeans. Beginning almost immediately after the first appearance of the so-called "Little Green Men," waves of Crimeans of all ethnic background began to flee the occupied peninsula for the Ukrainian mainland. Thus began Ukraine's current crisis of internal displacement.

The steady flow of internally displaced peoples (IDPs) from Crimea to mainland Ukraine was soon met and quickly eclipsed by a much larger group of internally displaced peoples from the eastern Ukrainian region known as the Donbas. Unlike their Crimean counterparts, IDPs from the Donbas were mostly driven from their homes by a large-scale military conflict between Ukrainian armed forces and a coalition of separatists and covert Russian soldiers that threatened the lives of millions in the region. Along with Crimea, the Donbas—consisting mostly of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts—is predominantly Russian-speaking and had long been viewed as a region with strong affinities for Russia, although a majority of its population is ethnically Ukrainian. Pro-Russian demonstrations in the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk in the wake of the Euromaidan gave way to the forceful seizure of government offices and agencies by separatist forces in April 2014, paralleling the events in Crimea two months earlier. Separatists, with the suspected assistance of Russian forces, declared the formation of the Donetsk People's Republic within the Donetsk Oblast on April 7, and the Luhansk Peoples Republic in the neighboring oblast on April 27. Again echoing the events in Crimea, on May 11 illegitimate referenda were held in the two separatist-controlled territories on their secession from Ukraine, which again yielded incredibly high but almost certainly fabricated support for secession. But



unlike Crimea, Russia did not recognize these results nor intend to absorb the territories.

The Ukrainian military, along with a number of self-organized militias and paramilitary groups, responded with force in an attempt to reclaim the sizeable portion so the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts that separatists had come to control. Known as the Anti-Terrorist Operation, the military conflict saw heavy fighting into early 2015, with the frontline shifting rapidly as both sides attempted to regain and hold territory. Many neighborhoods and towns near the shifting frontline were destroyed, forcing their residents to flee in desperation, with some heading elsewhere within Ukraine and some crossing the adjacent border into Russia. A shaky ceasefire agreement known as the Minsk Protocol went into effect on February 15, 2015 after a meeting between Putin and Ukraine's newly elected president Petro Poroshenko, but intermittent fighting has continued nevertheless. The conflict remains "frozen," with portions of the two oblasts under separatist control and Ukrainian military and paramilitary forces entrenched along the frontlines. Despite ample evidence to the contrary, the Kremlin has repeatedly denied any direct involvement in the conflict, and insists that it merely amounts to a civil war within Ukraine. As of June 2018, the conflict has resulted in roughly 10,500 casualties—including both combatants and civilians (Alexe 2018)—roughly 1.8 million internally displaced peoples (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018, 1),<sup>9</sup> and another million or so refugees within Russia (Mukomel 2017, 105).

### **Conclusions: Ukraine and Crimea's Postcolonial Condition(s)**

Although Crimea was joined with Ukraine and formally entwined with its historical trajectory only in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the two have been linked through the movement and

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<sup>9</sup> This figure includes IDPs from both the Donbas and Crimea, but as I will address in the following chapter, Crimean IDPs represent only a very small portion of Ukraine's total IDP figures.

interactions of peoples for millennia. Forming a contiguous territory at the intersection between Eurasia's great east-west migratory routes and ancient trading networks linking northern Europe and the Black and Mediterranean Seas, Ukraine and Crimea have been mutually conquered, settled, and subjugated from all directions. While the two entities are thus often referred to as a "crossroads" between empires and civilizations, or as a "gateway" between Europe and Russia and/or the Islamic world, this assessment reinforces the view that Ukraine and Crimea are merely peripheral to greater peoples and powers centered elsewhere—the *objects* of others' historical narratives imposed upon them rather than the *subjects* of a history unto themselves. Following the call of historians such as Von Hagen (1995) for centering Ukraine as an object of historical inquiry, I argue that Ukraine and its people are best understood as a unique palimpsest of the diverse peoples who have occupied it throughout its history; between the many Indo-Iranian, Uralic, Mongolian, and Turkic groups of nomads, and sedentarized Slavic, Germanic, Hellenic, Latin, and Armenian peoples who have left some impression within its modern territory, Ukraine has inherited a strong multiethnic heritage. Populated by ethnic Russians, Crimean Tatars, Karaites, Krymchaks, Hungarians, Romanians, Belarusians, Bulgarians, and dozens of other minority groups in addition to its ethnic Ukrainian majority, Ukraine is rarely recognized for the rich ethnic and cultural diversity it maintains to this day.

Reconciling Ukraine's long history of subjugation by outside forces with the imperative to center it within its own historical narrative demands that we view modern Ukraine and Crimea through the theoretical lens of postcolonialism, particularly with respect to their histories as part of the Russian and Soviet empires. Russia and the Soviet Union are often written out of the history of European colonialism because their colonial expansion into adjacent territories did not resemble Western European patterns of colonizing overseas territories, but they were colonial

empires nonetheless (Lieven 2000; Kappeler 2001; Martin 2001; Sunderland 2004; Breyfogle 2005; Hirsch 2005; Applebaum 2012). In fact, the Russian Federation still retains much of the territory acquired through colonization in the North Caucasus, Siberia, the Russian Far East, and elsewhere. As with Western European colonial practices, Orientalist discourses played a key role in Russian colonialism as well (Van der Oye 2010), although Knight (2000a, 2000b) argues that Russia's exclusion from the classical Orient-Occident dichotomy problematizes the notion of Russian Orientalism. Others (Moore 2001; Carey and Raciborski 2004; Spivak et al. 2006; Khalid 2007; Turoma and Waldstein 2013) locate distinctive Orientalist discourse within the experience of Russian and Soviet colonialism, and advocated for viewing the post-Soviet space broadly through the lens of postcolonialism. Echoing Entkind's (2011) thesis of "internal colonization" as a particular model of Russian imperialism, Morozov (2015) points to the postcolonial identity of modern Russia itself.

Although it is a European state and therefore falls outside most perceptions of the geography of colonialism, Ukraine specifically has increasingly been drawn into discourses of postcolonialism in recent decades. While literary scholars including Pavlyshyn (1993), Shkandrij (2001), and Chernetsky (2003) employ and advocate for postcolonial readings of Ukrainian literature, social scientists such as Szeptycki (2011), Riabchuk (2011), and Gerasimov and Mogilner (2015) have traced Ukraine's experiences under subjugation to Russian/Soviet hegemony to point to independent Ukraine's continuing postcolonial condition, although others including Velychenko (2004) and Hrytsak (2015) remain skeptical of this label. Events during and after the Euromaidan have sparked new rounds of advocacy for viewing Ukraine through a postcolonial lens; because its goals included emancipation from Russian economic and political

hegemony, but also because it revealed a new Ukraine (re)defining itself and infused with hybrid identities, Gerasimov (2014) has proclaimed the Euromaidan the “first postcolonial revolution.”

I join these scholars in advancing a postcolonial analytical framework for the study of Ukraine. However, I am critical of the fact that Crimea, the Crimean Tatars, and their distinctive experience with Russian and Soviet colonialism are rarely considered for their unique contributions to Ukraine’s postcolonial state. Although there has been a recent increase in calls for recognizing the Crimean Tatars’ status as an indigenous people of Crimea and Ukraine (see Belitser 2017), efforts to place them within a postcolonial framework are conspicuously absent within the scholarship on Ukrainian postcolonialism. As I have outlined in this chapter, the Russian colonization of Crimea was a separate process to that of Ukraine, justified through a particular set of Orientalist tropes, and carried out with specific imperial and strategic goals. While ethnic Russians and Ukrainians share a direct common lineage and are therefore portrayed as “brotherly nations,” the Crimean Tatars have been viewed as an exotic and foreign “other” in Russian imperial discourses, and this perception in part has justified the displacement and deportation of the Crimean Tatars from their homeland in a way never experienced by ethnic Ukrainians. The contours of contemporary Crimean Tatar ethno-national identities are also far more indebted to Soviet policies of *korenizatsiya* than Ukrainian ethnic identities. As if to drive the point home, Crimea and the Crimean Tatars were once again *recolonized* in 2014 by the successor to the same imperial hegemon that has dominated them for nearly 250 years, and although the occupation of Crimea also affects ethnic Ukrainians and Russian living there, it resonates far more powerfully with the Crimean Tatar experience of colonization.

To conclude, Ukraine should indeed be viewed through the lens of postcolonialism if we are to make sense of its history and present state, but we should also be attentive to the

distinctive postcolonialisms that coexist within it—namely those experienced within Crimea and within mainland Ukraine. Holding these separate postcolonial conditions at once also helps make sense of the hybrid and pluralistic identities that have emerged within modern Ukraine, particularly the civic and multicultural nationalisms in which Crimean Tatars have come to play a central role. Despite assumptions about the region’s deeply pro-Russian outlook, such discourses of Ukrainian identity have been present in Crimea since long before the Euromaidan, and are partially responsible for the exodus of thousands of Crimeans to the Ukrainian mainland in response to the Russian annexation. In the following chapter, I explore how Ukrainian identities and other factors drove the process of internal migration from Crimea.

## **Chapter Four: Profiling the Crimean IDP Community: Motives and Demographics**

February 23, 2014 marked the official end of the Euromaidan protest in Kyiv and many other Ukrainian cities. After three months of stubborn resistance to the demands of the Euromaidan and repeated attempts to violently subdue the protesters in and around Kyiv's *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square), leaving nearly 100 dead, the beleaguered and detested Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich fled for Moscow in the early morning hours in an implicit declaration of his own defeat and *de facto* victory for the protesters. Hours later an interim government sympathetic to the protesters' demands was formed to fill the political vacuum left by Yanukovich's collapsed regime. Meanwhile, protesters swarmed *Mezhyhirya*, the deposed president's decadent private residence north of Kyiv, where they exposed the spectacular wealth that Yanukovich had siphoned from state coffers and the comically audacious ways he had squandered it on his own vanity and leisure (Taylor 2014). Although the culmination of the Euromaidan would set into motion a series of far more tragic events for the people of Ukraine, on February 23 the mood was deservedly jubilant and celebratory for the millions of Euromaidan participants and supporters in Kyiv and across much of the country.

For many in Crimea, however, the news from Kyiv on February 23 triggered a deepening sense of anxiety over what these developments might herald. Many Crimeans, well-known in Ukraine for their pro-Russian sympathies and far less favorable attitudes towards European integration, had found the Euromaidan protests distressing from the beginning. Trustful of Russian state media that continually exaggerated the minor role of right-wing Ukrainian ethno-nationalists (Marples 2016), many in Crimea were convinced that the Euromaidan movement would now shift toward targeting Ukraine's ethnic Russians and Russian speakers. By all

accounts, Crimean media also had a hand in keeping local residents misinformed about the events in Kyiv. “The whole country followed the Euromaidan in Kyiv, they broadcasted it around the clock,” explained one interviewee, “but hardly anybody from Crimea reported on it. [Crimean] journalists were either too afraid, or they just thought that [the protests] would run their course and there would be no need to present the situation as it really is” (Interview 074, Russian woman, 30s). Rumors began to swirl that train loads of menacing Ukrainian nationalists—variably labeled “Banderites,” after the controversial early 20th century Ukrainian nationalist figure Stepan Bandera, or simply “fascists”—were on their way to Crimea from Western Ukraine to impose a new anti-Russian social order. Although many Crimeans had reasonable concerns about the goals and methods of the Euromaidan, a veil of misinformation had helped foment a sense of fear in Crimea that quickly morphed into a paranoid miasma with the conclusion of the Euromaidan, leaving many there feeling alienated or threatened by Kyiv’s sudden and seismic political shift.

Amidst the growing hysteria over a looming fascist threat from Kyiv, many Crimeans were in fact celebrating the Euromaidan victory along with their fellow citizens. Indeed, despite Crimea’s reputation for being pro-Russian, Crimeans numbered among the Euromaidan demonstrators from the beginning, either joining the crowds on Independence Square or holding smaller demonstrations in Crimea itself. Those who were able to make it to Kyiv and join the struggle at ground zero recount feeling a special sense of duty to demonstrate that many Crimeans do, in fact, stand in solidarity with their fellow Ukrainians. “‘I came from Crimea’—it was a slogan at that time,” recalled one interviewee who attended the demonstrations in Kyiv;

Saying that you are from Crimea means that you really support all those people who were standing there, because for them it was very important to understand that all of Ukraine was there. (...) When you said that you were from Crimea, you showed [other demonstrators] that there are also people like them there, that [in

Crimea] there are also people who stand in opposition, that there are people there who stand for the same values for which you are demonstrating. This was really important. People were really encouraged by this. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

But the Euromaidan was a movement that reached well beyond Independence Square.

Supporters had organized dozens of smaller demonstrations in cities and towns across Ukraine, including several in Crimea. The largest and most active group of demonstrators gathered regularly in Simferopol's central Lenin Square, where they were met by hostile locals and police while the figure of Lenin himself gazed down disapprovingly from atop his pedestal perch. One interviewee who frequently participated in the "Simferopol Euromaidan" explained that in the beginning,

it was just around 100 protestors on the Euromaidan side, and there were like a thousand policemen and *titushky* gathered around the small group of activists, journalists, people who were just on the side of Euro-integration. In Kyiv it was much more impulsive, so in Crimea it was like, ok, we exist here, we just want to show that we are with you guys in Kyiv. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Crimean Tatar activists played a key role in organizing the Euromaidan in Simferopol, but the demonstrations were purposely inclusive, attracting "intelligent people" of all backgrounds who supported European integration for Ukraine (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). The goals of demonstrators and counter-demonstrators alike at that time were never to reaffirm or disavow Crimea's place within Ukraine or to situate themselves within a pro-Ukrainian/pro-Russian ideological binary,

because of course it's Ukraine and nobody even had thoughts in their brains [otherwise], even the [counter-demonstrators], you know? They weren't pro-Russian, they were mostly against some 'Nazi' things (...) they told us that we are fascists, that we are neo-Nazis, that their grandfathers had fought against people like us, things like that (...) but we were just there to support staying with Europe, there wasn't any talk about *Pravy Sektor*<sup>10</sup> or any bullshit about Ukrainian language only, nothing like that. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

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<sup>10</sup> Meaning "the Right Sector" in Ukrainian, *Pravy Sektor* emerged as one of the more prominent far-right ethno-nationalist groups participating in the Euromaidan, becoming its own political party in the months that followed.



In fact, one interviewee confirmed that some Euromaidan demonstrators in Simferopol were decidedly not pro-Ukrainian at that time:

I have a few friends (...) guys with left-wing views, who fought for the rights of students, they had their own student union (...) they really didn't give a damn about any kind of Ukrainian identity, they just weren't interested in it. They cared about labor rights, the rights of students, stipends, living conditions in the dormitories, etc. They really didn't care about Ukraine, to them it was all the same. They all went to the Euromaidan in Crimea, and this was a shock for all the other groups of people there, when they all stood for a single idea, under a single slogan. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

The Euromaidan demonstrations in Simferopol always proceeded under the threat of violence, as demonstrators were routinely met by much larger and hostile groups of anti-Maidan counter-demonstrators. But elsewhere in Crimea, away from the slightly more liberal atmosphere of the capital, presenting oneself as a supporter of the Euromaidan was even riskier. Much smaller demonstrations were held in cities such as Kerch, Yalta, and Sevastopol, where hostilities frequently ran high. Shocking footage from an attempted pro-Euromaidan demonstration in Kerch shows just a handful of people gathered around a podium draped in a Ukrainian flag, attempting to speak in support of the demonstrators in Kyiv, while an angry crowd gathers around and drowns the speakers out with anti-fascist slogans. The speakers are pelted with eggs before the crowd begins swarming around them, destroying their equipment, and beating them as police half-heartedly struggle to keep the peace.<sup>11</sup> One organizer of the Euromaidan demonstrations in Sevastopol described the hostilities that they faced in the most pro-Russian of Crimea's cities:

In total, we held five "Maidans" in Sevastopol. In Kyiv the Maidan carried on non-stop, but in Sevastopol we only gathered on the weekends. We had constant skirmishes with the pro-Russian part of the population. There were some people who were paid [i.e., *titushky*], there were so-called "Cossacks" there. They came and tried to break apart our meetings, to disrupt the Maidan anyway they could. We decided that we could no longer carry out these demonstrations in Sevastopol

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<sup>11</sup> The disturbing scene can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrOTVjXiLgw>

when, at one of the meetings, people threatened to beat the children that had come with some of the demonstrators. We were worried that they would do it, those people were very aggressive. (Interview 066, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s)

The threat of violence was enough to deter many Crimeans from participating in the demonstrations, contributing to the impression that few in Crimea supported the Euromaidan.

“No, I didn’t take part there,” explained one interviewee from Sevastopol who had briefly joined the main demonstrations in Kyiv,

My husband strictly forbade me from participating in these events [in Sevastopol], because the Euromaidan supporters there were so few, and anything could have happened. Actually, this is what happened: People pressured and threatened them, then found out where they live, where they’re from—it really is a small city—and then a lot more threats followed. I was told not to go there and not to get involved. I went out just to see what was happening in the city, when people were gathering in anticipation of “Banderites,” driving around the city with flashing lights and megaphones calling for people to gather on a central street because the “Banderites” were coming for them. I went down to the city center, stood off to the side and simply observed what was going on, how people gathered, how they worked themselves up and silently filled with rage. It was terrifying, I didn’t want to take part in anything there. In Kyiv there were mainly like-minded people, but in Sevastopol and Simferopol it was just dangerous and life-threatening.” (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s).

For another interviewee, a more nebulous sense of uneasiness kept her from taking part in the Simferopol demonstrations:

I really didn’t show up there ever because ... I can’t even really explain it. Internally I just understood that something wasn’t right; when only five people are standing there and everybody else is against them, something isn’t right. It was strange to me at that time, I thought to myself, “why am I not doing this?” I supported it, I had friends who joined, who stood there with them, but I just supported it. I went to Kyiv during the Euromaidan, but went and stood around just for a day. The atmosphere there was different. (Interview 067, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s)

Relatively few in Crimea were willing to endure the threats and hostilities of the anti-Maidan counter-protestors and stand in solidarity with the Euromaidan movement, but support for the Euromaidan and Ukraine’s path toward European integration were indeed far more pervasive within Crimea than these small demonstrations suggested. Survey results indicate that even

among those who eventually left Crimea for the Ukrainian mainland after the Russian annexation, only 29.6% participated in the Euromaidan in some capacity (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, "Did you participate in the Euromaidan?"

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	29.6	31.8	25.9	28	33.3
No	70.4	68.2	74.1	72	66.7

### The Occupation Begins

Many in Crimea thus shared in the moment of victory that arrived on February 23, but this was quickly tempered by the larger sense of panic pervading the peninsula. Fearing what Kyiv’s new political order could mean for Crimea and its large ethnic Russian population, many began calling for greater autonomy or outright secession from Ukraine—demands that only a small but vocal minority of pro-Russian Crimeans had maintained since the early 1990s, even during the Euromaidan itself. Protestors took to the streets waving Russian flags in numbers that dwarfed the Euromaidan demonstrators, a small handful of which continued to demonstrate. The tension in Crimea grew day by day, culminating with the now-infamous clash of opposing demonstrations in front of the Crimean Parliament building on February 26. Yet even on the evening of the 26, just hours before the so-called “Little Green Men” first appeared, nobody in Crimea had a sense of what was coming. Tensions between opposing sides—now beginning to crystalize into “pro-Ukrainian” and “pro-Russian” camps—were certainly running high, and the specter of violence both from within and outside of Crimea hung heavy in the air. But even on the eve of the annexation the notion of a Russian military intervention had likely occurred to few if any on either side of Crimea’s rapidly expanding ideological gulf. Most still understood that

questions concerning what the Euromaidan and the collapse of the Yanukovych regime would mean for Crimea were a matter for Simferopol and Kyiv to work out once things cooled down.

Those delusions were shattered on the morning of February 27, when Crimea awoke to the ominous news that a group of heavily armed men bearing no national insignia had infiltrated and seized control of the Crimean parliament building, along with several other strategic administrative and military facilities across the peninsula. Even before it was known where these so-called “Little Green Men” had come from, their allegiances were plainly clear. “From the window of our office I could see the Cabinet of Ministers,” recalled one interviewee who went to work on the morning of February 27, “and it used to be the Ukrainian flag [on top], and the next day it was the Russian flag up there. It changed overnight. (...) It was obviously a military invasion” (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s). Interviewees frequently recalled their initial shock at the sudden appearance of armed military personnel on the streets of Crimea. Emotions were certainly running high in Crimea following the conclusion of the Euromaidan, but nobody was prepared for this sudden escalation. As one interviewee explained,

In the morning [of the 27<sup>th</sup>] we were totally shocked. You know, I’m just a 20-year-old guy going to university, and now suddenly there are tanks on the street, and around the parliament building there are people with guns who are really prepared to shoot, not just security. So, it was very strange to me, and of course scary. (...) People were shocked, everybody was shocked, because [the armed men] didn’t have signs, so we didn’t know who they were. Of course, we had a feeling who they were... So, it was the first time I was totally shocked, and I recognized that something wrong is happening, because the army of another country is in my country, my homeland. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s transparent denials that the “Little Green Men” were Russian military personnel continued for roughly two months after they first appeared, yet most Crimeans understood from the beginning that they heralded a Russian intervention. Those who had anticipated and feared a wave of Ukrainian ethno-nationalist violence were delighted by the

presence of would-be “peace keepers” in Crimea. Grotesque images of the heavily-armed men posing readily with gleeful children, swooning young women, and hapless kittens began to circulate in Russian and international media in the days following the coup, helping earn the “Little Green Men” the even more endearing nickname of “Polite People” (Figure 5). But while their origins were murky at first, their goals quickly became clear over the course of the ensuing week.

Even once the referendum on Crimea’s political status had been scheduled and the prospects of any outside intervention had evaporated, some refused to believe that the referendum would actually take place or that Russia would ever go through with formal annexation.



**Figure 5:** “Little Green Men” pose for pictures holding cats and children during their covert seizure and occupation of Crimea beginning in late February 2014. (Photo source: <https://www.ampravda.ru/2015/03/19/055910.html>)

Explaining her optimism leading up to the referendum date, one interviewee recalled that “my mom was panicking a lot, and I said, ‘why are you panicking, it’s impossible! It’s impossible to go from one country to another!’ I was arguing with her; ‘It’s impossible, don’t worry! It’s not going to happen, they’re just doing it for fun!’ I actually didn’t ... I really didn’t believe it” (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). Another interviewee expressed regret that he and his family did not initially take the threat of annexation more seriously:

Before [the annexation] I had never thought about a lot of things, because you plan things out one way, but then the circumstances... now everything's messed up. We couldn't have even imagined it. I think that we were pretty naïve, because we thought that it wouldn't happen, that things would turn out differently. For some reason we honestly didn't believe that there would be a referendum. You think, maybe this could happen somewhere else, but not to us. But it can happen! It happened! (Interview 025, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s)

From another perspective, one interviewee told me that he felt something of a morbid fascination with the events surrounding the annexation of Crimea in spite of his opposition to it:

You might say I had mixed feelings. On the one hand, yes, I didn't like what was happening. I felt that everything was being decided for me regardless of the fact that I, as a citizen, can go and vote in the referendum. All the same, it wouldn't change anything, my attitude toward all of this was very negative. On the other hand, I'm a historian by training, and, well, sometimes I can set aside my personal feelings, and at that time I understood what was happening, that extremely important events on a truly global scale were happening before my own eyes. This was somehow interesting to me. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian man, 20s).

However, many Crimeans—or at least those who were sufficiently “adequate” in their critical reasoning, according to one survey participant (Interview 062, ethnic Russian man, 40s)—quickly grasped the gravity of the situation. Pro-Russian military forces had already imposed a new political order over the peninsula and paralyzed all Ukrainian military capabilities there, while Kyiv, preoccupied with the tasks of organizing its own new political order immediately following the Euromaidan, was incapable of mustering an effective response. In the days leading up to the referendum, advertisements appeared in places throughout the peninsula depicting a Ukrainian fascist threat and urging Crimeans to vote for Russian unification, making clear how one was expected to vote (Figure 6). Many understood that Russia's forceful seizure of Crimea was already complete, and the outcome of the referendum was a foregone conclusion. “We understood perfectly what kind of ‘referendum’ it would be, and what the result would be,” one interviewee told me, “don't bother telling us that this was a referendum, it was no kind of referendum. It was all made clear in advance, we all saw it. Those

who say that there was a true referendum, they saw too that it was no referendum, they're just lying to themselves" (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 40s).



**Figure 6:** Political advertisements in Crimea in the weeks before the referendum, declaring “on March 16 we will chose” between a fascist or Russian Crimea (top), and telling voters which option to choose on March 16 in order to go “home to Russia” (bottom). (Photo source: <https://www.ostro.org/general/politics/articles/440058/>)

## Crimeans Begin Leaving for Mainland Ukraine

Seeing the writing on the wall and fearing that their window of opportunity to escape occupied Crimea may soon be closed, several began making preparations to flee before the referendum could seal the peninsula's fate. One interviewee described the urgency he felt to ensure that he and his family were safely far away from Crimea by the time the referendum was held:

After the Crimean authorities declared that there would be a referendum, that something was taking shape, unlike many of my colleagues I immediately understood how this referendum would end. It would end the same way that the referendum in Austria ended in 1938, when Germany annexed it. I knew, and so I bought [train] tickets to make sure that we got out two days ahead of the referendum. And when they moved the date of the referendum ahead, I bought new tickets for an earlier date, because I feared that immediately after the referendum some kind of blockade would begin, and so we left calmly under normal conditions, taking all the necessary things that we would need. I settled in Western Ukraine and for a while just lived in shock after everything that had happened. (Interview 043, ethnic Ukrainian man, 30s)

It was with such individuals, who promptly fled from Crimea during the 17 short days between the appearance of the “Little Green Men” and the final date of the referendum, that the first wave of Crimean IDPs materialized. Others who understood the severity of what was happening were unable to pack up and leave on such short notice for a variety of reasons. For some the sense of panic was initially tempered by the diametric sense of joy or security with which their loved ones greeted the occupation. One interviewee recalls her experiences on February 27, sitting in a café with her husband and a friend visiting from Kyiv:

That evening we sat looking at our phones and reading the news with our eyes wide open and our hair standing on end. “What can we do? Where can we take our things?” We were panicking. “What will we load in the car? How will we get out? Will we be able to get out? Will we not?” It was all like this. We rushed home—not to our own home, but to my mother and father's. I ran up the stairs to their apartment, my husband was waiting in the car. I ran inside with wild eyes; “mom, dad, quickly gather your things, we have to leave because there is going to be a war!” They looked at me calmly and said, “don't worry dear, they will save



us. Putin will save us.” This was the last conversation we ever had on the matter. I got dressed and left, and my husband and I began planning our escape. My parents stayed behind. It was just like that. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s)

This interaction is representative of what many interviewees reported experiencing from the very beginning of the occupation. Crimea’s sudden lurch toward Russia energized not only those who had been vocally pro-Russian in the years leading up to the occupation; to the surprise and disappointment of many IDPs, it also awoke a latent Russian chauvinism within many Crimeans who had never exhibited such tendencies before. The same interviewee quoted above expanded further upon her interactions with her father after the occupation had begun:

I said to my father, “dad, fine, this is the way things are going, but tell me something: we lived [in independent Ukraine] twenty some odd years. I never heard from you, not once, that you wanted Crimea to be Russian. And it wasn’t just you, but others too, I never heard this from anybody. But here you stand today. Can you explain to me why you say this now? Why did you never say before that you want to return to your ‘historical homeland,’ never packed your bags and left, but simply cross over now along with the territory [of Crimea]? Why did you never say anything about this?” He said, “daughter, I’ve waited.” Just waited until Daddy came along and fixed everything. It’s such an infantile attitude, and for me it’s a mystery, I don’t understand it. It just hurts my head, and I’ve stopped thinking about these questions because I just don’t have the answers. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s)

This sudden shift in perspective affected not only older generations whose nostalgia for Soviet times may endear them to Russia, but also those who were born in independent Ukraine and had never experienced life in the Soviet Union first hand. One interviewee, a former instructor at a Crimean university, believes that many young Crimeans inherited a pro-Soviet worldview from their parents that blossomed with the beginning of the occupation:

Most people in Crimea, if we don’t count the Crimean Tatars, are very pro-Soviet, and now they feel better because everything is definite and understandable, it’s a return to something that they are used to. And they give these values to their children, because the first shock for me was observing my own students, who were very pro-Ukrainian, very European, and very active, with whom I attended many conferences in Europe. [With the occupation] most of them became a new wing of [the pro-Russian political party] Russian Unity, and I saw that their true

values were not to be active as they were before, but just to adopt to the new realities. These were their Soviet values. (Interview 010, Ukrainian woman, 30s)

## **The Day of the Referendum**

Already certain of what the referendum's outcome would be and worried about how the voting process would play out, many chose not to participate or even to leave their home on March 16. The *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People, the official representative body of the Crimean Tatars, announced a boycott of the referendum in the days leading up to it, urging Crimean Tatars across the peninsula not to validate the Russian occupiers or attempts to legitimize their land grab. On the day of the referendum, Russian media depicted crowded polling places full of jubilant voters waving the Russian flag, enthusiastically casting their votes in favor of unification. Such images lent credence to the statistics released later that day showing that 83.1% of Crimean voters participated in the referendum, with 96.8% voting for unification with Russia. These staggering figures have been heavily disputed (Birrell 2014; Bobrov 2014; Somin 2014; Wilson 2014), but they are also at odds with the experiences of many interviewees who spoke of an ominous desolation on the day of the referendum, akin to a “zombie apocalypse” in the words of one interviewee (Interview 007, Crimean Greek woman, 20s). “Almost nobody participated,” said another interviewee, “pensioners participated, they went, but [the referendum] was a bluff, there weren't any people, nobody went [to the polling places]” (Interview 063, Ukrainian woman, 40s). One interviewee explained that she and many others feared violence could breakout on the day of the referendum:

As it happened, everybody sat at home. The streets of Simferopol were empty. These “Little Green Men” stood around, they were all working and going about. You ride on a *marshrutka*<sup>12</sup>, and you see ahead of you these people in unfamiliar uniforms, without any identification, and with automatic weapons. Even Russians

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<sup>12</sup> Marshrutkas are a type of public transportation vehicle common throughout the post-Soviet space, somewhere in size between a van and a bus and traveling along a fixed route.

who live in Crimea, they were scared. They feared that there would be some kind of military action. We were worried too, of course, but it was somehow different. They just sat at home and awaited whatever the outcome would be—Ukraine or Russia—and however they were then supposed to act. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Others said that they went to the polling places out of curiosity, and in many cases were surprised to find fewer voters than armed guards. One interviewee from the city of Alushta said that he spotted a former neighbor among the 15 or so guards standing outside of his local polling place when he went to investigate. The former neighbor told him that he had been paid 450 UAH—about \$50 at the time—to help “maintain order” during the vote (Interview 074, ethnic Russian man, 30s). In Sevastopol, another interviewee was told by men armed with automatic weapons outside of her local polling place that they were there “for order, so that people vote properly” (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s).

As expected by virtually all Crimeans, the referendum yielded overwhelming support for Crimea’s unification with Russia, and two days later Russia formally accepted the results and declared the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol two new subjects of the Russian Federation. The event was marked with great fanfare and celebration both in Crimea and across the Russian Federation, with a large celebration on Moscow’s Red Square featuring speeches by President Putin and other prominent political and cultural figures. The annexation of Crimea marked a moment of great patriotic euphoria for many across Russia and in Crimea itself, but others in Crimea viewed it as a momentous tragedy.

As the new realities of life under Russian occupation began to sink in, thousands more Crimeans began considering the difficult decision of whether they should stay or leave for the Ukrainian mainland. Those who ultimately decided to flee occupied Crimea were driven by a variety of motivating factors that generally fall into three broad categories: economic and pragmatic calculations; fear of persecution or concern for personal safety; and personal

opposition informed by negative emotional and psychological responses to the occupation (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, "Why did you decide to leave Crimea?"

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Personal opposition to occupation	71.2	75.5	79.3	52.8	83.3
Concern for personal safety	37	39.5	37.1	32.8	36.1
Political, ethnic, or religious persecution	33	33.6	27.6	36.8	33.3
Lack of economic opportunities	28.2	27.3	33.6	24	30.6
Left before the occupation	14.3	13.6	14.7	16	11.1
To study in a Ukrainian university	11.3	10	9.5	15.2	11.1
To continue or start a business	6.8	2.7	12.1	7.2	13.9

### **Economic Strains and Pragmatic Considerations**

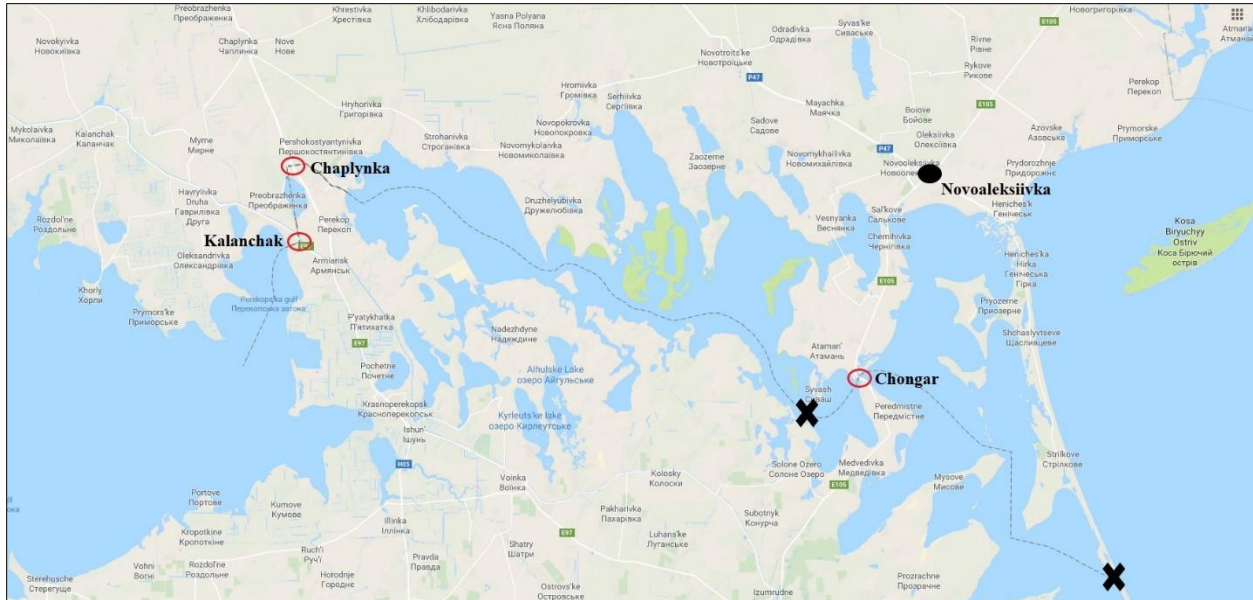
But for the narrow, 3-mile-wide Isthmus of Perekop linking it to the Ukrainian mainland, Crimea is essentially an island. It is separated from Russia to the east by the Kerch Strait, roughly two miles wide at its narrowest point, and a series of brackish lagoons known as the Sivash—bounded to the west by the Isthmus of Perekop and to the east by the long Arabat sand spit—severs the steppes of northern Crimea from those that stretch across much of the Ukrainian mainland. Yet, however tenuous Crimea’s physical links to Ukraine are, they have provided accessible routes and facilitated cultural and economic exchange between the peninsula and the mainland for millennia. A total of five routes link Crimea’s transportation infrastructure to the outside world via the Ukrainian mainland: two roads through the Isthmus of Perekop; one road along the isolated and infrequently visited Arabat Spit that is connected to the mainland city of Henichesk by a bridge; another road that includes a small bridge across a narrow point in the Sivash; and a railway line that also crosses the Sivash. Moreover, Crimea is linked to Ukraine’s electric and hydrological infrastructures by electric pylons and the Northern Crimea Canal that traverse the Isthmus of Perekop. Although many in Crimea prefer to view the region as an island

both physically and culturally, Crimea has indeed relied upon its many linkages to the mainland that have helped facilitate its political and economic integration with the rest of Ukraine.

### *Severed Infrastructure Linking Crimea to Ukraine and the World Beyond*

Those vital connections to the Ukrainian mainland were among the first casualties of the Russian occupation of Crimea. Declaring Crimea the sovereign territory of the Russian Federation, Russian authorities transformed the few small points of contact with the Ukrainian mainland into *de facto* borderlands. Where cars, trucks, and buses once passed freely and unimpeded through the Perekop or over the Sivash, there now stand checkpoints with customs and passport control heading in both directions. The small southern Ukrainian towns of Kalanchak, Chaplynka, and Chongar suddenly became well-known throughout Ukraine as the locations of “control points” regulating the entry of people and goods to occupied Crimea, while checkpoints on the Crimean side mark what Russia considers part of its international border with Ukraine (Figure 7).

Initially, the flow of people and goods across this newly-formed border was not fully prohibited, but newly imposed regulations, customs regimes, and border-crossing procedures meant that entry into Crimea from mainland Ukraine was now much more difficult, time-consuming, and unpredictable. Transportation to Crimea grew increasingly limited and regulated in the ensuing months following the annexation. Ukrainian trains no longer traveled to Crimea after December, 2014, when the state railroad company *Ukrzaliznytsia* declared that all Crimea-bound trains would now terminate in the small southern Ukrainian town of Novoaleksiivka, effectively severing Crimea’s railways from the outside world and severely limiting options for those traveling between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland (Dostim 2014). In September 2015,



**Figure 7:** Map of the region where the Crimean Peninsula meets the Ukrainian mainland. Only three points of entry are now permitted between the mainland and occupied Crimea: Chaplyнка and Kalanchak via the Isthmus of Perekop, and Chongar at a small bridge over the Sivash. The border crossing on the remote Arabat Spit is now closed (bottom right of map), as is a railway line that crosses the Sivash just southwest of Chongar. Ukrainian train routes once bound for Crimea now terminate in Novoaleksiivka, north of Chongar. (Map source: Google Maps)

Crimean Tatar activists established their own checkpoints at all entry points to Crimea in order to impose a blockade of all commercial goods traveling to Crimea from Ukraine, a move that compelled the Ukrainian government to eventually follow suit and declare an official embargo on trade to occupied Ukraine in December of that year (Putilov 2015). The supply of both water and electricity to Crimea also began to taper off following the annexation; citing outstanding payments for the delivery of water, Ukrainian authorities began restricting the flow of water into the Northern Crimean Canal ("Russia fears..." 2014), while Crimean activists further imposed an “energy blockade” of Crimea by destroying key pylons delivering Ukrainian electricity to the peninsula, causing widespread blackouts beginning in late 2015 (“Energoblokada Kryma nachalas” 2015).

As the physical and economic connections between Crimea and the rest of Ukraine began to atrophy, the actions of Western states and organizations served to further isolate Crimea from the rest of the world. Concerned about the safety of airspace over occupied Crimea, the International Civil Aviation Organization and European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation closed air travel routes over Crimea, effectively blocking air travel to or from the peninsula from anywhere except Russia (“European air traffic...” 2014). As of September 2018, it remains possible to fly in or out of Crimea only via Russia cities and carriers. Adding to the a series of sanctions imposed upon Russian businesses and individuals for their roles in the annexation of Crimea and ongoing aggression against Ukraine, in December 2014 the United States, Canada, the European Union, and other European and Anglophone states imposed further sanctions affecting occupied Crimea directly, restricting investment in Crimea-based companies and prohibiting the importation or exportation of any goods, services, or technologies to or from the peninsula (Rettman 2014).

### *Economic Repercussions of Crimea’s Sudden Isolation*

With severe restrictions on travel, trade, and business imposed both by Ukraine and the international community, Crimea has become more like an island than ever before, and the negative social and economic impacts of this isolation have motivated thousands of Crimeans to leave the peninsula. “I’m not sure how Ukraine feels without Crimea, but I can definitely say that it is really difficult for Crimea without Ukraine,” remarked one interviewee, “because absolutely all the connections came from Ukraine. So many peoples’ businesses, so many jobs, everything was connected to Ukraine” (Interview 077, Crimean Tatar man, 30s). Jobs in manufacturing, construction, retail, or any other industry that relied on delivery of goods or parts from the

Ukrainian mainland began to suffer with the restriction and eventual prohibition of trade across the newly-established border. Russia became Crimea's online lifeline, the only source from which all goods and services could now originate. With no road or rail link to the Russian mainland,<sup>13</sup> all had to be imported at higher cost via ferry or plane, contributing to a gradual rise in prices across the peninsula (Veselova 2016). With limited water available to farmers following the decreased outflow from the Ukrainian mainland to the North Crimean Canal, agriculture in Crimea has also suffered tremendously, further contributing to the rising cost of produce.

The difficulties and inconveniences of traveling to Crimea from mainland Ukraine also caused a large decrease in tourism, one of the region's most important industries. Before the annexation, Ukrainians made up the majority of Crimea's annual tourists, but deterred by the difficulties of reaching Crimea, the lack of financial services there due to sanctions, and the ever-present Russian chauvinism on display, most chose to avoid the region and vacation elsewhere beginning in the summer of 2014 (Liev 2014). In order to boost the post-annexation tourism slump, Russian authorities heavily encouraged tourism in Crimea over more popular destinations abroad such as Turkey or Egypt, framing Crimea as the patriotic choice.<sup>14</sup> Despite the best efforts of some Russians to heed the call of patriotism, their options for getting to Crimea remained limited in the months and years following the annexation, and travel to Crimea by ferry or flight alone simply could not compensate for the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and Russians alike who once arrived quickly and conveniently by train or bus.

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<sup>13</sup> Work began on a bridge linking Crimea to Russia across the Kerch Strait almost immediately after the annexation, and was finally completed in May 2018.

<sup>14</sup> For example, one advertisement from 2017 produced by the Russian news agency RT shows a young couple pondering where to vacation. After ruling out various international destinations for their problems, they settle on Crimea, "because it is ours [*potomu, chto nash*]," according to the campaign's slogan. The ad can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDKLTbeIHYc>



For the thousands of Crimeans working in the tourism industry or whose businesses rely on tourist spending, the severe drop in tourism after 2014 has brought great financial hardship. One interviewee told me of his friends who remain in Crimea and earn a living selling sweets in the western Crimean city of Saki, famed for its curative mud baths and a popular destination for health tourism:

They had a few booths along the beach, a few small shops. This year, in 2015, they had one shop that sold ice cream and another that sold Middle Eastern sweets. They sold the ice cream by weight, and they bought each flavor in a separate package. By the end of September they had gone through just one package of one type of ice cream, that was it for the whole season. They just barely sold off all their Middle Eastern sweets at cost, just so they didn't lose money on them. They didn't even make any profit. (Interview 036, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

I also spoke with a young couple who ran a business renting small cottages to tourists in the city of Alushta, located on the southern Crimean coast not far from Yalta, and one of the region's most popular tourist destinations. Almost all of their business came from people traveling to Crimea by car, and the drop in motor tourists from mainland Ukraine made it all but impossible for them to continue operating after the annexation:

M: My primary income was connected to tourism, and so when this whole reconfiguration [of incoming tourists] happened it was really serious, because they stopped coming from Ukraine. They fell from 80% to 15% of the tourists, and Russians still weren't coming. And the collapse meant that I had a lot of vacant rooms for really cheap prices, but there just weren't any people. Moreover, most of those who did come booked their accommodations in advance, but my work was very specific, because I had a small monopoly over an area where I was responsible for all the accommodations. It was always enough for me to just rent to those people who dropped in and didn't yet know where to stay...

W: They all came to Crimea by car, but now the border was closed. They restricted entry, so the cars stayed away, and there's no road from Russia. People were only coming by train—which were still coming from Ukraine at that time [in summer 2014]—and from Russia [via ferry] across the Kerch Strait. Everything was completely reconfigured.

M: We understood that we would not be earning anything that first year.

W: So we left. We saw that... usually the season begins in the end of June, and that's when we left.

M: There were certain signs, indications of whether anybody would be coming. During the May holidays you can usually tell what kind of season there will be and how things will continue. You see how many people stop by and how full the buses are, and from that you can tell what the tourist season will be like. It was a pragmatic situation. The signs indicated that there wouldn't even be a tourist season, and so there would be no income and no money. (Interview 074, ethnic Russian Man and Woman, 30s)

For others, the restrictions imposed upon Crimea through international sanctions meant that their particular industries could no longer function within the peninsula, forcing them out of work and compelling many to leave Crimea altogether. For example, with all international flights suddenly prohibited, airlines that offered service between Simferopol and any non-Russian destinations were forced to close regional offices and let their employees go, as was the case for one interviewee:

My last official place of work before the annexation was at an office for an airline that ran flights between Simferopol and Istanbul. I worked there as a representative of the company. I really liked this job, it really suited me. But because of the sanctions, international flights to Crimea were banned, and so the company had to close our office in Simferopol. At first we just canceled our flights and transferred our passengers, we thought that somehow this issue would be resolved soon and the flights would resume. The company didn't want to close the office immediately, because everything had been going so well before and it had almost been a full year since we began operating there. But nothing changed, and eventually we had to close. (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Also suffering a tremendous blow was Crimea's burgeoning information technologies (IT) industry, which was paralyzed by international sanctions against the importation or exportation of services and technologies to or from occupied Crimea, and by the disruption of financial services from Ukrainian banks. Thousands of well-paying jobs in the IT sector suddenly vanished overnight with the imposition of sanctions in December 2014, leaving many young, well-educated Crimeans—predominantly men—without work. While some opted to relocate to Russia, thousands of programmers, web designers, and engineers found work in the Ukrainian mainland, particularly in the city of Lviv, which has recently emerged as a leading center of

Ukraine’s tech boom (Francis 2016). Indeed, many of the Crimean IDPs with whom I spoke were employed in the IT sector, and roughly 16.6% of survey respondents cited their profession as a programmer, designer, engineer, or other IT specialist. In an interview with the Ukrainian tech-focused website DOA.ua, one programmer from Sevastopol who relocated to Kyiv estimated that half of Sevastopol’s two thousand IT specialists have left Crimea since the beginning of the occupation (Donchenko 2015).

### *Initial Gains, Long-Term Loses*

While severed connections to the Ukrainian mainland and burdensome international sanctions spelled economic ruin for many Crimeans working in the private sector, state employees and pensioners actually saw an immediate increase in their salaries and pensions once Russia took control of the region’s economic and bureaucratic levers. Indeed, as the Russian economy is stronger than Ukraine’s and average salaries and pensions there are generally higher, many Crimeans were eager to join Russia mostly for the higher wages. Salaries and pensions increased immediately, even exceeding the Russian average as, in the words of one interviewee, “Russia tried to buy the loyalty” of the Crimean populace (Interview 041, Crimean Tatar man, 40s). One former professor at a large Crimean university explained to me the how this payment scheme worked during the first months of the occupation:

In 2014, Putin actively bought Crimea. Enormous amounts of money poured into Crimea that year. Everybody was paid an unbelievable salary. In Crimea, in my university, professors’ salaries became standardized—32,000 rubles. The exchange rate to the dollar was still 30 rubles at that time, so professors immediately started earning \$1,050, \$1,080 per month. And we still had the old [lower] Ukrainian prices then, before the inflation started. As a result, many of my friends said, “listen, I don’t love [the occupiers], they’re vermin, but never in my life have I earned \$1,000 in one month! I can buy things for my mom, I can buy things for my kids!” This was every month. Plus, they even gave us bonuses as a further stimulant, and in the first year they gave them to everyone, but then they

started to decrease and were only given to certain people. But there was a bonus every month—20,000 rubles, 25,000 rubles, 30,000 rubles. A few months they even gave 40,000-ruble bonuses! So it was a 32,000 ruble salary, plus about a 35,000 ruble bonus every month, so all together they were getting 60,000 rubles, about \$2,000. So that year [2014] after the annexation a professor earned about \$15,000. This is... for us, this is an unbelievable salary! Not to mention the pensions, it was the same situation. Russian pensions are 8,000 rubles. That's nothing, just 8,000 rubles... I have a friend who was a professor at Leningrad University, we studied together in graduate school. He receives a pension, they give him 9,000 rubles, plus the university gives him an extra 2,000 rubles, altogether he gets 11,000 rubles per month. When he found out that in Crimea they were receiving such pensions... meaning the standard 8,000 ruble pension, but then multiplied by 7.8—this was the “boost factor.” So altogether former university employees started to receive 30,000-ruble, 40,000-ruble, 50,000-ruble pensions! My friend told me, “listen, I’ve lived in this country my whole life. I pay my taxes. Why do they pay me an 11,000-ruble pension and there they pay 30,000, 40,000, 50,000-ruble pensions?!” I said, “because they didn’t occupy you, but they’ve occupied us!” He said, “let them occupy Petersburg! Let them occupy it and pay me such a pension too!” (Interview 093, ethnic Russian man, 60s)

Pensions for retired military personnel also increased dramatically under Russian occupation—up to about \$500 per month compared to the roughly \$100 per month paid by the Ukrainian government, according to one interviewee whose father in Crimea receives a military pension (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s). For the tens of thousands of active and retired military personnel who call Crimea home, the increased pensions were a welcome change and a sign that life would indeed be better under Russian occupation.

However, as a result of Crimea’s growing political and economic isolation, its reliance on costly imports from the Russian mainland, and a rapidly devalued ruble caused by international sanctions and plunging oil prices, prices for goods and services began to skyrocket toward the end of 2014, mostly nullifying any initial financial advantages of the occupation (Yavorskaya 2014). “Immediately after the ruble was introduced the pensions and state salaries really increased by a factor of three, so people started earning more,” noted one interviewee, “but hiding behind the increased salaries was the increase in prices. It all just evened out” (Interview 053, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 50s). Multiple interviewees estimated that prices on many goods

increased two to three times compared to what they were before the annexation, exceeding even the prices in Moscow and St. Petersburg where standards of living are far higher. “The higher prices were really palpable,” recalled another interviewee. “Here [in Lviv] you get used to just going out to eat for lunch or dinner or just going to sit in a café. But there [in Sevastopol], you would go to a restaurant, open the menu and then think to yourself, ‘do I really want to [spend this much]? Probably not’” (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). And while those earning a higher government salary along with their initial bonuses could keep pace with the rising costs of living, those in the private sector faced increasing strains on their budgets.

Even for government employees and pensioners, the honeymoon did not last long. Payments were reduced to align with Russian-wide standards following an initial transition period, taking many by surprise who had grown accustomed to the occupiers’ financial largesse. According to the same professor quoted above, the situation shifted drastically at the end of 2014:

The transition period ended on January 1, 2015. A person who went to collect their pension on December 29 received their 8,000 rubles times 7.8, but a person who went to collect their pension on January 3, once the new year had passed, they just received 8,000 rubles. They’d say, “yes I know, and now the ‘boost factor.’”

“What boost factor?”

“Well, we all got...”

“No, that was 2014. Now you’re a region of Russia just like all the rest, so you’ll receive the same as they do in Petersburg, in Vladivostok, in Novosibirsk. That’s your pension, 8,000 rubles, that’s it.” So they saw it necessary in 2014 to guard against any kind of revolt or discontentment, and they did it with money. “Here you go, now keep quiet!” Now everybody’s left scratching their heads and swearing about how they have been duped. (Interview 093, ethnic Russian man, 60s.)

Thus, by the beginning of 2015 the economic outlook for the vast majority of Crimeans had grown dim, and with no signs of an improved economic relationship with Ukraine or the lifting of sanctions, and with a promised bridge to the Russian mainland still years away, mounting

financial pressures motivated many to consider leaving Crimea for greener pastures. Put bluntly, “life in Crimea is not very good now, the prices are really high and the salaries are really low. And, just... it’s dying little by little” (Interview 042, Russian woman, 20s).

Political, bureaucratic, and technological complications associated with the transition from a Ukrainian to Russian system of governance placed further financial strains upon many Crimeans. Ukrainian banks ceased to operate in Crimea shortly after the occupation began, leaving thousands without access to their accounts and, in many cases, their savings altogether (Batalov 2015). Moreover, international sanctions against Crimea prohibited credit card companies like Visa and Mastercard from operating within the peninsula, making it impossible for average Crimeans to access their lines of credit ("Visa i MasterCard..." 2014). The gradual restructuring and liquidation of various Ukrainian state-run agencies in Crimea also left many unemployed in the wake of the annexation. One interviewee informed me that she had been let go from her job at a state-owned television and radio broadcasting agency once it had transferred to Russian state control. “A lot of people lost their jobs,” she explained, “not because they didn’t support the annexation, but because everything was consolidated and reconfigured when the new authorities arrived. It was all very complicated” (Interview 065, Russian woman, 50s).

Although not a financial concern in the strictest or most immediate sense, higher education in Crimea also suffered tremendously as a result of the occupation. Ukrainian authorities revoked the accreditation of all Crimean universities following the annexation, rendering degrees earned there after 2014 worthless anywhere outside of Russia (Yankovskii 2015). A work around was established by which accredited universities elsewhere in Russia could issue diplomas to those graduating from a Crimean university, but higher education in Crimea was left in tatters under Russian occupation nevertheless. Many students have opted to

travel to Russia to attend university, while others—particularly Crimean Tatars—have come to the Ukrainian mainland instead to continue or begin their higher education. Refat Chubarov, a deputy of the Ukrainian parliament and chairperson of the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People, remarked that many Crimean Tatar youths “understand the value of an education earned at an unrecognized university—it shuts down their career development” (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov). Thus, with regards to the system of education and the opportunities it can foster, long-term economic prospects in Crimea appear as bleak as they do in the short-term.

Between economic and political isolation, sanctions and other obstacles that have hamstrung many industries, increased prices of goods, stagnating salaries and pensions, and evaporating educational opportunities, it has become incredibly difficult for many to simply find work or earn a decent living in occupied Crimea, and the situation only appears to be getting worse. Pavel Kazarin, a well-known Ukrainian journalist of Russian heritage who grew up in Crimea, explained to me his prognosis for Crimea’s future:

There are two senses of time; the first is when time is working for you. For example, you’re sitting in the hospital, they’ve cut out your appendix, the pain killers have worn off and you feel terrible, but you know that with every second the seams on your wound are healing, your health is recovering, and time is working in your favor. You just need to wait a bit and everything will be fine. (...) And then there are those situations where time is working against you. For example, you need to make an important decision, but you keep putting it off until tomorrow. It weighs on you, it makes you uncomfortable. Or when you have some kind of illness and you don’t begin to treat it. I have the distinct sense that time is working against Crimea, and this depresses me, it gives me no sense of joy. In the modern world it is only possible to be effective when you are open to the world; a transparent economy, a mutual exchange of knowledge, etc. Any kind of isolation is harmful, and today Crimea has become isolated. It’s already excluded from educational, scientific, and other spheres. It is not open to the world. (...) Therefore, my feelings toward Crimea ... I really hope that those changes for the worse that have already taken place in the peninsula will not be irreversible. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

Indeed, bleak financial prospects and economic isolation are important factors motivating many Crimeans to resettle in the Ukrainian mainland. When asked to identify reasons why they

decided to leave Crimea, 28.2% of survey respondents cited “lack of economic opportunities,” while 6.8% also indicated that they left “to start or continue a business.” Moreover, 11.3% of survey respondents said that they left Crimea in order to “study in a Ukrainian university.” However, while it may be appropriate to classify many Crimean IDPs as economic migrants given the financial pressures they have faced, economic factors are but one component of the complex set of conditions that have driven thousands from occupied Crimea to the Ukrainian mainland. Many—especially those who celebrate Crimea’s unification with Russia—are prepared to weather these economic woes and remain in the region, but for others life in Crimea has become a political and emotional struggle. “I could have stayed in Crimea,” one interviewee told me,

because my salary was ok. I wouldn’t say that I *couldn’t* live in Crimea, thought the prices, oh my god, they, I don’t know, doubled or tripled I guess. But I could survive. The question was not actually money, the question was, you know, mental and emotional. It’s more difficult than finances, personally for me. (Interview 007, Crimean Greek woman, 20s).

To fully grasp the motivations driving thousands of Crimeans to the Ukrainian mainland, it is crucial to understand the various forms of pressure and oppression that the Russian occupation has imposed upon them, and the very real sense of danger and fear that now permeates the peninsula.

### **Fear of Persecution and Concerns for Personal Safety**

Thousands in Crimea faced an imminent threat to their personal safety and freedom from the very first days of the occupation, as Russian authorities immediately made clear that opposition would not be tolerated. The same narrative that villainized the Euromaidan and the new government it helped bring to power was quickly projected onto anybody in Crimea that continued to show open support for the Euromaidan or demonstrate affinities for Ukraine,



recasting them as public enemies in occupied Crimea. What's more, in December 2013 the Russian Parliament had introduced Article 280.1 to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation aimed at squelching separatist tendencies in the Russian regions. The law criminalized any calls made publicly or online for actions that would violate Russia's territorial integrity, which, according to Russian law, included Crimea by the time the law went into effect on May 9, 2014 ("Kak v Rossii..." 2016). The law empowered Russian authorities to label as separatism an assertion that Crimea is not or should not be a part of Russia, and to penalize "separatists" with fines of up to 300,000 rubles (about \$8,500 at the time) or up to four years imprisonment.<sup>15</sup> Russian occupation effectively stigmatized and criminalized support for Ukraine and Crimea's place within it, leaving thousands vulnerable to harassment, violence, persecution, arrest, and even murder for the expression of their political identities. In fact, 33% of all survey respondents stated that "political, ethnic, or religious persecution" played a role in their decision to leave occupied Crimea, and 37% also indicated that "concern for personal safety" was a motivating factor in their relocation to the Ukrainian mainland.

### *Examples of Violence and Persecution Against Those Who Oppose the Annexation*

A number of high-profile arrests and disappearances set an ominous tone in the early days of the occupation. Reshat Ametov, a 39-year-old Crimean Tatar man, staged a solitary protest against the occupation in Simferopol's Lenin Square on March 3, less than two weeks before the referendum was held. In broad daylight, three unidentified men in military fatigues abducted Ametov in the middle of the square and shoved him into a car, after which he was never again heard from or seen alive. Twelve days later, on March 15—the day before the

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<sup>15</sup> The language of the law in the Russian criminal code may be read here (in Russian): <https://coderf.ru/uk-rf/280.1>

referendum—Ametov’s body was found in a field about 40 miles east of Simferopol, his head wrapped in duct tape, his legs bound, and bearing signs of torture that indicated a violent death (Human Rights Watch 2014).

While the disappearance, torture, and murder of Reshat Ametov underscored the terrifying and violent new reality that Crimeans faced under Russian occupation, a highly publicized criminal case beginning in May 2014 demonstrated the extent to which Russian authorities were prepared to use the law as a weapon against resistance. The case centered around a promising young filmmaker from the Crimean city of Yevpatoria named Oleg Sentsov, whose critically acclaimed 2011 film *Gamer* was an autobiographical depiction of a disaffected Crimean youth’s escape into the world of competitive video game culture. Sentsov, 38, had been active in the *automaïdan* movement—an off-shoot of the Euromaidan that mobilized car owners to provide transportation and road obstruction in service to the Euromaidan’s objectives—and had helped deliver supplies to Ukrainian military personnel after the “Little Green Men” had blocked their escape from Ukraine’s military facilities in Crimea.

Along with four other young men—Oleksandr Kolchenko, Hennadiy Afanasiev, and Oleksiy Chyrniy—Sentsov was arrested by Russian authorities in Crimea on suspicion of plotting to commit terrorist acts against Crimea’s infrastructure and monuments. The four men were tried as Russian citizens although none had accepted Russian passports after the annexation. They were all subjected to beatings and torture by Russian authorities, after which Chyrniy and Afanasiev confessed to their involvement in the plot and identified Sentsov as the ringleader—claims which Afanasiev later rescinded (Makarenko 2015). Chyrniy and Afanasiev’s testimonies, obtained through torture, were used to convict three of the four men of terrorism, while Afanasiev was later released in June 2016. In August 2015 Sentsov was sentenced to 20

years in prison, while Kolchenko and Chyrniy received lighter sentences of 10 and 7 years, respectively ("Russian court..." 2015). The arrest and conviction of these men sent a clear warning that opposition and resistance to Crimea's new political order would be met with harsh repercussions under the law. Oleg Sentsov, who began a hunger strike in May 2018 to demand the release of all Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia, has emerged as a major symbol of Ukraine's resistance to Russian aggression, with "#FreeSentsov" becoming a popular social media campaign and rallying cry for Ukrainians and international sympathizers alike.

### *Activists, Journalists, and Ukraine Supporters at Risk*

The very real threat of violence and palpable sense of fear that now gripped Crimea motivated many to plot their escape from the peninsula, especially those who had actively supported the Euromaidan and spoke out publicly against Russian occupation. Olga Skripnik, founder of the social organization *Al'menda*, was an active participant and organizer of pro-Ukrainian demonstrations in her native Yalta during the Euromaidan, and her bold refusal to cease demonstrating after the occupation had begun made her and her colleagues open targets for harassment and suppression. Along with her husband, Skripnik fled from Yalta to Kyiv on the day of the referendum. As she explained to me,

Two of my colleagues were kidnapped on the eve of the referendum. They were abducted and held captive for two weeks, they were tortured. After this I received clear signals that I will be next because I was one of the organizers [of pro-Ukrainian demonstrations] in Yalta. We were added to the so-called "black list," which included not only those people who would be persecuted, but all those people who were to be physically destroyed or denied freedom. Since my husband has a lot of experience working in the Caucasus around 2008—during the events in South Ossetia—he knew how the FSB<sup>16</sup> and Russian special forces operate, and practically forced me to leave Crimea, because I did not believe that it could all be so bad. But it really was. We had reasonable grounds to believe that they were going to come for us, and so we were compelled to leave on March 16, the

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<sup>16</sup> The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (*Federal'naiia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*).

same day as the so-called referendum. Practically our whole organization had to leave, because we were all actively involved in these events, we all participated in peaceful demonstrations, and we participated publicly. We managed to hold our last demonstration on March 13; it was an anti-war demonstration, against the Russian occupation, and that was already after the so-called ‘Little Green Men’ had arrived. They showed up at our demonstration not only with the intention of disrupting it, but to beat us up. So we understood that the situation had become too dangerous. (Interview 033, Olga Skripnik).

Another interviewee from Simferopol left for the Ukrainian mainland with his family just days before the referendum was held, fearful that his participation in a civilian defense of Ukrainian military facilities had put him and his family on the occupiers’ radar:

As soon as the “Little Green Men” arrived, along with my brother and my wife, we went out with our signs and protested just on our own. We thought that this would help in some way. The whole time there was information in the media about how they might storm some of the Ukrainian military facilities there, so we went to one of them around 3 or 4 in the morning. We thought that the presence of the citizen population might somehow prevent them from storming it. (...) We stayed there day and night for a few days, dozing when we had the chance. Given our active position, we started to feel as if we were being persecuted after this. So, because my whole family was implicated in this, before the so-called referendum even happened I gathered everything that would fit in the car along with my family—my wife and two children—and we left for Lviv. (Interview 058, Krymchak man, 40s)

Crimean journalists working for news outlets that were supportive of the Euromaidan or critical of the occupation in its early days were also among the first targets of suppression.

Crafting a narrative of Ukrainian aggression toward Crimea’s Russian population and their desperate need for salvation was a key component of the Kremlin’s successful seizure of Crimea, and occupying forces moved swiftly to silence any regional media presenting an alternative narrative of the events surrounding the annexation. Before arriving in Kyiv, one interviewee I spoke with had worked for a critical media outlet in Simferopol known as the Center for Journalistic Investigations, and she recounted how Russian special forces moved to shut down the organization and intimidate its employees during the first days of the occupation:

It all started systematically after the seizure of the Crimean Parliament and Council of Ministers on February 27. Right after that, on March 1, they seized our Center for Journalistic Investigations, just three days later. We were located in the very center of Simferopol, and armed men just broke in and blocked us from leaving the building, and from that moment we felt direct censorship placed upon us. Some of our colleagues were taken to the basement and Aksyonov's<sup>17</sup> thugs roughed them up, and after that we were no longer given access to any events or meetings organized by the new Crimean authorities, and they would no longer give us any commentary. After that they continued to threaten us, and they began following us without even trying to hide it. They would follow behind us whenever we went out, somehow it would always be the same guy in some Cossack uniform<sup>18</sup> carrying a Russian flag who would follow us home, just blatantly trying to show us that they knew who we are. After we started investigating the murder of Reshat Ametov, they started threatening us directly with physical violence. Then they terminated the lease on our offices in the Trade Union House of Simferopol, where we had been located for 15 years, even though our papers were all in order. They just kicked us out onto the street (...) I was the first one from our staff to leave. I lived there for half a year after the annexation and left at the end of the summer. (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Fears of reprisal afflicted not only those who had demonstrate or spoken out against the occupiers, but also anybody who simply maintained an outwardly pro-Ukrainian stance while those around them succumbed to anti-Ukrainian hysteria. Many who identify strongly as Ukrainian citizens grew rapidly alienated from their pro-Russian friends, neighbors, and even family members who began openly denouncing them or bringing them to the attention of the new authorities. I spoke with one proudly Ukrainian man about his experiences in occupied Crimea via Facebook Messenger, as he was serving in the Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in Eastern Ukraine at the time. Responding only in Ukrainian to the questions I posed in Russian, he described the experiences that compelled him to relocate to Kyiv with his wife and two young children:

Threats started coming because of my convictions, and we started keeping track of which of our pro-Ukrainian citizens were beaten, which were leaving [Crimea],

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<sup>17</sup> Sergei Aksyonov, the Kremlin-appointed Prime Minister of Crimea.

<sup>18</sup> Some Russian nationalists have taken to dressing and identifying as “Cossacks”—subscribing to a particular Cossack cultural heritage yoked to Russia rather than Ukraine—and serving as vigilantes in service of the Russian state.

and which had fallen under the influence of the enemy's propaganda. The worst was when our friends and relatives started to believe the things that the enemy was inventing about me. The separatists posted my photo online with provocative information, they sent denunciations of me to law enforcement and to my work. I felt like a Jew in Berlin in 1939. They forced us to accept their citizenship under threat of violence. It was a really terrible time. It is morally difficult for all Ukrainians to live among neo-Nazis. (Interview 089, ethnic Ukrainian man, 20s)

Indeed, many interviewees described a sense of fear that emanated less from the threat of state violence imposed by Russian authorities in Crimea, but more from the aggressively pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian attitudes that spread rapidly from the beginning of the occupation. Factions of the Crimean population had long expressed affinities for Russia and general disdain for the Ukrainian state in ways that were more or less peaceful, as I had frequently observed during my time in the region, but in the delirium brought on by the arrival of the Russian occupiers, some of these factions were pushed in violent new directions. One interviewee described to me the moment when this atmosphere of violence and fear became too much to bear, evoking in her a dark historical memory of another fearful period in the region's past that she is far too young to have experienced herself:

In Simferopol, when all these 'Russian things' started, and we "became Russian," so to speak, I saw a poster hanging on a wall that said... I cannot translate it word for word, I don't remember exactly what it said, but the idea was, like, "attention Russian patriots: if you know any people who do not support Russia, who don't support the referendum and so on, contact the..." I don't know, like, some kind of watchdog organization. There were telephone numbers to call if one of your neighbors supports Ukraine. When I saw this I was like, 'oh my god, it's the Soviet Union in the '30s! And the 40s! And the 50s! And the 60s! Oh my god, what's going on?!' And you know, that was the moment when it hit me: I should leave this region! And I'm thankful to my friends; they didn't do it, they didn't contact anyone! (Interview 007, Crimean Greek woman, 20s)

### *Targeting the Crimean Tatar Community*

Although anybody in Crimea who opposed the annexation had reason to fear for their safety, threats to the community of Crimean Tatars were most serious. Crimean Tatars were

among the staunchest supporters of the Euromaidan in Crimea, and to the surprise of many Ukrainians, displayed a fierce loyalty to the Ukrainian state from the very beginning of the Russian occupation. The *Mejlis*, the representative body of the Crimean Tatar people, had declared a boycott of the referendum, making clear from the very beginning that they would resist efforts to wrench Crimea from Ukrainian control.

Crucially, Crimean Tatars also wielded what is perhaps the most powerful weapon against Russia's efforts to impose its hegemony over Crimea: a deeply-rooted national narrative inextricably tied to the Crimean Peninsula, which directly repudiates the alternative Russian narrative that the Kremlin willfully brandished to justify the annexation. As one Crimean Tatar focus group participant told me, "Russia did not want any other groups besides Russians living in Crimea, because we destroyed the myth of a Russian Crimea. Just one Crimean Tatar living in Crimea nullifies the assertion that it is 100% Russian" (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). Where Ukrainian claims to Crimea could be easily dismissed by pointing to the relatively short period of time it had been subordinate to Kyiv or to purported improprieties surrounding the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954, Crimean Tatars' claims are deeply historical and fundamentally tied to their national identity, presenting a legitimate challenge to the imperialist narrative of Crimea's inherent Russian-ness.

What's more, Russia already figured prominently in Crimean Tatar historical narratives as their number one enemy and aggressor, as Russian and Soviet colonizers had repeatedly driven the Crimean Tatars from their homeland or otherwise attempted to snuff them out for over two centuries. From the Crimean Tatar perspective, the annexation represented just the latest iteration in a cyclical pattern of Russia's violent antagonism toward them and their homeland, rightfully agitating the ingrained resentment and enmity that most Crimean Tatars have long felt

toward the Russian state in its various historical reincarnations. “Catherine the Great, Stalin, and now Putin. One and the same, nothing ever changes,” one focus group participant aptly summarized (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s). “In their blood and from their mothers’ milk, Crimean Tatars already have an antipathy toward this country,” an interviewee told me bluntly, adding that “Russia has brought a lot of trouble to our nation” (Interview 076, Crimean Tatar man, 40s). Fully aware of this profound resentment, Russian authorities understood that the Crimean Tatars would be the sharpest thorn in their side as they moved to seize Crimea. Neutralizing Crimean Tatar resistance was therefore an urgent objective.

Russian authorities immediately began restricting Crimean Tatars’ rights to assemble, banning the yearly gathering on Simferopol’s Lenin Square to commemorate May 18, the anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars. A commemorative gathering was permitted only in one Crimean Tatar district on the outskirts of the city, under the watchful eye of Russian security forces (["Bol'she 10 tysiach tatar..."](#) 2014). Authorities also moved swiftly to delegitimize and ultimately eradicate the Crimean Tatar leadership, beginning with its most prominent leaders and vocal critics of the occupation. Refat Chubarov had become the chairperson of the *Mejlis* in November 2013, only four months before the annexation. He had succeeded Mustafa Dzhemilev, the famed leader of the Soviet-era Crimean Tatar national movement and first leader of the *Mejlis* after its rehabilitation in 1991. Despite no longer leading the *Mejlis*, Dzhemilev remains almost universally revered within the Crimean Tatar community, and is still regarded as their *de facto* leader. Both Dzhemilev and Chubarov are also members of the Ukrainian parliament, making them vital political conduits between the Crimean Tatar community and the Ukrainian government. Neither men were in Crimea when the Kremlin formalized the annexation on March 18, and by April both were declared *persona non grata*



within the territory of the Russian Federation for five years, including in Crimea. Flanked by dozens of their supporters waving the Crimean Tatar flag, the two men made a highly publicized attempt to enter the territory of Crimea from Ukraine on May 3, only to be turned away and soon thereafter charged with illegally attempting to enter Russian territory, putting them both on the federal wanted list and further ensuring their exclusion from Crimea ("Dzhemilev ne pustili v Krym" 2014).

Having effectively banned the Crimean Tatar's two most important and symbolic leaders from Crimea, Russian authorities set about neutralizing the *Mejlis* and going after other prominent Crimean Tatar figures. Authorities seized the building housing the *Mejlis*'s Simferopol offices in September 2014, confiscating their documents and equipment (Dempsey 2014). The *Mejlis* was ultimately declared an "extremist organization" in April 2016, essentially criminalizing and dissolving the organization under Russian law (Nechepurenko 2016). Within the first year of the occupation, several more Crimean Tatar public figures had either been banned from the peninsula or charged with criminal activity in response to their outspoken opposition to the occupation. Between January and March 2015, a total of eight Crimean Tatar men were arrested and charged with organizing and participating in public disorder in connection with their involvement in the demonstrations that took place in front of the Crimean Parliament building a year earlier on February 26, 2014—an event that involved thousands of both pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian demonstrators alike, and which took place at a time when Russia still recognized Crimea as Ukrainian territory. The most prominent of these arrestees was Akhtem Chiygoz, vice chairman of the *Mejlis*. Chiygoz was ultimately tried and convicted for his supposed crimes in September 2017, and was sentenced to eight years in prison.

Another high-profile case involved *Mejlis* member and head of the Bakhchisarai municipal administration, Ilmi Umerov, who stated in a television interview while in Kyiv in March 2016 that Russia should remove itself from Ukrainian territory in Crimea and the Donbas. Russian authorities invoked Article 280.1 in response to these statements, searching Umerov's home and charging him with separatism two months after his television appearance. In August 2016 authorities subjected Umerov, who suffers from Parkinson's disease and Type 2 diabetes, to a one-month involuntary stint in a psychiatric hospital, before ultimately convicting him in September 2017 of the crime of separatism and sentencing him to two years in a prison labor camp. Both Umerov and Chygoz were unexpectedly released from prison in October 2017, reportedly due to a direct appeal to President Putin by Turkish President Recep Erdoğan, and now both men have relocated to Kyiv. But others in Crimea cannot rely on the patronage of a powerful foreign leaders to save them from political persecution; as Refat Chubarov explained to me, any displays of disloyalty to Russian authorities can bring grave consequences for Crimeans:

Under the occupying regime, any person who is even mildly prominent—it can be a journalist, a small-time social activist, a teacher, a doctor, or even some person selling produce in the bazaar—he must constantly affirm and demonstrate his loyalty [to the Russian state]. Lacking loyalty is a threat, lacking loyalty is grounds for the authorities to come after you sooner or later, or to call you in for interrogation, or to go after your children and so forth. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

### *Devout Muslims and the Specter of Islamic “Extremism”*

Beyond the Crimean Tatar leadership, Russian authorities have also disproportionately targeted Crimean Tatars in dozens of home raids and arrests across Crimea since the beginning of the occupation. Most of these raids and arrests have occurred not in accordance with the law criminalizing perceived calls for separatism or expressions of pro-Ukrainian sentiments, but as part of a Russian effort to repress religious “extremism” and curtail the growth of more

traditional forms of Islam associated with Wahhabism. In Crimea, these efforts have been aimed primarily at the organization known as *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, a controversial pan-Islamist organization whose stated goal is the establishment of a religious Caliphate uniting the Muslim world. Although members of *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* have never been involved directly in any acts of terrorism or violence in advancement of their goals, the organization is outlawed as an extremist or terrorist organization in many states including Russia, but not Ukraine. Beginning in the 1990s, *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* had maintained a small but stable following within the community of Crimean Tatars, whose participation in the organization was peaceful and rarely drew much attention (see Muratova 2008). With the annexation, Crimea's *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* members were rendered extremists and criminals overnight, prompting a majority of them to flee for the Ukrainian mainland shortly after the occupation first began.

Russian special forces in Crimea have raided the homes of dozens of Crimean Tatar families on suspicion of association with *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* or possession of certain “extremists” texts, targeting those who are merely more devout in their practice of Islam. Families that include men who grow out their beards or women who wear traditional *hijabs* are easy targets, but the raids have expanded to include Crimean Tatars who are less obviously devout in their religious beliefs. I met with members of a few traditional Muslim families from Crimea who now live in a remote part of the Carpathian Mountains in Western Ukraine. It was unclear whether they considered themselves members of *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, but their outward appearance and open adherence to traditional Islamic principles made them clear targets for Russian anti-extremist measures, and they were thus compelled to leave Crimea shortly after the occupation began. The head of one family gave me his assessment of the risks Muslims now face in Crimea:

Our fears were confirmed when those who left [Crimea] after us complained about the physical and moral pressure that was placed on them. Some people's

homes have been raided, and others were essentially told, “don’t worry, we’ll come for you sooner or later...” It’s such a completely stressful atmosphere that you can never let your guard down. Those who have left most recently say that the authorities raided their homes and all this, and the raids are still happening. And now it’s not just the devout Muslims [*predstavitel’i Islama*] like us who are being targeted for raids, but average [Crimean] Tatars who never attracted anybody’s attention in the Ukrainian days when a Tatar was a Tatar, just a person like you or anybody else. We can’t even talk about ourselves in this regard because from the very beginning they considered [people like] us to pose a certain threat, and all the media talked about how we are terrorists, Wahhabis, etc. They put us all into one category, they don’t make any distinctions.” (Interview 80, Muslim man, 30s)

Dozens of arrests of mostly Crimean Tatar men—many of them with large families—have resulted from these raids, despite resounding denials of membership in *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* or involvement in any extremist activity. As Mustafa Dzhemilev explained to me,

The occupiers’ repressive apparatus works primarily against the Crimean Tatars. If we take the 160-180 home raids that have taken place from the beginning of the occupation until now [November 2015], 99% of them are against Crimean Tatars. They are arresting Crimean Tatars too, and this creates the conditions where it becomes necessary for Crimean Tatars to leave Crimea. The Crimean Tatars there are not very skittish, but when they take away your children and they are later found dead, of course this inspires fear. (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev)

Indeed, Crimean Tatars’ fears of physical violence from Russian authorities and their supporters in Crimea are well founded. In addition to Reshat Ametov, dozens of men—the vast majority of which are Crimean Tatar—have gone missing since the beginning of the occupation, including five additional Crimean Tatar men whose bodies were later found with signs of violent death (“Propavshie i pogibshie...” 2016). I also heard from several Crimean Tatars that they believe Russian authorities in Crimea are attempting to provoke the Crimean Tatar community into lashing out violently in order to justify a large-scale military crackdown against them. Some expressed fear that another deportation was imminent, while others feared that Putin would use tactics drawn from the Chechen war to wipe out any and all Crimean Tatar resistance. “It’s

obvious that the occupiers had counted on the Crimean Tatars to put up some kind of physical resistance,” Dzhemilev elaborated,

so then they could begin to eradicate them like they did in Chechnya. They had a clear strategy. We had received reliable information that the occupiers have hoped to find the bodies of Russian soldiers in Crimean Tatar villages, in order to justify an ethnic cleansing. This is why in the very first days of the occupation we immediately formed patrol units that could monitor all those who came and went from the villages. Their provocations did not work on us. But the fear, the premonition that something bad will happen is ever-present. (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev)

### *Threats of Violence from Other Crimeans*

Beyond the persistent threat of state violence and the law used as a cudgel against their community, Crimean Tatars have increasingly faced the threat of discriminatory violence from other Crimeans who are emboldened and supported by the new authorities. One interviewee described a violent encounter he experienced shortly before leaving Crimea and attributed such violence to an underlying hatred that some Crimeans harbor against non-Russians:

Two guys who lived in the same village as me disappeared, they were just thrown in to a car and driven away. It was in broad daylight. They still haven't been found. Then they found Reshat Ametov, who had been tortured and who died a horrible death for his civic position. I understood that power on the peninsula had suddenly fallen into the hands of people for whom the opportunity for revenge is like some evil form of self-expression, who can't do anything except mock and act violently toward people who are different from them. (...) In their understanding, justice means squashing those who aren't Russian, destroying everything that isn't Russian but Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar, etc. If you speak in your native language, they threaten to beat you up. I was just walking in Simferopol and some kid came up to me, some student, and demanded to see my papers just because I don't look Slavic. I said, "why should I give you my papers? The police have never asked for my papers before because I'm a peaceful, respectable citizen. I've never had any trouble with the law. So, why?" He pulled out some certificate printed on a normal piece of paper that read, "Crimean Self-Defense," and said that I was required to obey him. When I refused, a few adult men came running up to us and started beating me. They knocked my teeth out. I tried to defend myself and then called the police, but the guys just said that I had provoked them. The police begrudgingly offered me some first aid, because we were right in the center of the city. I understood that if you try to fight you expose

yourself to danger, and everybody else around you is constrained by fear, so you have to choose between groveling or exposing yourself and your family to danger. And there won't be any justice, there's no use waiting for it. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

However, many Crimean Tatars I spoke with tended not to distinguish between threats emanating from Russian authorities and those posed by hostile Crimean residents. As far as they are concerned, threats from above and from below are both part of a coordinated assault on Crimean Tatars' freedom and safety in retribution for their persistent solidarity and alliance with Ukraine, and for their refusal to submit willingly to Russian hegemony in Crimea. During one focus group session, a young Crimean Tatar man who had been an active member of the Crimean Euromaidan mournfully recalled the threats and provocations he had endured in the lead up to his departure from Crimea, and the dangers that now await him if he were to return to his homeland. His description of these threats moves seamlessly between those imposed by Russian authorities and those carried out by anonymous, hostile individuals:

I don't think that it's worth the risk for me to go back there now, given the trend that we now see. You would think that after some time and after everything that's happened, that the situation would start to calm down, but that's not the case. With every month the occupiers are more and more active with these policies [toward Crimean Tatars] in Crimea. I don't even know if they would let me into Crimea now, but if I were to show up there I might well be abducted. When I was still in Crimea, people had written graffiti on my house and posted fliers saying that I'm a fascist, that "a fascist lives in this house, he's financed by America, and the blood of people who died on the Maidan is on his hands." And there are a lot of people like this. I know many other Crimean Tatars who had this happen to them, it's surprising that they didn't do it to *every* Crimean Tatar. It's difficult to call Crimean Tatars fascists—the Russian Federation just came in with its troops, and then somehow the Crimean Tatars became the fascists. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

When I asked him if his parents had remained in Crimea, he simply replied, "I don't like to talk about my parents, because I'm afraid for them" (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

While vocal opponents of the occupation in Crimea face legal or violent repercussions for their activities regardless of ethnicity, Crimean Tatars have been targeted collectively for the

stubbornly pro-Ukrainian and anti-occupation stance of their leaders and most community members, and for the threat that their presence in Crimea poses to rhetorical justifications for the annexation. Wild accusations of nefarious and subversive activities—either as “extremists,” “terrorists,” or “fascists,”—are the primary means of justification for Russian authorities and pro-Russian Crimeans alike to imperil Crimean Tatars’ safety and freedom. These threats have been a major factor motivating Crimean Tatars and other opponents of the occupation to leave Crimea and resettle in the Ukrainian mainland; 33% of survey respondents indicated that “political, ethnic, or religious persecution” influenced their decisions to leave Crimea, while 37% also cited “concern for personal safety.” But although thousands of IDPs were motivated to leave Crimea because of the very real danger that they and their families faced, a majority indicate that they left not under threat of violence, but rather for political, emotional, and psychological reasons.

### **Emotional Reactions and Political Opposition to the Occupation**

Hundreds have fallen victim to violence and persecution by both state and non-state actors in occupied Crimea, and thousands more have suffered under the looming threat of violence and persecution. Yet, according to survey results, the most commonly cited factor motivating Crimean IDPs to leave the region is not the threat of persecution or fear for the safety and wellbeing of self and family; 71.2% of survey respondents indicated that “personal opposition to the occupation” influenced their decision to leave Crimea, nearly twice the rate of response for the second most commonly cited factor, “concern for personal safety,” at 37%. Of course, “personal opposition to the occupation” is only a vague articulation of how IDPs have responded to Crimea’s new political and social conditions. Framed differently, life in Crimea has

become taxing and uncomfortable for those who remain opposed to the occupying regime. “I didn’t feel unsafe,” one interviewee confided, “because you never know what will happen tomorrow. Maybe they will try to win you over or something, or maybe a war will start. But I wasn’t afraid that a war might start, because it was just *unpleasant* [*nepriiatno*] [in Crimea]” (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s).

### *Feelings of Discomfort and Alienation*

Descriptions of a general “unpleasantness” enveloping Crimea permeated many of my conversations with IDPs, albeit in many different manifestations. One common trope that I encountered in my interviews was that opposing the annexation or supporting Ukraine brought about feeling of alienation, or the sense that one is no longer welcome in the place they called home. “I supported the Euromaidan, and when all the events [of the annexation] began, it suddenly became clear to me that there is no place for me [in Crimea],” explained one interviewee, adding that “when they announced the results of the referendum, I understood that everything immediately became alien to me” (Interview 059, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s). As the rhetoric of Ukrainian aggression and Russia’s righteousness calcified into the accepted narrative of Crimea’s “reunification” with Russia, those holding an alternative view were made to feel as though their perceptions were skewed and their opinions deviant. “You feel like you are the one who is not right in this region,” one interviewee told me in frustration, because “[i]f you have a different point of view, that means that you have a problem, you are the one who doesn’t understand something or who gives the wrong position and so on. It’s very difficult, because you can’t express your opinion” (Interview 007, Crimean Greek woman, 20s).



Some frame their feelings of alienation as resulting from their refusal or inability to view the situation in Crimea according to the officially sanctioned Russian narrative, while others attribute it to the changes taking place around them. Many interviewees described a dark and ominous feeling in the air, an eerie shift in the mood that grew increasingly alienating and made them feel as if they were no longer at home in Crimea. As one interviewee explained, the feeling hit whenever he left the house:

When the invasion and annexation of Crimea happened, you could feel the pressure. It's not like someone is always following you with a gun while you're walking, but there is this pressure, it's in the air, this tension exists. Like, you go walking in Simferopol, and it seems like you're walking in a different city. There's just this feeling. (...) You walk out into some kind of alien, hostile place. (Interview 040, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

For others, simply moving through public spaces became a taxing emotional experience due to the constant visual reminders of Crimea's new political reality. Symbols of the Ukrainian state and its sovereignty in Crimea were rapidly replaced with symbols of Russian authority following the annexation. Images of Putin, the Russian flag, and the orange and black St. George ribbon—an emblem celebrating the Soviet victory in World War II that has become heavily associated with Russian nationalism in recent years—are now ubiquitous features of the cultural landscape, particularly in Crimea's cities. "It was so difficult to walk down the street and see portraits of Putin, for example, or Russian flags," one interviewee from Simferopol recalled mournfully,

It really was just so difficult, it brought me to tears, really. I just didn't know what to do with myself. I remember how I was on my way to meet someone one time, and I saw how the Russian tricolor was hanging from the building of the Crimean Parliament, and the tears just started flowing. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s)

In other cases, interviewees equated feeling of alienation with the substantive loss of freedoms that accompanied Crimea's transition to Russian authority:

I felt free in Crimea, but when the new authorities arrived, I no longer had the feeling that Crimea is mine. I no longer felt free, I felt like a stranger, a stranger among my own people (...) Before all of this I had been in my homeland, but when all this conflict started, I saw all these changes, how the people changed, and I just told myself that I can't stay here. Crimea became alien to me.  
(Interview 070, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

### *The Hardships of Refusing Russian Citizenship*

The experience of suddenly feeling alien or outcast without ever having left one's home region is a common thread running through many of the personal narratives that interviewees shared with me. However, in the months following the annexation, thousands in Crimea became aliens not only figuratively, but literally, as those who refused to accept Russian citizenship were automatically re-registered as foreign residents. In a process similar to the "passportization" of peoples in Georgia's break-away regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Artman 2013), all Crimean residents were automatically issued Russian passports unless they filed a formal declaration refusing Russian citizenship at the passport services office. One interviewee, who claimed to be the second person in line to refuse Russian citizenship, explained to me that Crimeans were initially given only during the month of April 2014 to file their declarations of refusal, but authorities ended the process early on April 18 with hundreds still waiting to file. According to her, about 3,500 people managed to formally refuse Russian citizenship within those 18 days, while the remaining 1,200 waiting in line became Russian citizens, "whether they liked it or not" (Interview 053, Ukrainian woman, 40s). Without ever changing their residence, those 3,500 who successfully filed their paperwork became foreigners, Ukrainian citizens living in the territory of Russia according to the region's new authorities. However, this interviewee also noted that "with the exception of a small number of principled citizens," those who initially refused Russian citizenships eventually decided to accept it anyway, because

to live in Crimea now without a Russian passport is to live in complete isolation from the world, you can only sit at home. If you refuse the passport, you become a complete outcast, you can't do anything, you're bound by the fact that you need a Russian passport. The consequences are real, because you can't receive medical treatment without this passport, you will even be denied urgent care without a Russian passport. You can't receive any government services. You can't register as an individual business owner, so engaging in business is forbidden [without a Russian passport]. There are so many things that you cannot do. You cannot reregister your apartment, you cannot sell or buy a home. Nothing is possible unless you have a Russian passport. (Interview 053, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s)

I spoke with one man who, along with his entire family, managed to live in Crimea for over a year without Russian citizenship, but who ultimately relocated to Kyiv in autumn 2015. He recounted many of the restrictions that he and his family encountered while living as registered foreigners in their own hometown of Simferopol. They were no longer able to access their bank accounts, use their credit cards, or exchange currency without Russian passports. He was denied the right to formal employment, leaving him and his family to survive on cash payments from ongoing work he had begun prior to the annexation. Running a fever of 102 degrees, his young son was denied medical treatment and a prescription from their longtime family doctor, and was later denied an excused absence from school without a doctor's note. He was also unable to enter into a payment agreement for his home utilities once the law required all standing agreements be rewritten with newly-issued Russian passports (Interview 025, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s). With such debilitating restrictions in place, those who refused Russian citizenship were made to understand that

Sooner or later I should just sacrifice my principles and say, "well, I need to live somehow. I need to get a [Russian] passport. I'll get the passport and... oh!" Now everybody's happy, they've all got their Russian passports, but this is all just meant to coerce, so that the statistics show that, "look, they've all accepted [citizenship], so it means we did the right thing, great job." But we didn't want this. We didn't accept [passports] because we didn't want to be part of this statistic. We didn't participate in this because we didn't want that passport, even

under pressure from all those circumstances. (Interview 025, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s)

Many of the IDPs I interviewed had also refused Russian passports before leaving Crimea, doing so out of protest or merely on principle. As one Crimean Tatar interviewee stated bluntly,

When the option to swap my passport for a Russian one came around, I didn't even consider it, because I knew what a Russian passport represents, I know what happens to Muslims and to indigenous peoples in the country that hands out this passport. I know what the country represented by this passport did to my grandfather and my great-grandfather. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

### *Déjà Vu: Experiencing Crimea's Backslide into the Soviet Era*

Whether or not they were legally considered foreigners, the feeling of alienation in occupied Crimea appears to be nearly universal among the IDPs with whom I spoke. For some, particularly those under the age of 25 or so, this feeling of alienation came from the perception that Crimea had suddenly become a very different and unfamiliar place after the annexation. Yet for others, especially older generations, the new Crimea felt dreadfully familiar; several interviewees expressed feelings as though Crimea has been pulled back into the Soviet era since the occupation began. "It's the Soviet Union, in the worst possible way that that can be construed," proclaimed one interviewee, adding that "it's an absolutely different reality, a completely different paradigm" (Interview 059, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). On the one hand, this "re-Sovietization" of Crimea involved the revival of Soviet-era symbols and slogans, and celebrations of the Soviet Union's most reviled figures. One young couple recalled their impressions of Crimea upon their first return visit after resettling in Lviv:

M: the general atmosphere was really... it made me laugh, I looked around at everything and it just brought me unrestrained laughter. If they seriously embrace all of this, then it seems to me like a comedy show. On banners hanging from every pole and on the sides of the trolleybuses, there's Zyuganov<sup>19</sup> declaring that "we will build communism!" It's so surreal.

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<sup>19</sup> Gennady Zyuganov is the long-time leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

W: Last summer there was news from Sevastopol about how they had composed a new song about Stalin. People took it very seriously, listening closely and clapping along, with some giant signs that declared, “Bandera is a fascist, Stalin is a hero!”<sup>20</sup>

M: ...the man who had millions of his own people killed. (Interview 074, Russian man and woman, 30s)

Many IDPs expressed resentment with the way their fellow Crimeans so eagerly embraced the Soviet nostalgia that gripped the region in the wake of the annexation, but few were altogether surprised; observers have noted anecdotally that Soviet identities remain stronger in Crimea than elsewhere in the post-Soviet space, and my own survey from 2011 indicated that one’s “Soviet past” continues to be an important part of identity construction in Crimea, chiefly among ethnic Russians (Charron 2012). Echoing a narrative I heard from multiple IDPs, one interviewee explained why Soviet nostalgia is so deeply rooted in Crimea:

You know, Crimea is probably one of the largest preserves [*zapovednikov*] of the Soviet Union. The cultural monuments connected to Soviet power are much larger there than in Moscow. There are lots of retired officers of the KGB and the Soviet Army who live there, who felt they were entitled to live out their later years in such a heavenly place as Crimea because they served the Soviet authorities (...). Now, naturally, their children and grandchildren live there. (Interview 044, Crimean Tatar man, 50s)

According to one vocal interviewee, nostalgic Soviet identities and a misplaced longing for the halcyon days of the Soviet Union were, in fact, driving forces behind so many Crimeans’ enthusiastic embrace of the Russian occupation:

The people there want to remember and return to the Soviet Union, not just because it was the Soviet Union, but because that was the time when they were young and healthy, and sausage cost 2.20 rubles, and there was no need to make your own decisions or take personal responsibility. There are those who are prepared to take responsibility for themselves, and those who are not, and it doesn’t matter what their nationality is. They don’t remember that their salaries were only 95 rubles, they only remember that sausage was 2.20 rubles. They remember things very selectively. They don’t remember how they stood in line for five years for that sausage. They don’t remember this stuff, they just remember the times when they were happy, when they got the sausage. And they

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<sup>20</sup> The performance she describes may be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjHicUuP-c0>

remember how [the Soviet Union] was a great country that nobody could mess with (...) but the Soviet Union is nothing like modern Russia. (Interview 059, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

But while many in Crimea—and indeed across the post-Soviet space—recall their Soviet pasts with fondness in spite of the hardships, attitudes towards the Soviet Union among IDPs are markedly more negative. The nostalgic revival of Soviet culture and attitudes that seemingly comforted and delighted many Crimeans only served to repulse and alienate the majority of those who eventually left the region. One interviewee spoke of the anxiety she felt watching Crimea’s apparent backslide into the dark days of the Soviet Union:

It was a great year for me in 1991 when the Soviet Union broke up. It was such an improvement. At last, it had all fallen apart and we became free! It’s like the Russians say, “things are always good wherever we are not” [*khorosho tam, gde nas net*]. Exactly—things are better wherever there is no Russia! For me, things were great and absolutely comfortable in Crimea, but then I understood that “this” had once again returned. I started panicking from the very beginning; here’s this empire again, and now it’s sweeping over me. (Interview 064, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

Comparisons between occupied Crimea and the Soviet Union, however, do not end with the superficial resurgence of Soviet-era symbols, slogans, and personalities. Interviewees described how Russia and its agents in Crimea have constructed an alternative reality using tactics of misdirection and obfuscation drawn straight from the Soviet propaganda playbooks, only updated and refined for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If anybody can speak with authority on Soviet strategies of misinformation, it is Mustafa Dzhemilev—the man who spent decades leading the fight against the Kremlin for the Crimean Tatars’ right to return to their Crimean homeland, much of it from a prison cell. His words regarding the state of Russian propaganda surrounding its operations in Crimea therefore carry tremendous weight:

In general, the Soviet Union was not even founded on such propaganda. Sure the Soviet authorities also lied, but at least there was some value placed on truth. They just distorted the truth, but now they just make up [*vysasyvaiut iz pal'tsa*]

some facts to try to show that everything is fine. The level of deceit probably exceeds even Goebbels' propaganda. (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev)

The deceit started from the very beginning of the occupation, with the Kremlin's hard-headed denial—until some months later—that no Russian forces were involved with the operation to seize control of Crimea. This was the message broadcasted by Russian media organizations across the Russian-speaking world in the weeks leading up to the Crimean referendum, and while the lie may have been convincing enough to those watching and listening from outside of Crimea, it was painfully, demonstrably false to those within the region who saw the operation unfold before their own eyes. The gaping disparities between the observable reality and the media's presentation of the events in Crimea were maddening and demoralizing for many, causing a certain mental and emotional anguish for some:

I had simply never encountered such a torrent of audacious lies, and I simply cannot tolerate such things. Maybe it's normal for some people, maybe some people can easily embrace this, but when I see such blatant lies... here's an example: the Ukrainian television channels were shut down immediately, so only the Russian channels were available everywhere. And all the Russian channels were saying that there are no Russian soldiers [in Crimea], that there are only Crimean self-defense forces, that military units are voluntarily taking down all the [Ukrainian] flags and swapping them [for Russian ones], when I personally saw [the Russian soldiers] with my own eyes, I saw them standing five meters away from me, and they were asserting themselves at all levels [of society]. My relatives from Russia were telling me that there were no [soldiers in Crimea]; what's more, I had friends in Kyiv and other [Ukrainian] cities, so when [my relatives] told me that there were "Banderites" there, I knew this wasn't true. This has a very strong impact on your psyche, so it was all very emotional for me. (Interview 022, Russian man, 40s)

### *A Suffocating Atmosphere of Fear and Paranoia*

President Putin did, of course, concede later that the annexation had been a Russian-led operation all along. But the Kremlin has continued to rely on a framework of interrelated lies and mischaracterizations to justify the annexation and ongoing occupation of Crimea. It is now taken

as gospel in official Russian discourses that, for example, Russian troops prevented Ukrainian ethno-nationalists from launching a violent assault against ethnic Russians in Crimea; that Crimeans' support for unification with Russia was and remains nearly unanimous; that the *Mejlis* and other factions within the Crimean Tatar community pose a threat of "extremism;" and that the annexation saved Crimea from the same violent conflict that has embroiled the Donbas—a conflict that the Kremlin itself was largely responsible for instigating. Sustaining these narratives requires a compliant and complacent populace, for the house of cards that Russia has hastily constructed in Crimea could easily topple if critical voices within the region were to grow too loud. As such, authorities have implemented a zero-tolerance policy regarding criticism against the Russian state or challenges to the state-sanctioned narrative about the conditions in Crimea, creating a stifling atmosphere of paranoia and rampant self-censorship. One interviewee described how this paranoia has gripped his friends who remain in Crimea, based on observations during return visits after resettling in Kyiv:

When you visit Crimea now, when you go and see your friends and acquaintances, you don't get the sense that anything has changed with them externally, it seems like they are the same as before. But then if you start to talk about certain topics—even about things that aren't conspiratorial or anything, just about politics—in some place where it's somehow not safe to talk, people immediately get tense with fear. The fear leaps out of people as soon as you touch upon certain topics. (Interview 003, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

This instinct for self-preservation reflects broader trends seen across the Russian Federation, where voices of opposition or statements perceived to undermine official state policies have been met with increasingly harsh repercussions in recent years (Human Rights Watch 2017). But by many accounts, the pressure to remain silent and conceal one's opinions is far greater now in Crimea than elsewhere. "Crimea is completely fucked up," exclaimed one interviewee who is fluent in English profanity after years spent studying in the United States,



the problem is that I really like to be free, and I don't think the system... the system is completely fucked up in Crimea. It's worse than in Moscow. There is no air to breathe. It's really... like, you can feel it. I mean, Moscow is... just because it's such a huge city with so many different people, a lot of things happen there. You can find these liberal circles who are very critical, and bars where liberal people hang out, and you can still find out very easily where gay bars are, and all these kinds of things. And like, Crimea is completely fucked up. It's just like, you can't talk. I mean, you just get paranoid. (Interview 047, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s).

I repeatedly encountered this same reference to the absence of “air to breathe” as a metaphor for the lack of freedoms in occupied Crimea, implying a corollary feeling of figurative suffocation. Here again, interviewees drew a direct comparison between Russian-occupied Crimea and the Soviet Union, contrasting the relative freedoms they enjoyed in independent Ukraine with the suffocating political atmosphere they associate with the Soviet and Russian regimes. “A person who has breathed the air of freedom falls into a strange condition: he has no desire to return to a totalitarian regime,” one interviewee joked before stating more sternly that, “[f]or me, present-day Russia is the worst continuation of the Soviet Union, so I would not want to live there” (Interview 044, Crimean Tatar man, 50s).

Others concur that Crimea's oppressive and stifling political environment feels even worse than the Soviet days precisely because they have come to value the freedoms that Ukraine guarantees. Although Ukraine has continued to suffer from a culture of political corruption it inherited from the Soviet system, it has been far more successful than most post-Soviet republics in protecting freedoms of speech and assembly—freedoms most clearly embodied in the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan. Maintaining a low profile and keeping one's opinions secret were necessary survival skills in the days of the KGB, and older generations of Crimeans have drawn from this well of experience in order to adapt to their new political realities. But for the first generation of Crimeans born and raised in independent Ukraine, the swift transition from a

relatively free and open political environment to an oppressive one produced a much stronger cognitive whiplash. From the perspective of one IDP born in the 1990s, the cumulative effect was worse than what he imagined the Soviet era to be like:

It's worse [than the Soviet Union]. Yeah, it's worse. Because in the Soviet Union, it was just the lifestyle of the people to keep quiet, because they knew... you know? It was from generation to generation, you learn how to stay out of trouble and get by. Like Stalin and all the dictators, they were just killing people for their words, and they were always listening. And of course people knew about it, about the KGB and the NKVD, everybody knew what they did, nobody was surprised. People were used to living that way. Now the situation is different because people in Crimea had gotten used to living in a democratic and free country for like 20 years, but now they have to watch what they say again. It's a much larger trauma, I think. Now people in Crimea know the value of that freedom of speech. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

“People are not talking on the phone with each other about certain topics,” he continued, providing some details about the methods of self-censorship many Crimeans have adopted. “Any words like ‘police,’ ‘government,’ ‘Russia,’ ‘Putin,’ ‘bomb,’ I don’t know, ‘hate.’ They just don’t talk about it. Not even on Skype” (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

Carefully avoiding particular words and phrases while speaking on the phone is certainly reminiscent of the Soviet Union’s darker days, but advances in communication technologies also contribute to a sense among Crimeans that the situation is much worse today. Despite their reach, the KGB and the NKVD had far fewer resources at their disposal with which to monitor and surveil Soviet citizens before the advent of the internet, the smartphone, and social media. “You can’t speak freely,” explained one interviewee as he contrasted modern-day Crimea with the stories he had heard from his parents and grandparents about life under Stalin’s rule:

My mother, grandmother, father, and grandfather all told me about the time before [World War II]—I wasn’t alive then—but they told me that you had to talk about certain things quietly, in whispers, because you never knew who might be standing outside your window and listening, and then they might report you. That was the time of the NKVD, the Stalin era, ’37 and ’38. I think that the technology was not so advanced then, now they can just listen to you through your telephone.

It could just be laying on the table, and they could be listening to what I say through it. These special services, they just have the technological capabilities to listen for any information, to listen to whomever they want. (Interview 040, Crimean Tatar man, 50s)

Lightening the mood, his son chimed in with an apropos joke:

There's a joke like this about the special services: a guy gets a call on his phone, he answers it and hears, "hello, this is the FSB."

He says, "yes, I know."

"Oh, how did you know it was us?"

"My phone was turned off when you called." (Interview 040, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Social media activity has also become a source of anxiety for many Crimeans, as they fear that their comments or even the act of "liking" certain material may draw scrutiny or harassment. A few interviewees even noted the decline in activity among their Facebook friends in Crimea. "They'll go to Facebook, read some things, but they never leave comments on anything," remarked an interviewee, "they're just afraid" (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s). Another interviewee argued that the drop-off in Facebook activity among her friends remaining in Crimea speaks to a more profound decline in their overall happiness and quality of life compared to the days before the annexation:

It was never the case that my friends wouldn't post anything on Facebook. We would always see that they were free and joyful; they made *plov* at home, they went to the mountains, they took vacations, they traveled to conferences, and they posted about it all over Facebook. And now there's no one there. They don't post anything anymore, it's as if they've all left Facebook. It's just so strange (...) [Before], they would cover their tables with food, and they would take pictures and post them. Guests would come over, and they would share the pictures. What does this say? It says that people were content, that they were living comfortably, that they felt at home, and now there's nothing like this. I'll open Facebook, and there are all my same friends, but most of them are silent, they just don't post anything. And those who aren't silent, they post about the raids, the arrests, the fines, the challenges and all that. So that's the situation, it's very difficult from a psychological perspective. (Interview 082, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

Objections to Russia’s severe curtailment of freedoms of speech in Crimea and its reliance on sophisticated—yet still strikingly Soviet-esque—policies of censorship and surveillance are primary catalysts for the exodus of thousands of Crimeans, but the resulting atmosphere of paranoia and need for self-censorship are also motivating factor in Crimean’s relocation to mainland Ukraine. When describing the measures they now must take to ensure their conversations are not overheard or intercepted, interviewees frequently referred to “speaking in the kitchen,” an old Soviet trope about the home as a private space and the last bastion of safety and free expression (Rethmann 1997). Typically, it was only around the kitchen table—and usually with the radio or television blaring in the background to cover their voices—that friends and family felt comfortable speaking openly with each other about sensitive topics during the Soviet Union’s most repressive periods. As an example, one couple invoked this trope as they explained that the absence of free speech was a major factor motivating their relocation to Lviv:

M: If we had pondered [our decision to leave Crimea] for too long, we probably would have just decided that we’ll wear gasmasks and keep on living there, having conversations only “in the kitchen” like before. That’s the reality there. I went to meet with my neighbors, and we closed the window in the kitchen so the other neighbors couldn’t hear what we were talking about. It’s like all of this has returned again. My neighbor told me that she can’t say anything at her work. What do I need all this for? We are accustomed to being able to go down to the square and say, “Poroshenko is an idiot!” I don’t want to say this, but I *can* say it, and nothing will happen to me because of it. Try saying that about them [in Crimea/Russia]! Even if the police don’t get you, then the old ladies will beat you with their purses.

W: You won’t even make it to the police.

M: They are such a “progressive” people there. How can you live in a place where you are forbidden from saying anything? (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man and woman, 50s)

### *An Aggressive Shift in Public Attitude*

The previous quote also speaks to another important element of life in occupied Crimea that many IDPs cite as a reason for leaving, namely the alarming chauvinistic attitudes of the people around them. The comment about “old ladies” beating protestors evokes another cliché familiar to people across the post-Soviet space—that of the righteous and vigilant *babushkas* seemingly posted in every residential courtyard, monitoring the movement and behavior of all those who come and go, serving unofficially as the first line of defense in the authorities’ efforts to uncover subversive or divergent activities. In occupied Crimea, however, it is no longer just the ubiquitous *babushkas* who aggressively enforce prescribed social and political norms, but much of the general populace.

The heated rhetoric that Russian authorities and media outlets have pushed regarding fabricated threats of Ukrainian “fascism” and Crimean Tatar “extremism” have helped whip up an aggressive chauvinism among pro-Russian Crimeans, distressing and demoralizing those who opposed the annexation. Indeed, many of the IDPs I spoke with indicated that they were motivated to leave Crimea primarily because of the discomfort they felt as their fellow Crimeans succumbed, seemingly en masse, to a wild Russian chauvinism. “We decided to leave because the people were acting so aggressively,” explained one interviewee who, along with her husband, remained vocally pro-Ukrainian as the occupation got underway, adding,

I had never seen such aggression. I’m 28 years old, and I lived 27 years of my life in Crimea, but I didn’t recognize these people. They changed completely, they took such an aggressive position. I said to them, “you all have some kind of virus, it’s not going away.” It wasn’t safe. My husband took the kids to preschool every morning, and we didn’t know whether or not he would be attacked, because he had received threats. (Interview 024, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s)

But expressing support for Ukraine or disapproval of the annexation are not the only activities that now rile Russian chauvinists in Crimea; the West—and the United States in particular—has

also been harshly demonized. Western sanctions targeting Russia broadly and Crimea specifically have helped cripple the region's economy, and under the exclusive influence of Russian media, many in Crimea now take it as fact that the Euromaidan was a CIA-led plot to overthrow the Yanukovich government (see Pleshakov 2017, 50–60). Hence, the trappings of Western society are now frequently viewed with derision or disdain in Crimea, and those appearing to embrace them may be met with hostility. In one interviewee's experience, even encountering the English language can now trigger resentment and malice:

I was riding on the bus and reading a book in English—I always liked reading English books—and I noticed a man who was just looking at me, and he was really angry. I was living there for 20 years, and for ten years I was reading books in English, and nothing happened. At that moment, I felt that I ... I don't know, I felt unsafe. I didn't feel safe. I was living here for so long, nothing happened, and now I can be scared just because I'm reading a book in English? Because there might be some aggression, I mean, how do I know? And I understood that I am even scared to speak, I'm afraid to speak in English or something. (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

For others, Crimea's descent into chauvinistic hysteria was alarming not so much because they felt personally threatened by it, but because it ensnared their friends, family members, and the people whom they once trusted and respected. Several interviewees conveyed a sense of shock, disbelief, and disappointment in the vigor with which their loved ones had heralded Russia's subversive actions in Crimea, and in how suddenly they had transformed into rabid Russian chauvinists. Crimea was already well-known for its pro-Russian streak, but the eagerness with which residents seemed to embrace even the most cynical aspects of Russian nationalism took many by surprise. Virtually all IDPs have a story about their falling out with friends or family who got swept up in the hysteria, and many remain resentful. "I absolutely love my Crimea, but at the same time I really don't like the people who live there," complained one interviewee,

because I saw these people for twenty years and I see them now. I see how so many of them are ... let's just say I was really disappointed. I have practically no friends left there; some of them left, and those who stayed I can't really call my friends anymore. It's one thing to accept the Russian annexation of Crimea as inescapable, but it's another to turn into a Russian chauvinist. That's just sick. (Interview 043, ethnic Ukrainian man, 20s)

In a similar vein, another interviewee described with sadness how aggressive rhetoric promoted by the Russian media desensitized some of his friends to the use of violence and stirred in them a frightening callousness:

There were people who didn't disappoint me so much as they just astonished me. For example, I had a friend who was the mother of a small child who was maybe 2 or 3 years old. When the referendum was happening I went to visit them, and they were watching a TV program that showed how Russian soldiers were descending on the border with the Donbas, the movement of Russian and Ukrainian troops and how they were coming closer together. There was clear tension. I heard my friend—the mother of a 2-year old child—say, “It looks like a war. Well, let them give Crimea to Russia, then let them go to war.” I was in shock. For her the main thing was just that we become a part of Russia, then let them fight in the Donbas. I just didn't expect such an attitude from a person who has a child. How can a person talk like that? “Let them fight as long as everything is fine here.” These were the kind of people whom I was disappointed in. (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

As Crimea's social and political orders were being forcibly restructured around them with much of the general public's jubilant approval, those who remained opposed to the annexation were left feeling as though their worlds had given way beneath their feet. Not only had they been alienated from the Ukrainian state, to which tens of thousands of Crimeans remained loyal, but they felt increasingly alienated from their own communities within Crimea. Many felt as though they no longer belonged in a Crimea that had been so fundamentally altered, where social conventions had been thrown so far out of alignment with their own values and convictions. In the words of one interviewee, it felt as though Crimea had been converted into a “madhouse,” to which he and his like-minded compatriots had been wrongly committed:

When you get sent to a madhouse, I don't know, but you probably feel alright there, and the unruly bunch of people are happy to be there, it's all great. But when a normal person enters a madhouse, how do they feel there? When we went out into the streets of Simferopol, it was truly like walking into a madhouse. The people who were against it all just kept quiet, but the people who welcomed the annexation, to us they all seemed to have this wild expression on their faces, with some kind of odd smile, rejoicing at the sight of every one of these "Little Green Men" ... I really mean it, we felt as if we had entered a madhouse. We understood that it's impossible to stay in the madhouse. (Interview 064, Russian man, 50s)

### **Internal Displacement from Crimea as Voluntary Migration?**

Yet, for all the stressors, anxieties, and inconveniences that Russian occupation has brought to many in Crimea, at a very basic level it is wholly possible to stay put, accept Russian citizenship, and live a quiet life confined to the locations and social circles that remain safe and comfortable. In this regard, Crimea is far safer and more stable today than the separatist-occupied regions of the Donbas in Eastern Ukraine, where a violent conflict has destroyed the lives, homes, and livelihoods of millions, and where citizens remain even more severely isolated living under unrecognized separatist regimes in a frozen conflict zone. Crimea has thankfully evaded the violence that catalyzed the displacement of over two million people from the Donbas, and this is reflected in the much smaller number of IDPs from Crimea. Crimeans have relocated to mainland Ukraine for a complex variety of economic, pragmatic, political, and emotional reasons, and as a result the profile of the average Crimean IDP differs significantly from that of the average IDP from the Donbas. One interviewee explained the difference like this:

People from the Donbas left because they were being shot at, or because there's no industry left there now, there's practically no work now. But people from Crimea left not because they were being shot at, not because there's no work there, but because it's not possible for them to live there. This is a kind of generalization, that people left Crimea not because there's nothing left there, but because there's nothing to breathe there—it's figure of speech, that you can't breathe freely there. In principle, this is important for some people, and not important for others. As it turns out, it's important for me. (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s)



Herein lies a crucial point: while Donbas IDPs and refugees are mostly understood to have been forced from their homes by violence and destruction, the general perception is that Crimean IDPs left by choice because they objected personally to the region's imposed political order and the unfavorable living conditions it created. While these circumstances mean that Crimean IDPs do wield greater agency in the processes of relocation compared to their Donbas counterparts, some have cautioned that a binary framework of forced-voluntary migration is reductive and essentialist, as most migrant journeys are mediated to some degree by both structural forces and human agency (Pilkington 1998; Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011; Anderson 2014; Scheel and Squire 2014). This binary may be better theorized as a dialectic continuum between *reactive* and *proactive* (Richmond 1988) or *structural* and *agentic* (Van Hear, Brubaker, and Bessa 2009) catalysts for migration, in which case Crimean IDPs generally fall toward the *proactive* or *agentic* end of the spectrum while internal displacement from the Donbas is a much more *reactive* process influenced to a greater degree by *structural* forces. Indeed, several interviewees emphasized that leaving Crimea was their choice, and staying put was a manageable if not wholly unfavorable option. "In principle, if you just ignore all the political inconveniences, then yes, of course you can live there; there's air to breathe, the clouds keep passing overhead, people are still people. You can just get your new documents and keep on living," pondered one interviewee, flipping the now-common metaphor concerning the breathability of Crimea's air to underscore that literal oxygen, like other basic living necessities, is of course still available in Crimea. However, as he continued:

But somehow, we cannot accept it. We don't want to just resign ourselves to this. (...) Democracy disappears as soon as people show up with guns, because you can no longer speak up or discuss anything. The fact is, they just showed up with their guns, and that's it. You only have a few options; either you respond with your own weapons, you resign yourself to it, or you leave. There are no other

choices. If I didn't have a family, if I had been younger, I might have done something about it. But I have a family, I know that I am responsible for them, so I can't do anything like that. We didn't want to stay and resign ourselves to the new reality, and this was a family decision that my wife and I made together. So, the only thing left to do was to leave. (Interview 025, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

In its succinctness, “those who cannot accept it” is perhaps an appropriate descriptor for the segment of Crimea’s population who left the region for mainland Ukraine following the Russian annexation. Virtually all Crimean IDPs were compelled to leave because, in one way or another, they found life in Crimea unacceptable regardless of the fact that it was still *possible*, except in the most extreme cases of murder, torture, and imprisonment. But why did life in Crimea become unacceptable for some and not for others? What kind of identities, experiences, and perspectives may influence some to celebrate the Russian occupation, and compel others to reject it entirely? While the former question is beyond the scope of this study, responses from an online survey offer some insight into the socio-political demographics of Crimean IDPs, helping sketch a revealing portrait of this diverse community.

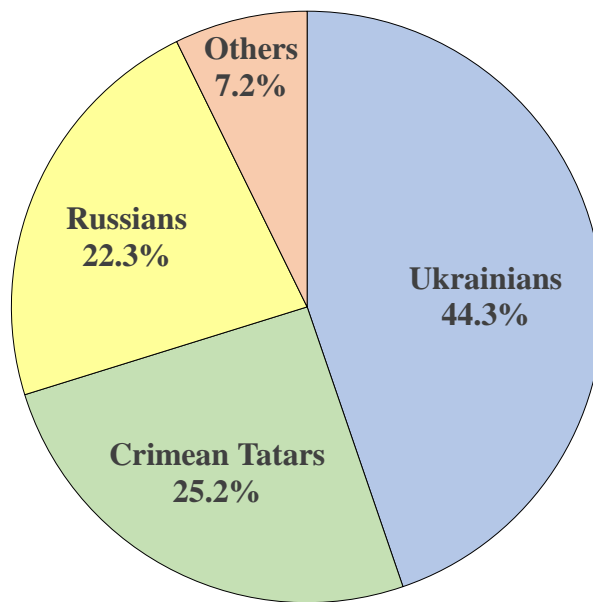
### **Who are the Crimean IDPs?**

It may be said that Crimean IDPs represent those among the Crimean populous who “could not accept” the Russian occupation, and who had the means and determination to uproot themselves and relocate to the Ukrainian mainland. But although they share a generally pro-Ukrainian outlook and certain sensibility with regard to the social and political state of Crimea, internally displaced Crimeans are a diverse group in terms of ethnicity and culture, comprised of ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, Crimean Tatars, and peoples from many small minority groups. Results from the online survey I conducted help elucidate the breadth of this diversity, but also point to some surprising commonalities that paint a telling portrait of the Crimean IDP

community's socio-economic demographics. In this section I will discuss some key findings from the demographic data that survey respondents provided about themselves.

### *Ethnicity*

At 44.3% of the sample, ethnic Ukrainians form the largest group of survey respondents by far. Crimean Tatars are the second largest group with 25.2%, followed by ethnic Russians with 22.3% and all other ethnic minorities with 7.2% (Figure 8). These figures are markedly divergent from the ethnic composition of Crimea itself; according to the most recent Ukrainian census, completed in 2001, ethnic Russians hold an outright majority in Crimea with 60.4% of the population, while ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars are regional minorities with 24% and 10.2% of Crimea's population, respectively (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2004). In other words, Russians are heavily underrepresented while all other groups are overrepresented in this sample when compared to their relative populations within Crimea.



**Figure 8:** Ethnic Composition of Survey Sample According to Respondents' Self-Identification (N=497).

Two points may explain why the ethnic composition of this survey sample diverges so greatly from the ethnic composition of Crimea itself. First, as regional minorities who are explicitly excluded from the imperialist narrative of a Russian Crimea that was used to justify the annexation, ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars likely feel greater pressure to leave occupied Crimea than ethnic Russians, whose social standings have increased under occupation. Ethnic Russians who might otherwise favor Ukraine are not necessarily deterred from leaving Crimea because of their elevated social standing under occupation, but the imposition of Russian ethnic and cultural hegemony under occupation is likely a greater incentive for ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars to leave Crimea than for Russians themselves. Secondly, political loyalties toward Ukraine and a general upswelling of Ukrainian identities following the Euromaidan may also compel some ethnic Russians to claim Ukrainian ethnicity as an expression of Ukrainian civic identity when given the option in a venue such as an online survey (Kulyk 2018). As is often the case, the boundaries between Russian and Ukrainian ethnic identities can be blurry or malleable within Ukraine (Pirie 1996; Arel 2002; Shevel 2002; Metzger et al. 2016; Onuch and Hale 2018), and many Ukrainian citizens claim both Russian and Ukrainian ancestry. It is reasonable to suspect that some survey respondents who identified themselves as ethnically Ukrainian did so as a deliberate political statement while claiming Russian ethnicity in previous instances or different contexts, and such a discrepancy may have contributed to the overrepresentation of ethnic Ukrainians in the survey sample. Whatever the explanation may be, survey results indicate that the population of Crimean IDPs is weighted heavily by regional minorities, specifically ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

## Age

Survey results suggest that Crimean IDPs may be younger on average than the general Ukrainian population. The median age of all survey respondents is 36, while recent estimates place the median age of all Ukrainian citizens at 40.4 (Central Intelligence Agency 2016). With a median age of only 31, Crimean Tatar IDPs stand out as an especially young group compared both to ethnic Ukrainian and Russian IDPs—whose median ages are 36 and 37, respectively—and to the Ukrainian population as a whole (Table 3). This younger-than-average population may reflect stronger affinities for Ukraine among those who were raised primarily in a Ukrainian institutional milieu rather than a Soviet one following Ukrainian independence. Moreover, younger individuals are less likely to have the kinds of responsibilities or obligations that might keep them in Crimea or otherwise incentivize them to stay put, such as a steady career, young children or elderly parents to care for, or property ownership.

**Table 3: Average (Mean) and Median Ages of Survey Respondents.**

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Average Age (Mean)	36.7	37.8	37.8	33.3	38.8
Median Age	36	36	37	31	37

Crucially, there is a unique sense of duty among older generations of Crimean Tatars to remain in Crimea despite the pressures of Russian occupation that is less urgent among the younger generation. Many who are old enough to remember the decades-long struggle for the right to return to Crimea now refuse to leave it all behind again, resolving to dig in their heels and endure the hardships of occupation rather than abandon their homeland. Although this deeply rooted sense of attachment and obligation to Crimea spans generations of Crimean Tatars and is instilled within those born in Crimea or shortly before repatriation, young Crimean Tatars today never experienced the struggle first-hand, and may not feel the same imperative to remain

in Crimea that members of their parents' or grandparents' generation do. Crimean Tatars who are now roughly 30 years old or younger are either too young to remember much before Ukrainian independence, or were born as Ukrainian citizens. Having been raised mostly or entirely with Ukrainian institutions, many young Crimean Tatars may feel a deeper sense of patriotism than their elders, and thus may be drawn to the Ukrainian mainland in greater numbers in response to the occupation.

### *Religion*

At 36.6% of the survey sample, Orthodox Christianity is predictably the most frequently reported system of religious belief among respondents. This included 53.2% of ethnic Ukrainians, 49.1% of ethnic Russians, and 22% of all other minorities excluding Crimean Tatars. Additionally, 4.5% of ethnic Ukrainian respondents indicated that they are members of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (also known as the Uniate Church), which is more common among Ukrainians in Western regions of the country. 6.4% of ethnic Ukrainians, 6% of ethnic Russians, and 11.1% of other non-Crimean Tatar minorities also indicated that they follow other Christian denominations—including various Protestant denominations, Catholicism, or generic “Christianity”—bringing the total proportion of Christians to 64.1% of Ukrainians, 55.1% of Russians, 33.3% of all other minorities, and 43.8% of the entire survey sample. Not a single Crimean Tatar survey respondent indicated that they are Christian; rather, at 85.6%, Crimean Tatar respondents are overwhelmingly and predictably Muslim, bringing the proportion of Muslims within the entire survey sample to 21.9%. Additionally, 1.4% of survey respondents—including exactly two from each of the three primary ethnic groups and one among all other

minorities—identify as Jewish, 1% identify as Buddhist, and 1% adhere to alternative belief systems (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Survey response rates (percent) for adherence to given systems of religious belief.

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
All Christian	43.8	64.1	55.1	0	33.3
Orthodox Christian	36.6	53.2	49.1	0	22.2
Greek Catholic (Uniate)	2	4.5	0	0	0
Other Christian	5.2	6.4	6	0	11.1
Muslim	21.9	0	0.9	85.6	2.8
Jewish	1.4	0.9	1.7	1.6	1
Non-Religious/Atheist/Agnostic	31	32.7	39.7	12.8	55.6
Buddhist	1	0.05	2	0	0
Other	1	0.9	0.9	0	5.6

Notably, a relatively large proportion of survey respondents (31%) indicated that they are non-religious, atheist, or agnostic—including 32.7% of ethnic Ukrainians, 12.8% of Crimean Tatars, 39.7% of ethnic Russians, and 55.6% of all other respondents. The ratio of Muslim to non-religious Crimean Tatar respondents appears to be more or less consistent with that observed among Crimean Tatars in Crimea as a whole; Mukomel and Khaykin (2016, 67) found that 84% of Crimean Tatars within Crimea identify as Muslims, while the remaining 16% are likely secular or non-religious. However, rates of responses indicating a lack of religious faith among ethnic Ukrainians, ethnic Russians, and all other minorities are markedly high compared to the whole of Ukraine. According to a 2016 survey, 65.4% of Ukrainians are Orthodox Christians and a total of 81.9% are Christians of any denomination, while only 16.3% of Ukrainians do not affiliate with any system of religious belief (Razumkov Center 2016, 29). Although the report also indicates that this is the highest rate of an absence of religious belief observed in Ukraine since 2000, it is still less than half the rate among ethnic Ukrainian and Russian survey respondents, and less than three times lower than the rate among other minorities surveyed here.

These relatively low rates of religious affiliation may parallel the more youthful composition of the survey sample, as well as recent global trends toward secular belief systems among younger generations (Bullard 2016).

### *Education*

Perhaps the most significant demographic finding from this survey is the remarkably high levels of education among Crimean IDPs, especially when compared to state-wide statistics. A 2008 survey indicates that 27.3% of all Ukrainians have a university education, with an additional 5.6% completing some requirements of a higher degree; 36.3% have a vocational or technical education beyond secondary, 17% have completed only their secondary education, 10.7% have completed at least some of the requirements of a secondary education, and 3% did not attend school for any portion of their secondary education (Razumkov Center 2008a).

**Table 5: Survey response rates (percent) of obtained level of education.**

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Incomplete secondary ( <i>nepolnoe srednee</i> )	0	0	0	0	0
Secondary ( <i>srednee</i> )	2.6	1.4	2.6	4.8	2.8
Vocational ( <i>srednee spetsial'noe</i> )	8.5	7.3	6.9	11.2	11.1
Bachelors or equivalent ( <i>bazovoe vysshee, bakalavr ili spetsialist</i> )	20.9	18.2	22.4	24.8	19.4
Graduate or equivalent ( <i>spetsialist, magistr, aspirant, kandidat nauk, ili doctor nauk</i> )	67.8	73.2	68.1	59.2	63.9
All higher education (Bachelors and up)	88.7	91.4	90.5	84	83.3

Comparatively, survey respondents appear exceptionally well-educated. A full 67.8% of all survey respondents reported holding the equivalent of a graduate degree, while 20.9% reported having the equivalent of a bachelor's degree. Combining these two figures, a staggering 88.7% of survey respondents have a higher education of some kind—roughly three times higher than the rate among all Ukrainians. Only 8.5% indicated that they have a vocational or technical



education beyond secondary, 2.6 completed only their secondary education, and not a single respondent had not completed at least their secondary education. These rates vary somewhat among ethnic groups; the overall rate of higher education is 91.4% for ethnic Ukrainians, 84% for Crimean Tatars, 90.5% for ethnic Russians, and 86.1% for all other minorities. Conversely, 8.7% of ethnic Ukrainians, 16% of Crimean Tatars, 9.5% of ethnic Russians, and 13.9% of all other minorities have only a secondary or vocational education (Table 5). Slightly lower rates of education among Crimean Tatars compared to other ethnic groups may again reflect the lower average age of Crimean Tatar survey respondents, which includes a higher proportion of individuals who are not yet old enough to have completed higher degrees, particularly at the equivalent of the graduate level. Regardless of these small variations between groups, survey results suggest that Crimea's most highly educated residents are fleeing the peninsula for the Ukrainian mainland at rates much higher than the less educated. Such figures should raise serious concerns about a potential "brain drain" effect taking place within occupied Crimea.

### *Former Places of Residence*

Another distinctive characteristic of Crimean IDPs suggested by survey results is that they disproportionately come from urban areas when compared to the overall population of Crimea. The 2001 Ukrainian census indicates that Crimea's population is 67.6% Urban and 32.4% rural (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2004). Survey results, on the other hand, show that 95% of respondents reported living in one of Crimea's 18 designated cities<sup>21</sup> before arriving in the Ukrainian mainland, with only the remaining 5% coming from designated rural

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<sup>21</sup> Only 18 settlements within Crimea are classified as cities and constitute the entirety of its urban area. These 18 cities are, from most populous to least populous: Sevastopol, Simferopol, Kerch, Yevpatoria, Yalta, Feodosiya, Dzhankoi, Alushta, Bakhchisarai, Krasnoperekopsk, Saki, Armyansk, Sudak, Belogorsk, Shcholkin, Inkerman, Sary Krym, and Alupka.

areas. Only 3.6% of ethnic Ukrainians, 4.3% of ethnic Russians, and 5.5% of all other minorities come from rural communities not designated cities, while this figure is only slightly higher for Crimean Tatars at 8% (Table 6).

**Table 6:** Survey response rates (percent) for former place of residence before relocating to mainland Ukraine.

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Simferopol	40	32.3	37.9	55.2	41.7
Sevastopol	22.3	30.5	27.6	4	19.4
Yevpatoria	6.8	8.6	4.3	8	0
Kerch	4.6	4.5	2.6	4.8	11.1
Yalta	9.7	10.9	7.8	8	13.9
Feodosia	3.8	2.7	7.8	2.4	2.8
Bakhchisarai	2	0.9	1.7	4.8	0
Urban area (one of 18 designated cities)	95	96.4	95.7	92	94.5
Rural settlement (not a designated city)	5	3.6	4.3	8	5.5

Moreover, survey results indicate that Crimean IDPs disproportionately come from the region's two largest cities, Simferopol and Sevastopol. The 2001 Ukrainian census puts Simferopol at 15.1% of Crimea's total population and Sevastopol at 14.8% (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2004). By comparison, 40% of survey respondents stated that they lived in Simferopol before resettling, and 22.3% lived in Sevastopol, both figures far exceeding the relative proportion of the total Crimean population that these two cities represent. Rates of survey respondents arriving from Simferopol and Sevastopol are relatively even among ethnic Ukrainians and Russians: 32.3% of ethnic Ukrainian and 37.9% of ethnic Russian respondents come from Simferopol, while 30.5% of ethnic Ukrainians and 27.6% of ethnic Russians come from Sevastopol. However, a full 55.2% of Crimean Tatar respondents came from Simferopol, while only 4% come from Sevastopol. In fact, more Crimean Tatar respondents reported coming from much smaller cities than those coming from Sevastopol, including from Yalta (8%), Yevpatoria (8%), Kerch (4.8%), and Bakhchisarai (4.8%).

Such low figures for Crimean Tatars from Sevastopol are unsurprising given that they make up only about 0.5% of the city's population, as few were able to or interested in resettling in the so-called "City of Russian Glory" upon their return to Crimea (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2004). Simferopol, on the other hand, absorbed many Crimean Tatars in the early years of their repatriation to Crimea as the squatter settlements they established on the outskirts of the city were gradually incorporated into the city's infrastructure, forming large Crimean Tatar neighborhoods along the city's fringes. For ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, however, the high proportions of IDPs arriving from Sevastopol are significant given the city's reputation for being extremely pro-Russian and its hosting of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. That such high rates of ethnic Ukrainians and particularly ethnic Russians have fled from the heavily Russian and Russophilic city of Sevastopol to the Ukrainian mainland is one indication that Crimeans' overwhelming support for "reunification" with Russia is vastly overstated. The more important outcome of these survey results, however, is that Crimean IDPs appear to come from urban rather than rural areas at rates far exceeding statistics for Crimea's general population.

### **Crimean IDPs as Regional Elites?**

Generally speaking, survey responses suggest that the population of Crimean IDPs is disproportionately young, well-educated, urban-dwelling, and less religious compared to the overall populations of both Crimea and Ukraine as a whole. These findings are generally corroborated by anecdotal accounts of many interviewees regarding the social makeup of the IDP community. Survey responses and interviewee testimonials also suggest a high concentration of students, journalists, IT specialists, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and other white-collar professionals within the Crimean IDP community.

Because of these trends, several interviewees suggested that the IDP community represent the cultural, economic, and intellectual *elite* of Crimea. As in the following example, this argument was frequently framed by contrasting the Crimean and Donbas IDP populations and the conditions that motivated them to leave their homes:

The situation is that the displaced peoples from Luhansk and Donetsk differ qualitatively from the Crimean IDPs. Crimean IDPs are people who fled either because of their internal convictions or because they feared persecution, and in many cases they were socially active, or they were economically active people. So, for the most part, these are entrepreneurs, activists, influential people, and patriots. So the backbone [of the Crimean IDP community] is made up of elites—the intellectual elite, and the economic elite. But in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts, these are just refugees and displaced peoples who fled from the war, not because they chose to leave, but because they did not have a choice. [In Crimea] there was a choice, so there is a qualitative difference in the people coming from there. (Interview 015, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s)

But the suggestion that Crimean IDPs constitute the regional elite often carries the problematic implication that a certain process of intellectual filtering is taking place—that it is the elites who possess the mental and moral fortitude to see the annexation for what it is, and so they, naturally, are the ones who would choose to uproot themselves and become internally displaced. Indeed, several interviewees saw a direct correlation between intelligence and rejection of the occupation, even as they tried to remain humble:

For the most part, I look at all these students and young people who left Crimea, and I don't want to say whether or not they are the elite—this would be immodest. But to tell the truth, a lot of really intellectually developed people left from there, people who aren't just indifferent to everything, so Crimea has really lost a lot because of this. (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Others were blunter in their assessment of Crimeans' intellectual facilities; “the way I see it,” one interviewee stated plainly, “things unequivocally got worse. Economically and socially, life got worse. I think only unintelligent [*neadekvatnye*] people don't understand this” (Interview 039, Crimean Tatar man, 30s). In other cases, interviewees indirectly supported the argument for

Crimean IDPs' elite status simply by demonstrating a penchant for *elitism*, as in the following example of one interviewee recalling her impressions of the people in Crimea after the annexation:

I remember our last days in Crimea. It was late July or August [2014]. I remember how we were relaxing on the beach, and what kind of people there were around us. Everybody was very negative and uncultured. I remember a man who was sitting on the beach with his three small children and pregnant wife. He was drunk, he could barely stand up, but he went jumping into the sea from the cliffs. There are just such irresponsible people there, negative and uncultured. (Interview 062, Russian woman, 30s)

Given the negative experiences that many IDPs reported having with supporters of the annexation before leaving Crimea, the impulse to view them with such derision is perhaps understandable, although less than commendable. There is no denying that a gaping socio-political schism has opened along the fracture dividing supporters of Crimea's annexation and those who reject it, but attributing the inability or refusal to recognize the negative consequences of the annexation to an underdeveloped intellect is dangerous and misguided. Others take the more productive and less essentialist view that supporters of the annexation are simply being manipulated by Russian media to hate Ukraine and believe in the righteousness of the Kremlin's intervention in Crimea. In an informal conversation I had with a group of IDPs, I asked about the role of the Russian media in the events surrounding the annexation:

AC: How do you see the role of the Russian media? Television, for example?

W: That's the very role!

M1: This is fundamental.

W: It plays the most important role in all that happened.

M2: And it's still happening now.

W: Yeah, zombies. (Interview 009, mixed group)

The argument that most Crimeans have been "zombified" by Russian media came up frequently in my interviews, including from Mustafa Dzhemilev, who lamented that "there is a terrible zombification of the people. Those who carelessly watch Russian television somehow

start to think like them” (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev). Taking a more understanding—if not cynical—tone, another interviewee argued that Crimeans’ susceptibility to Russian propaganda simply reflects a human drive for comfort and stability:

The majority of people just live in the system and they are consumers of information. A majority of people are conformists, pretty much. And you can't blame people for it, it's just human nature, I think. (...) It's just that reality is more complex than people want to see. I mean, of course a majority of people don't want to see complex things or think about complicated shit. (Interview 047, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Along the same lines, other interviewees argued that a majority of Crimeans are not the Russian chauvinists they may appear to be, but are simply apathetic and indifferent to matters of geopolitics as long as the state provides for them—a mentality inherited from Soviet times.

According to this view, many supported the annexation because they believed the Russian Federation, like the Soviet Union before it, would be much more paternalistic than Ukraine:

People who live in Crimea—not Crimean Tatars and maybe not [ethnic] Ukrainians—they are all Russian speakers, but to them it's all the same whichever flag is flying or whichever state it is. They lived like post-Soviet citizens, and for some reason the idea has even been ingrained into their children that there is a general secretary like in the Soviet Union who will say, “just do things like this, we will make all the decision for you, and everything will be fine! Just go on living your life.” And they know that there is some kind of higher authority that they must obey and listen to. Instead of using their minds and thoughts to prioritize and think about the future, they just hope that someone will come along and take care of everything for them. So it doesn't even matter to them whether they live in Ukraine or Russia. They don't see the difference, they don't feel it. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

While it would be inappropriate to argue that Crimean IDPs are more intelligent than those who willfully embraced Russian occupation, the fact remains that Crimean IDPs appear to be younger, more educated, less religious, and more likely to be urban-dwellers than average Crimeans—characteristics that point to a certain elite status. Moreover, while my survey did not ask respondents to report their level of income, the preponderance of prestigious occupations

among Crimean IDPs does suggest that they tend to be higher earners than the average Crimean as well. The term “elite” can be misleading, however, as it is often associated with the ruling political class, and this certainly does not describe the community of Crimean IDPs; there are few displaced Crimeans who now serve in the Ukrainian government— although exceptions include parliament members Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov, Deputy Minister of Information Policy Emine Dzhappar, and member of the National Council on Issues of Television and Radio Broadcasting, Sergei Kostinsky.

### **Crimean IDPs as a Regional Intelligentsia**

Because Crimean IDPs do not represent the antecedent Crimean ruling class, to describe them as the regional “elite” is imprecise and misleading. Instead, I argue that a more appropriate term would be the *intelligentsia*—a term frequently used in Russian and Soviet contexts to denote a privileged class of cultural, professional, and intellectual elites who do not necessarily hold positions of power but are nevertheless instrumental in shaping national or regional culture and in influencing public discourses. Although the term did not come up as frequently as “elites,” a handful of interviewees did refer to an “intelligentsia” with regard to Crimean IDPs, including one Crimean Tatar artist who did so while comparing the 18<sup>th</sup> century annexation of Crimea with recent events. As he states, “[w]e already saw what happened before when Russia came to Crimea—the first to suffer were our craftspeople, our intelligentsia, and active people. Well, now we are seeing the same thing” (Interview 002, Crimean Tatar man, 30s). However, not all who could be considered members of the Crimean intelligentsia opposed the annexation; I personally knew several pro-Russian public intellectuals in my previous work in Crimea who cheered the annexation and remain vocal defenders of the Russian occupation. Nevertheless, the

political atmosphere in occupied Crimea has grown incredibly stifling and can no longer support a thriving intelligentsia unless its members are already predisposed to a pro-Russian worldview.

Public intellectualism cannot be sustained under an authoritarian regime where the threat of intimidation, imprisonment, or violence effectively silences those whose views stray from the party line. For an intelligentsia to thrive, its members must be able to speak openly, to explore new and unpopular ideas, to travel, to engage with the rest of the world, and to foster respect for alternative perspectives. Regardless of where their cultural or social affinities may lie, much of the Crimean intelligentsia understood that it was no longer possible to cultivate such a lifestyle in occupied Crimea, and that Ukraine remained a bastion of freedom by comparison:

We know that Ukraine means freedom of speech and freedom of the press, that you can say your opinion, you can move at your own pace, you can develop Crimean Tatar culture, you can arrange conferences where people come and exchange information and ideas. It isn't some kind of closed Island of Bad Luck.<sup>22</sup> For [people who stayed in Crimea], they think, "what's the difference? We consider ourselves Russians. My mom is from Rostov-on-Don, my dad is from Novorossiysk." They have some relatives there, so for them it's all the same. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20)

Even if the political environment were less suffocating, if people were afforded greater freedoms and could speak truth to power, Crimea would still remain isolated from the rest of the world due to sanctions and travel restrictions. "I understood that Crimea will now be a 'half-dead zone,'" commented one interviewee,

even though they said that Crimea would be developed [under Russian authority], I never believed it because of the examples of other territories that were seized, annexed, or decided to break away, like North Cyprus, Transnistria, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia. I knew that there would be no kind of normal development [in Crimea], because the entire world doesn't accept this territory [as part of Russia]. I was completely aware of this. (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

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<sup>22</sup> The interviewee is referring to a popular song called "The Island of Bad Luck" [*Ostrov Nevezeniia*] from the popular Soviet comedy Film "The Diamond Arm" [*Brilliantovaia Ruka*].



While some may be willing to renounce their freedoms and accept political, economic, and social isolation in exchange for a government that promises greater paternalism or that stimulates a latent ethno-nationalism, there are “those who cannot accept it,” for whom freedoms of expression and association are too valuable, and who are willing to uproot themselves in order to retain these freedoms. Perhaps therein lies the true marking of an *intelligentsia*.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of the diverse set of factors that have motivated some to leave Crimea for the Ukrainian mainland. While political opposition to the annexation and personal discomfort within occupied Crimea are among the primary motives driving many to mainland Ukraine, economic pressures and legitimate fears for the safety of self and family also play important roles, as I outlined earlier in this chapter. Although I have divided these motivating factors into categories, they should not be viewed as discrete or mutually exclusive; those who face economic hardships may also be motivated to leave occupied Crimea by the fear of violence and/or personal discomfort. Indeed, most were motivated to leave the region by a combination of factors, so to portray the entire IDP community as the Crimean *intelligentsia* is certainly a broad generalization.

Furthermore, it is also a mistake to assume that Crimea has been thoroughly drained of all people who oppose the occupation, or that all who remain are supporters. The decision to leave Crimea was a difficult one for virtually all IDPs, and for some the costs of leaving everything behind, renouncing certain obligations, and starting over in a less familiar place outweighed the benefits. As an example, one interviewee mentioned an acquaintance from Crimea who wishes he could leave, yet his responsibilities prevent him from doing so:

Maybe some people want to leave, but they must leave everything behind—leave their families, leave all the things they can’t get here, their apartments, their homes. I have a... let’s call him a friend, who stayed in Crimea. Whenever we talk I tell him it’s time for him to leave. I will call him from here and I say, “well,

what's the deal? Have you decided yet?" He'll say, "well, where would I go? I have a home, a family, a small granddaughter, two kids. Where can I go? I will just endure." (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

The decision is particularly difficult for Crimean Tatars, who fought for decades to return to Crimea after their deportation. In spite of the difficulties and threats that their communities now face under Russian occupation, many Crimean Tatars refuse to leave the homeland that they so cherish. "Not everybody is able to leave," noted one Crimean Tatar interviewee, because "[o]thers will say that, 'we don't want to go and leave behind all that we have fought for in Crimea.' Crimea without Crimean Tatars—that's no Crimea" (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s). Wrestling with conflicted feelings over leaving their Crimean homeland is an experience shared by many Crimean Tatar IDPs, and I will explore this more deeply in Chapter Eleven. My point is that there remain thousands in Crimea who oppose the occupation regime, who wish that they could once again live as citizens of Ukraine, but who have decided to remain in Crimea and endure the hardships for a variety of pragmatic or ideological reasons. As one interviewee explained to me,

[Before leaving Crimea] we would meet people and discuss the whole situation, and we saw that people understand us and speak the same language, they saw everything the same way we do. There was nobody among our close circle of friends whose view of the situation surprised us. There are people who stayed [in Crimea] and who have the same views, but they've adapted. They got [Russian] passports, changed the license plates on their cars, but as far as I understand they've just disassociated from politics in general. They just started living simply domestic lives, sharing their opinions only with those who are very close to them. They don't feel nauseated anymore like they did initially from all the [Russian] flags and St. George Ribbons. They've just been able to disassociate; their families and relationships, their homes and domestic responsibilities have probably outweighed their response to everything that's happened in a political sense. (Interview 074, Russian woman, 30s)

But "not for us," her husband immediately interjected.

## Conclusion

By and large, the international community has rightfully condemned Russia's annexation and occupation of Crimea, placing political and economic sanctions on both Moscow and Crimea itself, and refusing to recognize the Kremlin's *de facto* sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula. Yet there is a tendency among many observers outside the region to argue that the majority of Crimeans were in favor of joining Russia anyway, even if this was achieved through illegal and illegitimate means. They point to Crimea's ethnic Russian majority or to the dubious results of the March 2014 referendum to concede that maybe the annexation was ultimately for the best. It is certainly true that some strongly supported Crimea's break from Ukraine and accession to the Russian Federation, and there are many others who are largely indifferent but accepted Russian sovereignty in Crimea as the path of least resistance. But to rely on distorted results from an illegitimate referendum or essentialist correlations between ethnicity and political affinities as a rhetorical justification for Russia's actions in Crimea is misguided—a point to which the stories of Crimean IDPs should testify.

Life in Russian-occupied Crimea has become extremely difficult and oppressive for many, compelling some untold thousands to abandon the region and resettle in the Ukrainian mainland. They have done so for a variety of reasons: some are motivated by pragmatic considerations after sanctions and severed connections to the outside world have left Crimea economically and politically unstable; others have left out of fear and safety concerns due to the political, ethnic, and religious persecution that has left hundreds of Crimeans arrested, beaten, murdered, or disappeared without a trace; and others have left because their opposition to the occupation has left them feeling uncomfortable, disillusioned, or alienated from Crimea and its

people. In most cases, people have been motivated to leave occupied Crimea for a combination of these factors.

The general profile of Crimean IDPs that emerges from survey responses is of a community that is multiethnic, highly educated, urban-dwelling, and much younger and less religious than national and regional averages. Some have pointed to these trends to argue that Crimea has lost much of its *elite* to internal displacement, but this term is misleading because it falsely implies that they made up the Crimean ruling class. Instead, I cautiously endorse the term *intelligentsia* to denote the assemblage of intellectuals, artists, journalists, technical professionals, students, and conscientious objectors that make up a large portion of the Crimean IDP community—in other words, those Crimeans whose worldview were incompatible with the realities of Russian occupation. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that thousands of objectors remain in occupied Crimea but are unable or unwilling to relocate to the Ukrainian mainland for various ideological and pragmatic reasons.

Life under Russian occupation was indeed unbearable for many thousands of Crimeans, and because they voluntarily resettled in mainland Ukraine we may draw the corollary assumption that they strongly identify as Ukrainians or with the Ukrainian state. This is mostly true, but Ukrainian identity is complex and nuanced in any context, and even more so for Crimeans who mostly profess a strong regional identity. In the following section I explore the diverse and evolving meanings of being both Ukrainian and Crimean within the community of internally displaced peoples.

## **SECTION II: ON BEING UKRAINIAN AND CRIMEAN: DISJUNCTIVE DISCOURSES OF TERRITORIAL BELONGING**

### **Chapter Five: On Ukrainian-ness**

A variety of complex factors—economic, pragmatic, political, and emotional—compelled tens of thousands of Crimeans to leave their home region following the Russian annexation. Although the relative weight of these factors may vary from person to person, virtually all those who have left Crimea since 2014 are bound by a common rejection of the revanchist and chauvinistic image in which the Kremlin has remade the peninsula. But there is another crucial force uniting the displaced Crimeans—their loyalty to Ukraine. Aside from a relatively small number who have ventured further afield—to countries including Turkey, Poland, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, just to name the cases with which I am personally familiar—those who have been displaced from Crimea have chosen overwhelmingly to resettle in the Ukrainian mainland. Like the decision to leave Crimea, choosing to relocate elsewhere in Ukraine was, in part, a pragmatic decision informed by the restrictive hurdles of emigration, the privileges of citizenship, and existing social ties to the mainland. Yet there is a general consensus within the community of Crimean IDPs—at least rhetorically—that they were pulled toward the mainland by the far nobler call of patriotism. “Those IDPs who have come here are patriots,” one interviewee stated plainly, for, “if they weren’t patriots, then they would have stayed in Crimea. The people who came are those who want to build Ukraine” (Interview 053, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s).

The moment of arrival after passing through the series of checkpoints that now separate the peninsula and the Ukrainian mainland was one of joy and catharsis for many fleeing their

beleaguered and increasingly unfamiliar Crimea. “When I lived in Crimea during the occupation, I felt the crushing pressure,” recounted one interviewee, for whom

Everything seemed grey, the faceless masses, the angry attitudes of the people, all of that. Everybody was in a constant state of depression, even me, although I had never experienced depression before. I am optimistic about life, but hearing all that the people were saying there and how they acted, it just killed my morale.

But from across the Isthmus of Perekop, Ukraine beckoned like a ray of hope:

When we were leaving Crimea, as soon as we crossed the border we received an automated text message that said, “Welcome to Ukraine!” I was so overjoyed to receive this message. (...) [E]verything was in bloom, and it smelled so wonderful because it was the summertime, so we were so happy. And the attitudes of the people too... we saw our soldiers, and they were all so kind and friendly, all speaking in Ukrainian, and we were just so overjoyed. (Interview 024, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s)

In other cases, the very process of crossing the border served to reaffirm Crimeans’ affinities for Ukraine, even to their own surprise. “The most amazing moment was when I passed through the checkpoint, when I passed the *Kalanchak* border crossing,” recalled one interviewee. “When I approached our [Ukrainian] checkpoint, I saw the Ukrainian flag, and I understood how much I love Ukraine. I’m serious, this is not an exaggeration. I really felt like I was in my native land, because this was not possible in Crimea” (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s).

But the displaced Crimeans arrived in a Ukraine undergoing major transformations, and not just in terms of its national politics or economy. Emerging from a transformative moment of great triumph and tragedy, the country was beginning to reckon with the fallout from the Euromaidan, the loss of territory in Crimea and the Donbas, and a mounting military conflict on its own soil—the work of its powerful and freshly hostile neighbor to the East. Ukrainians have met these Herculean challenges not only with a great sense of resolve and determination carried over from the heady days of the Euromaidan, but with a renewed sense of purpose and solidarity that has reinvigorated and re-centered the national conversation about what it means to be

Ukrainian. Forged in the bonfires of the Maidan, this “new” Ukraine has parlayed the movement’s ideals of social inclusivity, civic agency, and progressive aspirations into a new discourse of Ukrainian civic nationalism that has captured the national zeitgeist. The looming advance of Russian revanchism, accompanied by an onslaught of rhetoric aimed at further destabilizing and delegitimizing the Ukrainian state and nation (Laruelle 2016; Suslov 2017), has also played a crucial role in rallying Ukrainians around a new set of patriotic principles and hardened their resistance to the forces that seek to undo it.

Since independence in 1991, the people of Ukraine have contended with their precarious position between Russia and Europe and grappled with the question of whether they should aspire to emulate and associate with one or the other. This schizophrenic sense of national purpose was often attributed to an oversimplified regional divide between an ethnically and linguistically Ukrainian west that favored a European trajectory and a pro-Russian east and south populated by ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians (O’Loughlin 2001; Shulman 2002). As such, public debates concerning the genealogy and modern substance of Ukrainian national identity typically pivoted on questions of ethnicity, language use, and the memorialization of a contentious and violent history (Riabchuk 2003). “For 23 years, Ukraine was never able to find a point of consensus on certain questions, and your answers to them would serve to identify you,” explained journalist Pavel Kazarin, adding, “these questions would usually be rooted in Ukraine’s own history; what are your attitudes toward Stepan Bandera, towards the OUN-UPA, etc.” (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin). But by meddling in Ukraine’s politics in a transparent attempt to thwart its westward drift, and by violating its territorial integrity and fomenting unrest in response to Ukrainian resistance, the Kremlin destroyed its remaining goodwill and effectively relinquished its once powerful sway over Ukrainian politics

and large segments of the Ukrainian population. Russia had shown its true colors, losing the struggle for Ukrainian hearts and minds, and pushing Ukraine past the tipping point toward a decidedly European vision of itself (Zhurzhenko 2014; Riabchuk 2015). Along with a new pro-European consensus, Ukrainians emerged from the turbulence of 2013-2014 with a new framework for debating their national identity:

Now a completely new set of questions have appeared: Who does Crimea belong to? With whom is Ukraine at war? On what conditions can peace be achieved in the Donbas? These questions are much more relevant now than the questions of the past. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

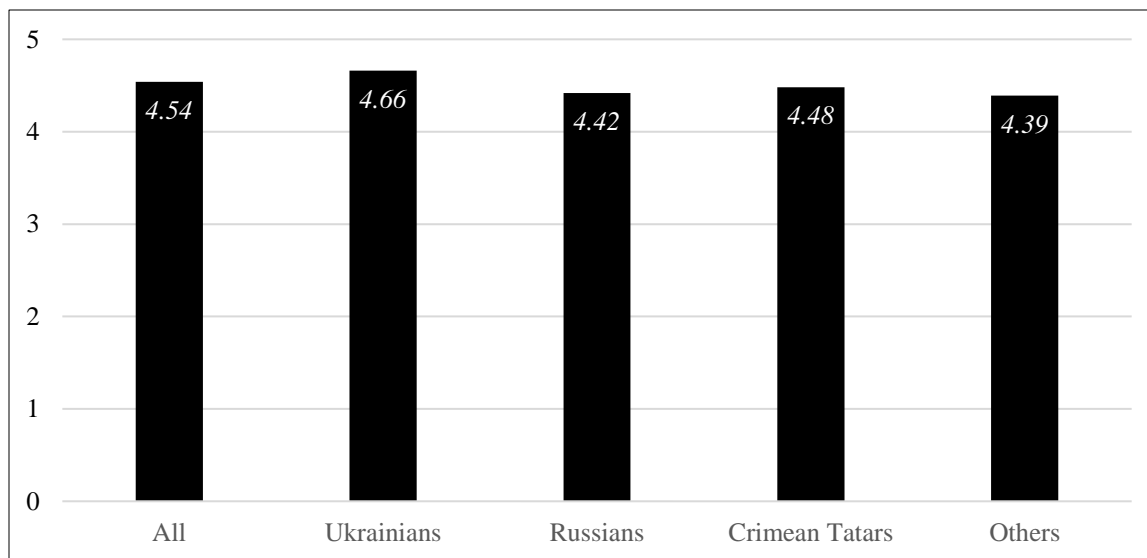
Tragically, Ukraine's social transformation has come at the expense of lost territory, lost citizens, and lost lives to Russian aggression in the Donbas and Crimea. It is no coincidence that these are the two Ukrainian regions with the largest populations of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers; cultural and political affinities for Russia in Crimea and the Donbas helped breed opposition to the Euromaidan and its agenda, assuring the success of the Kremlin's bid to cling to these two pieces of territory while the rest of Ukraine slipped through its fingers. Although it has not conceded these losses, for the time being the "new" Ukraine has no choice but to move forward without these territories and their populations in tow. Some have argued that Ukraine is better off for this, that by removing these pro-Russian diluents the Ukrainian citizenry is stronger and more unified in its vision of a European future (Motyl 2016). The same argument is frequently inverted with specific regard to Crimea, with many suggesting that Crimea is better off with Russia because its people mostly do not share these European aspirations, nor harbor affinities for the Ukrainian state altogether (O'Loughlin, Toal, and Kolosov 2016; Toal 2017). Despite broad international consensus on its illegitimacy, the results of the 2014 Crimean referendum help make for an easy case that Crimeans do not see themselves as a part of Ukraine.



While conventional wisdom may suggest that Crimeans overwhelmingly identify with Russia and were simply misplaced in Ukraine by some historical quirk, the truth is far more complex. There is no denying that Russian language, culture, and ethnicity are dominant in Crimea, and that vocal pro-Russian contingencies have been a powerful force in Crimean politics since the beginning of Ukrainian independence (see Sasse 2007). But Crimeans have been unfairly and inaccurately portrayed as a group devoid of Ukrainian identities and out of place within the Ukrainian body politic. Indeed, several surveys conducted in the years prior to the annexation indicated that a significant and growing number of Crimeans expressed affinities for Ukraine and favored keeping the region within Ukraine as opposed to joining Russia (Razumkov Center 2008b; International Republican Institute 2013; Charron 2016). But Ukrainian identities and expressions of support for Ukraine are now maligned and suppressed in Russian-occupied Crimea, rendering invisible the “Ukrainian-ness” of the region and its people.

Yet despite efforts to snuff it out, the flame of Crimea’s “Ukrainian-ness” burns on within the community of Crimean IDPs. By relocating to the mainland, thousands of Crimeans have endured great economic hardship, sacrificed personal relationships, and parted with their homes and possessions for the sake of remaining Ukrainian. Survey responses underscore just how strong Crimean IDPs’ Ukrainian identities are; when asked to rate the importance of “being a citizen of Ukraine” to their self-identity on a scale from 1 to 5, the entire survey sample averaged 4.54, with only small variations between ethnic sub groups (Figure 9). Moreover, Crimean IDPs have arrived in the mainland at a moment when the very substance of “Ukrainian-ness” and Ukrainian nationhood are being renegotiated according to principles of civic engagement, political solidarity, and cultural plurality (Kulyk 2014, 2016b; Riabchuk 2015; Onuch and Sasse 2016). In this environment, Crimean IDPs have ironically emerged as

exemplars of Ukraine’s new mainstream civic nationalism; they are highly diverse—ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and culturally—and have all deliberately chosen Ukraine over Russia, often at great personal expense. However, I argue that the “Ukrainian-ness” embodied by Crimean IDPs is yet more profound: the Crimean IDP community is an essential site in the (re)negotiation and (re)construction of Ukrainian nationalism in the post-Maidan era. This chapter traces discourses of “Ukrainian-ness” among Crimean IDPs, and discusses the important role they play in contemporary debates over the constituency and substance of Ukrainian nationhood.



**Figure 9:** Average survey response rates (scale of 1 to 5) to the question, “How important is being a citizen of Ukraine your self-identity?”

### **On Being and Becoming Ukrainian**

It took several years after Ukraine gained independence before Crimea’s place within the nascent state was clearly delineated. In a special referendum in January 1991—the first and only of its kind in the Soviet Union—Crimeans had voted overwhelming to become an autonomous republic within the Ukrainian SSR, but determining how it would function as an autonomous region within independent Ukraine was a fraught and delicate process. After five years of slow

negotiations between Simferopol and Kyiv that were exacerbated by a potentially volatile pro-Russian separatist movement in the peninsula, in 1996 an uneasy division of power was finally agreed upon and codified in both the Ukrainian constitution and the constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (see Sasse 2007). From the first days of Ukrainian independence, Crimea had been dominated by a pro-Russian political class and its constituency, who were vigilant in safeguarding the region's Russian pedigree, and vocal in their opposition to Ukrainian policies that might encroach upon it.

But despite efforts to limit as much as possible the creeping “Ukrainization” of Crimea, Ukrainian identities nevertheless took root. Ethnic Ukrainians had long made up a significant portion of Crimea's population—roughly a quarter since at least the 1950s (Vodarskii, Eliseeva, and Kabuzan 2003)—but ethnicity and national identity are by no means coterminous, especially in the post-Soviet context. In ways that were both deliberate and subconscious, Crimeans of all ethnic backgrounds began developing a sense of belonging to the Ukrainian state despite the intensely pro-Russian rhetorical environment. Even in Sevastopol—the beating heart of Russian and Soviet national pride—preferences for Ukraine appeared early on. “We always identified as and considered ourselves Ukrainians from the moment Ukraine became independent,” proclaimed an interviewee and former resident of Sevastopol, where she and her family “were clearly the odd ones out, there weren't many of us. I read Ukrainian news and I read Russian news, I saw what was going on in Russia, and there was absolutely nothing that made me want to go there” (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). For some, a consciousness of belonging to Ukraine took hold even before it became independent, when Crimea was merely an *oblast* of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Crimea was integrated into the governmental, bureaucratic, and institutional structure of the Ukrainian SSR beginning in 1954, and it was

through these same structures and institutions that Crimeans continued to interact with the state once Kyiv had nationalized them. As one interviewee noted, he had lived with these institutions his whole life, so he never questioned to which state he felt a sense of belonging:

I didn't understand when they said [after the annexation] in Crimea, "oh, we finally returned to our homeland," or something like that, especially when it was the youth who were saying it. I just didn't understand this. I was born in Soviet times in the Ukrainian SSR, in Crimea. Crimea was a part of the Ukrainian SSR at that time, you can't get around that. Then I served in the Ukrainian army. After that I worked in a Ukrainian police force. After that, I worked in local government in Ukraine. So why should I consider Russia my homeland? This is what I don't understand. Because I am Russian by ethnicity? I never considered Russia my homeland even though all my roots are from Russia. My parents, my sister, they were all born in Russia, I am the only one who was born in Crimea, in Ukraine, so I never perceived Russia as my homeland. (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

For others coming of age in Crimea during the early years of Ukrainian independence, questions of identity and national belonging were more ambiguous and illusive. "It's interesting," one interviewee pondered, "for Crimeans it's probably some kind of inside joke, but the issue of identity was always very complicated for us." She explained that it was only through the prism of recent events that she has come to recognize her own deeply-held sense of Ukrainian-ness, even though the signs had been there all along:

I had never asked myself before, "who am I?" The question had never even entered my mind before the whole situation in Crimea started [*poka vsia eta kasha ne zavarivalas'*], but now it has. Now I know who I am, I know definitively that I am a Ukrainian (...) It wasn't as if a switch suddenly went off in my head, like, "now I am a Ukrainian." When did it happen? I don't really know when, but I'll look at my Facebook when it shows me what I was doing five years ago, and I think, "my god, I really wrote this?" I had such an actively pro-Ukrainian position even five years ago! This is how I felt, but I had just never really given much thought to it. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s)

In other cases, interviewees were able recall specific moments from their upbringing when questions of identity and national belonging were laid bare, forcing them to grapple with seemingly contradictory notions of who they are supposed to be and where they are supposed to

belong. One interviewee, an ethnic Ukrainian, relayed to me one such moment from his youth when the matter of his own Ukrainian-ness was first thrown into question:

In 1990, I really started to think about this. My father's brother came to visit us, and I was shocked for the first time when he said, "I'm Russian." I said, "wait, Uncle Vitya, how can you be Russian?" He just said, "I'm Russian." How so? His last name is Ukrainian, his father is from Zhytomyr. What gives? But he just said, "We are all Soviet people, and I am Russian. It's that simple! That's all there is to it, I'm Russian. It even says in my passport that I am Russian." I just didn't understand. How could this be? [Russian] culture didn't interest me, it just didn't do anything for me. The music wasn't familiar to me when I heard it. Sure, there were some things I liked about it, but it wasn't *mine*. I can harmonize in [Ukrainian] music, but I can't in Russian music. I can find my voice [in Ukrainian music], but not in Russian music. It was internal, there was something different for me [compared to me uncle]. And my father told me in 1990, "you need to choose for yourself." I said, "I'm Ukrainian." (Interview 025, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s)

### *The First Post-Soviet Generation of Ukrainians*

However, some of the most compelling narratives that I heard of Crimeans coming to terms with their own Ukrainian-ness came from younger individuals, members of the first post-Soviet generation who were born after or just before Ukraine became an independent state. They grew up in a Crimea that was, for the most part, *defiantly* Russian and steeped in a simmering resentment towards all things Ukrainian. "There is no land for us beyond the Perekop!" [*za Perekopom dlia nas zemli net!*] became a popular slogan in Crimea in the 1990s—an obstinate rallying cry meant to steel Crimeans against Kyiv's influence and reassert a regional identity aligned with the narrative of a Russian Crimea (Kisileva 1999). But for many young Crimeans, who were Ukrainian citizens by birth or at least from a very young age, there was indeed land beyond the Perekop, and it felt much closer to them than that land across the Strait of Kerch. Yet in such a pro-Russian political environment, identifying as Ukrainian was often viewed as aberrant or even delinquent. In our conversations, many young Crimeans recalled experiences of

being treated different or as though something were wrong with them for expressing affinities for Ukraine. For example, one interviewee remembered the reactions of ordinary Crimeans upon seeing her as a teenager wearing a *vyshyvanka*, the decoratively embroidered shirt closely associated with Ukrainian folk culture:

I started walking around [Simferopol] in a *vyshyvanka* on Ukrainian Independence Day, along with my good friend who also wore his *vyshyvanka*. (...) We would walk around together and with other friends, and people's reactions were clearly written on their faces: surprise, skepticism, all these negative reactions. It was all really obvious. But we [Ukrainian-oriented people] could identify each other by our smiles; when you see that someone walking past gives you a smile, you smile back at them, because in principle [such people] were not very common. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Since the annexation, many young Crimeans have begun reflecting on and re-contextualizing the experiences of their youth in order to tease out the roots of their “deviant” sense of Ukrainian-ness. Several interviewees told me of particularly salient moments when their Ukrainian sympathies emerged: one young woman from Sevastopol recalled seeing a television advertisement as a child in which Ukrainian actor Bogdan Stupka extolled the beauty of the Ukrainian landscape, prompting her to declare—quietly and to herself—that Ukraine is her homeland (Interview 042, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). Similarly, a young man from Simferopol recounted watching a high-stakes soccer match between Ukraine and Russia as a teenager, and recalled the sense of joy he felt when the Ukrainian team scored a goal in the final minute to win the match (Interview 018, ethnic Russian man, 20s). For others, including one young ethnic Russian woman and her friends, the roots remain difficult to pinpoint, yet salient all the same:

[After the annexation] I started meeting with friends and talking frankly about the fact that something is off with us, that all our parents are pro-Soviet and pro-Russian while we are pro-Ukrainian. We got together and wondered, what's wrong with us? We are part of a generation born in a different country, but why is it that our parents all support [the annexation]—they call it a “reunification”—and none of us support it? (...) I went back to Crimea last summer, and we talked about this some more, and my friend told me for the first time about her response

to a questionnaire about ethnicity in the first grade. She wrote “Ukrainian,” and she was practically the only person in the class to write this. Afterward they called her mother to the school, and they all asked her, “what is this? Why did you write ‘Ukrainian?’” I was shocked when I heard this; we had never spoken about moments like these, they had just never seemed out of the ordinary to us before. These questions had never seemed so important, never something that needed to be discussed. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

This same interviewee also recalled her personal experiences as a teenager trying to reconcile her Russian ethnicity with her Ukrainian citizenship in an attempt to isolate her true sense of national identity. The clarity of hindsight, refracted through the prism of post-annexation realities, has helped her pin down the germ of her Ukrainian consciousness:

I never considered myself to be from Russia [*imenno rossiiankoi ia sebia ne schitala*], but I considered myself Russian [*russkoi*]. In principle I had never been to Russia, I don’t know how they live there, but when I was 14 I started asking myself, “who am I? Russian? Ukrainian?” I thought about it for a long time, I tried to understand it. At that age this question really started to nag at me. It’s funny, I wrote poetry [about this question], and I kept a diary in the fifth grade, and now I’ve started reconsidering the things I did as a child. I started revisiting those writings, and came to understand that I had decided at age 14 that I am more Ukrainian. It’s not even that I was *more* Ukrainian, it was just a question of the country where I was born. I was born in Ukraine, that means I’m Ukrainian, period. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

For one interviewee, identifying as Ukrainian was a very deliberate choice, informed by a great deal of research, exploration, and self-reflection that drove her to question the pro-Russian discourses that dominated her upbringing and education. The following quote is long, but worth reproducing in whole, because it helps illustrate the structural and institutional barriers that many Crimeans have had to overcome in order to kindle a sense of Ukrainian identity:

I have two sisters—an older sister, she’s six years older than me, and a younger sister, one year younger. Growing up, we would fully learn Ukrainian, we had no issues speaking Ukrainian, understanding Ukrainian. Our parents had fewer issues than our grandparents with the Ukrainian language, because they were younger when Ukrainian became the official language and the television switched to Ukrainian [after independence]. But growing up. I think that only I really identified as Ukrainian. [My sisters] didn’t really care much or they didn’t really think deeply about it, especially early on.

I had this very favorite teacher of Ukrainian language and literature, and I was so excited about the literature and the history. (...) She had the greatest sense of Ukrainian history and the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the intelligent people that are the cornerstone of the Ukrainian nation, and so she was very good at portraying that and giving that information to us. Now, my history teacher was a very stoic Soviet woman, who taught history the way she wanted to know it, and so every time we would have our lessons, we would have two different history books. She would tell us, "you keep *this* one on the corner of your desk in case the Ministry of Education people come by, so they see that we have it." She explained it to me later because I was her favorite student; she told me, "this book is garbage, this is what the Ukrainian Minister of Education wants me to teach you, but we are going to study with *this* book instead," which was very much pro-Russian and pro-Soviet, with a very different view on the *Holodomor*, and on other issues that are still very controversial. And so imagine those high school students that just don't want to learn, period. They just don't want to learn, right? Show me a high school student that will read both books. Nobody.

But I was that student. I was very curious, and I really wanted to know. I would read additional magazines and go to the library and read some more. And I noticed early on how different the views are, you know, between this book and that book, and it was very confusing to me. And when I tried to approach my teacher, she wouldn't give me an objective explanation. She would give the explanation that she believes in, which was, like, "Russian people are oppressed [in Ukraine]. This Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture was imposed upon us. We don't need it, we originally belong to Russia." So, to me it was like, ok, it's your view, but it's ok. But I was comparing the history books and reading about what Ukrainian people had to go through. I read poetry and all these novels by Ukrainian authors like Ivan Bahrianyi—he was one of my favorite authors. (...) When you read [Ukrainian literature], you see and you compare, and you're like, "oh my god, how can this much suffering and this much love and passion not be true? It cannot be made up. How can that be?" Show me anything from the Russian side that portrays as much depth, passion, and dignity about these kinds of issues as I see from the Ukrainian side. There was none, there was nothing I could find! (...) So that's what made up my mind, and I knew that I want to be identified with the Ukrainian nation because that's where I think I belong. This is where my mind and my heart are. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

### *Crimean Tatars into Ukrainians*

For both ethnic Ukrainians and Russians in Crimea, embracing any sense of Ukrainian-ness has therefore meant fighting the mainstream currents of pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian attitudes that predominate within the region. However, a very different set of circumstances have characterized the development of Ukrainian-ness within the community of Crimean Tatars. The



Crimean Tatars had been deported from Crimea in 1944, at a time when the peninsula was an autonomous republic of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Its status was then downgraded to that of an *oblast* in 1945 and subsequently transferred administratively to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954, ten years after Crimean Tatars had already been removed from Crimea. Thus, by the time Crimean Tatars began returning to their estranged homeland in the late 1980s, it was now a region administered—or, after 1991, governed—as part of Ukraine, a territory in which they had never lived nor to which they had ever before felt a sense of loyalty or belonging. But surprisingly, Crimean Tatars took to Ukraine rather quickly and easily, embracing the state as newly-minted Ukrainian citizens, and steadfastly supporting Kyiv in the struggle to defend its sovereignty over Crimea from the threat of Russian separatism. Even more remarkably, the Crimean Tatars remained staunch supporters of Ukraine despite the fact that Kyiv offered them little to no assistance in their struggles with local pro-Russian authorities to reclaim land and rebuild communities (Wilson 1998). Indeed, by many accounts, Crimean Tatars have generally been the most consistent and vocal pro-Ukrainian contingency in Crimea since Ukrainian independence (Sasse 2007).

Thus, for the returning Crimean Tatars, Ukrainian-ness was never a latent or suppressed element of social identity to be discovered or nurtured into health, as it was for many Slavic Crimeans; rather, it was a political identity born from the deliberate decision to embrace and celebrate Ukraine as the state to which Crimea—and by extension, the Crimean Tatars—belongs. As they now play a prominent role within the community of Crimean IDPs and post-Maidan Ukraine as a whole, it is important to consider why Crimean Tatars so easily accepted Crimea's status as a part of Ukraine and became eager Ukrainian citizens. I received a variety of

compelling answers to this question in my interviews with Crimean Tatar IDPs, and although they are perhaps distorted by recent events, they are nevertheless illuminating.

Put crudely, at the time of their return to Crimea, Crimean Tatars understood that Ukraine represented the lesser of two evils. This is not to say that Ukraine appeared particularly “evil” to them at the time, but for most the alternative was entirely unacceptable. That alternative, as advocated by many, was for Crimea to join the Russian Federation, the new successor to the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire before it—i.e., the latest incarnation of the Crimean Tatar’s historical aggressor and “enemy,” in the words of many Crimean Tatars. Knowing the history of the Russian-Crimean Tatar encounter, and seeing the resistance with which their return to Crimea was met by local pro-Russian forces, the Crimean Tatars adamantly opposed efforts to once again deliver Crimea to the Kremlin. In the words of one Crimean Tatar interviewee,

We know what it means to be with Russia. We know the first annexation of Crimea by Catherine II in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when much of the Crimean Tatar intelligentsia left. We know the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the leaders of the Crimean Tatar people were shot and beaten. We know the period of deportation in 1944, when half our population died. Historical memory has a very strong impact. (Interview 072, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

As a small nation struggling to regain footing in their native land, the idea of an independent Crimean Tatar state was out of the question and never seriously entertained, and thus supporting Ukraine’s continued sovereignty over Crimea was clearly their best option. Emine Dzhappar, the Deputy Minister of Information Policy of Ukraine, explained to me the pragmatism behind the Crimean Tatar leadership’s decision to support Ukraine:

Even if Crimean Tatars wanted to be independent, it was not realistic because Crimea is in this geopolitical triangle between Russia (which was an empire), Turkey (which was the Ottoman Empire), and Ukraine. So, Crimea is fated to balance these interests, but we must understand who our friend is in this triangle. And if you ask me who our friend is, I would definitely say that Ukraine is our friend, and let's say a "big brother" who would lobby and advocate for our interests on the international level, because we have many things in common, like

history, traditions, even tragedies; Ukrainians faced the *Holodomor*—it was also genocide—and we faced deportation. (Interview 031, Emine Dzheppar)

However, as the above quote suggests, the Crimean Tatars saw in Ukraine not only a bulwark against the Kremlin’s influence in Crimea, but also a strategic partner with a shared experience of Russian colonization and oppression. In short, “the main reason [Crimean Tatars embraced Ukraine] is that we have a mutual enemy. Nothing unites people like a mutual enemy” (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 30s). Indeed, the sense that Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians have both suffered at the hands of Russian power was not lost on the Crimean Tatars when they returned from exile, and through the lens of recent events this connection has been further traced out. According to one Crimean Tatar historian, they gravitated toward Ukraine and felt a sense of solidarity with Ukrainians

[b]ecause we knew the history. Ukrainians also suffered gravely from the Soviet authorities, from the Russian Empire. Ukrainians really did suffer. Ukraine had the same kind of history; there was “Operation Vistula,”<sup>23</sup> during which they were also deported. Ukrainians were relocated from Poland, and Poles were resettled from Ukraine to Poland. This was also a kind of violent deportation. Much of the Ukrainian intelligentsia was also destroyed, and Ukrainians were forbidden from speaking the Ukrainian language in the times of the Russian Empire. So, in 1991 it was certainly no coincidence that the Crimean Tatars, in line with the decision of the *Qurultai*, exercised their self-determination as indigenous people to decide that they should support Ukraine, *independent* Ukraine, and to be a part of independent Ukraine. There is freedom in our blood and in our mentality, and Ukraine has also struggled for self-dependence, for freedom. This was certainly no coincidence. (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

In the view of Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev, having also suffered collectively at the hands of a common enemy has produced within the Ukrainian nation a unique sense of empathy and compassion for the Crimean Tatars, allowing for an easy and mutually respectful partnership. “Ukraine, which was always under pressure from the Russian Empire, and which

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<sup>23</sup> “Operation Vistula” was the codename for a 1947 Polish campaign of forced resettlement of ethnic Ukrainians from the borderland with the Ukrainian SSR to territories in western Poland recovered after WWII.

also suffered many injustices, can better understand our mentality and our struggle,” he suggested to me, adding that, “in fact, there is not much chauvinism in the Ukrainian nation, no sense of superiority over other nationalities” (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev).

Although I heard from several Crimean Tatars about this special bond they share with Ukrainians, I am admittedly skeptical of the suggestions that a sense of shared suffering played a key role in the Crimean Tatars’ decision to embrace Ukraine at the time of their return to Crimea. That Ukraine was a much more agreeable option than Russia given their vulnerable circumstances was certainly reason enough for the Crimean Tatars to throw their support behind Kyiv; but the feeling of a deeply-rooted solidarity with the Ukrainian people is more likely a narrative reflecting the post-annexation rhetoric of political solidarity being projected onto past events. In fact, despite their unwavering support of Ukraine, the Crimean Tatars’ relationship with Kyiv was often tense and unproductive, and the Ukrainian public generally viewed the Crimean Tatars with a fair degree of suspicion according to the testimony of many interviewees. However, according to other Crimean Tatars I spoke with, the fact that the Ukrainian government offered them little in the way of assistance was not an issue, and suited them fine so long as Kyiv did not interfere in their efforts to rehabilitate themselves in their homeland. I was told repeatedly that Crimean Tatars pride themselves on their self-sufficiency, which centuries of hardship have instilled in them. “It’s in our blood,” one interviewee explained:

Adapting quickly, relying only on yourself, not being afraid of any difficulties, working to build a comfortable life for yourself and your family. We don’t feel any kind of dependency, we don’t wait for someone to come along and give us anything. Nobody is going to give you anything, it’s just the opposite, they might come and take it away. You must fight to hold onto what you have. All these qualities are ingrained in us like some kind of genetic memory or feature. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

In light of this attitude, the most convincing argument I heard for why Crimean Tatars were happy to accept Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea was simply this: “Because Ukraine did not oppress us. Ukraine is the first country in the last 200 some-odd years that didn’t touch the Crimean Tatars. (...) Crimean Tatars felt fine in their homeland” (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev). Counterintuitively, the Ukrainian state earned the support of the Crimean Tatar community by simply not meddling in their efforts to reclaim land, rebuild homes, and resettle their homeland, even when it did not offer legal or logistical assistance. As one young man explained succinctly, “Just let us be. We will build, just give us some land. If you don’t give us land, we will find it ourselves. Just let us be. That was the principle” (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). The Crimean Tatars’ communal sense of self-sufficiency helped them persevere through the difficult early years of their return to Crimea, and they were gratefully merely for the fact that Kyiv did not attempt to “tread on them,” so to speak. Indeed, the parallel here to the spirit of American rugged individualism is not my own:

If they say that Ukraine didn’t do anything for the Crimean Tatars, then thank heavens that they didn’t do anything. I like to make a comparison: in some ways the Crimean Tatars are similar to the Americans who tamed the Wild West, who relied only on themselves, who weren’t paid anything by the government. So for the Crimean Tatars, the ideal situation is simply when nobody touches them. That is, they are not a paternalistic people. You could never imagine a Crimean Tatar who goes out demonstrating to demand they be paid a pension, for example. It’s just impossible to imagine. Crimean Tatars will never hold a demonstration demanding water or electricity—they will dig their own canal for their own water, and they will lay the electric cables themselves. You have to understand what the difference is. After two generations, there are still Crimean Tatars alive who survived the deportation. They were sent away each with a couple of suitcases, but they came back with maybe ten suitcases and a container full of furniture. They came back to empty fields and lived there in tents, in construction trailers, and built their own homes—even those who were not builders. Take my family: my mother is a doctor, my uncle is an accountant, my brother is a history teacher, and they all built their own homes. There’s a joke about this, that if they dropped a Crimean Tatar on the moon, he would still build a house. We have a saying that

is associated with the return to Crimea: in any uncertain situation, start building a house. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

Hence, the returning Crimean Tatars embraced Ukraine not only as an effective partner in resistance to Russian revanchism in Crimea, but as an authority that appeared almost benevolent in its non-intervention when stacked against the centuries of oppression and displacement wrought by Russian and Soviet authorities. In effect, Ukraine represented the *anti-Russia* at a moment when the Crimean Tatars had finally won a hard-fought victory against the Kremlin for the right to go home, and they were loath to fall back under its authority. Their embrace of Ukraine in the late 1980s and early 1990s was therefore a pragmatic decision and not, in principle, driven by a profound sense of solidarity with the Ukrainian people, as much as they may feel it now.

But their relationship to the Ukrainian state continued evolving. As an ethnic community, the Crimean Tatars' sense of place and territorial belonging had been connected exclusively to the Crimean Peninsula; it was in Crimea that diverse peoples and cultures coalesced to form the Crimean Tatar nation, and it was the dream of returning to Crimea that held together the Crimean Tatar community in Uzbekistan and in other small pockets around the Soviet Union, propelling their remarkable activist movement during their decades of exile (Uehling 2004; Bekirova 2017). Without question, Crimean Tatars considered Crimea their homeland, and Ukraine happened to be the state within whose borders that homeland fell after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But in the nearly 30 years since the Crimean Tatars first began returning to Crimea, an entire generation has been raised as Ukrainian citizens in a Ukrainian Crimea, and as young adults their attitudes towards Ukraine are no longer informed chiefly by pragmatism as those of their parents and grandparents once were. "You understand, Crimean Tatars returned to Ukraine," explained one interviewee,

They returned to here and they lived here, and children grew up here, and so they have already been Ukrainian citizens, they were always Ukrainians due to the fact that they were raised here. Russia isn't a homeland for them, they came mostly from Uzbekistan to Ukraine. It's understandable that they are not patriots of Uzbekistan because they left from there, but in no way can they be patriots of Russia, because they never lived there. They are genuine patriots of Crimea and Ukraine. (Interview 052, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

In fact, in my conversation with Refat Chubarov—who, as leader of the *Mejlis* and fellow member of the Ukrainian Parliament, is effectively the second most important Crimean Tatar political leader behind Mustafa Dzhemilev—he expressed surprise in the degree to which many young Crimean Tatars have come to identify closely with Ukraine:

[The younger generation of Crimean Tatars] has already grown up under the conditions of an independent Ukraine, and while maybe they haven't yet achieved much in terms of their social status or their financial situation, they have already breathed the air of freedom. (...) I want to say that, even though we had very limited opportunities in the 23 years since our return to Crimea and the foundation of independent Ukraine, and we had little success in creating national schools and special youth programs, it turns out that we have raised a very patriotic youth nevertheless. I was shocked by this, especially in the first months of the occupation. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

In the course of fieldwork, I too was often surprised by the strength with which many young Crimean Tatars asserted a deeply-held and well-developed sense of belonging to Ukraine. Having researched identities in Crimea, my understanding was that Crimean Tatars' socio-spatial identities were still very much rooted in Crimea; they had indicated overwhelming that they considered Crimea alone to be their homeland, and the importance of living in Crimea far exceeded other territorial components of identity according to the survey I conducted there in 2011 (Charron 2016). But hiding amid the data and the rhetoric, it seems, was a brewing generational shift that came to the fore with the Russian annexation of Crimea, which tellingly occurred just as the first generation of Ukrainian Crimean Tatars were coming into their own. "I, and [all] Crimean Tatars, are Ukrainians," proclaimed Alim Aliyev, co-founder of the

organization *Krym SOS* and a prominent Crimean Tatar activist. And although such sentiments have only grown more salient among Crimean IDPs since the annexation, Aliyev asserts that they are by no means new. He continues, “I absolutely believe this is a political nation, and there is an understanding of this, and a consciousness of it. For me it was always like this, it isn’t like it suddenly appeared” (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev). Some suggested that young Crimean Tatars feel this way toward Ukraine because it has afforded them many of the freedoms and rights that their parents had been denied as internally displaced Soviet subjects. This generation did not experience for themselves the hardships that their parents and grandparents endured in their struggle to return to Crimea, but they have been instilled with a sense of gratitude for the opportunities afforded to them both by the sacrifices of their elders, and by the state in which they grew up. In the words of one young Crimean Tatar woman living in Lviv,

I think for the younger generation, [Ukraine] means more. And it means more because they don't have a background that they can compare to. They lived here, they liked it, and they had the possibility to travel. I mean, my parents didn't travel. They didn't have the possibility. I wanted to travel a lot, all the time, I was dreaming about it. I wanted to see the world, and my parents understood it. They would say, "yeah, at least now we have the possibility." Before that, we had nothing. So I think for a younger generation it means more, because [their parents] went through all this. (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Perhaps the most striking statement I encountered regarding the Crimean Tatars’ relationship to Ukraine came from one young woman now living in Kyiv. In a surprising departure from the core narrative of Crimean Tatar national identity, she insisted that her homeland is not only Crimea, but rather Ukraine as a whole, and she was well aware that such a statement could spark controversy within the Crimean Tatar community:

To tell you the truth, my relatives all say that “our homeland is Crimea,” the homeland of Crimean Tatars. Most of those who are older than me were born in Asia, before they started returning to Crimea, and so for them, their homeland is Crimea, the homeland of their ancestors, of their parents, of their grandmothers and grandfathers. But I was born in Crimea, and for as long as I can remember,



this was Ukraine. Therefore, Crimea isn't my homeland so much as all of Ukraine. I'm not only a patriot of Crimea, Ukraine probably comes first for me. Ukraine as a whole is my homeland, and then Crimea. Maybe my parents and my relatives will judge me for this and think that it is not right, that I am a Crimean Tatar so Crimea should come first. But for me it's Ukraine, I don't know why. (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

When I asked if the annexation and her own experiences of displacement had changed her view on what constitutes her homeland, her response was “no, for me it was always the same. Ukraine was my homeland completely before the annexation. Both before and after, it was Ukraine” (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s).

### *Revolution and the Awakening of Crimeans' Ukrainian-ness*

Although in principle they remained a minority when compared to those who express views more favorable of Russia than of Ukraine, many Crimeans of diverse ethnic background—and particularly those born and/or raised after the Soviet collapse—have indeed developed a meaningful sense of attachment and belonging to Ukraine. Even before the annexation, the burgeoning Ukrainian-ness of Crimea and many of its people was frequently overlooked by outside observers who tended to focus more on the region's pro-Russian tendencies and potential for conflict (see Chase 1996; Dawson 1997; Sasse 2002; Wydra 2004; Kuzio 2010). Recent events in Crimea have certainly highlighted the importance and compelling nature of this pro-Russian angle, but the pro-Ukrainian angle must also be taken into consideration.

The flow of internally displaced peoples from Crimea to mainland Ukraine further underscores the important point that many Crimeans do, in fact, prefer Ukraine to Russia. While Ukrainian identities emerged and developed among some Crimeans in the decades after Ukraine became independent, they did not fully materialize for others until much more recently. Several of the IDPs I interviewed noted that it was the events surrounding the Euromaidan, the

annexation of Crimea, and the recent political shifts that have finally awoken a Ukrainian patriotism within them or boosted their sense of belonging to the Ukrainian state. It should be noted, however, that some claim to have experienced a similar moment of awakening a decade earlier under similar circumstances, when the 2004 Orange Revolution—which some have now retroactively dubbed the “First Maidan”—brought hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians to the very same Independence Square in Kyiv to protest a corrupt regime that had enlisted Russian assistance to rig the presidential election. For one Crimean Russian man now living in Lviv, it was the Orange Revolution that first stirred in him a sense of Ukrainian patriotism:

I was not a patriot of Ukraine before 2004. Even less so during the first attempts [in the mid-1990s] to separate Crimea. That was a long time ago, and I was completely neutral toward it, I just didn't think about it. I'm not saying that I was wildly enthusiastic about it, no. I had my own life to live, and to be honest it was just the same to me, Ukraine or Russia. My life had nothing to do with politics at that time, and things were generally better in Russia. So, I didn't reject Russia or anything that happened in Crimea at that time. I was just neutral. (...) This started [to change] in 2004, with the first “Orange” Revolution. Before 2004, I was what you might call an “apathist” [*pofigist*], but for whatever reason I believed that Crimea was Russian all the same. The fact that Crimea was separate, that “there is no land beyond Crimea,” all Crimeans knew this. That is, the saying “beyond the Perekop there is no land,” everybody knew this. But when the Orange Revolution happened, I started paying attention and really began to understand that Ukraine has come a long way moving away from Russia, and Russia is sliding backwards. (Interview 068, ethnic Russian man, 50s)

But while the Orange Revolution had exposed both the nefarious nature of Russia's meddling in Ukrainian politics and the strength of Ukraine's civic society to resist it, the Euromaidan of ten years later proved to be the true watershed moment. The stakes were much higher, the pushback from state authorities was much more violent, and the outcomes—both positive and negative—have been far more consequential, especially for Crimeans. The one-two punch of the Euromaidan and the annexation laid bare the conflicting political cultures that Putin's Russia and a decidedly pro-European Ukraine had come to embody, and Crimeans were

all but forced to pick a side. For one friend of mine—a young Crimean Tatar man whose punk rock ethos had previously instilled in him an aversion to the politics of nationalism—these events had a profound effect on his outlook, transforming him into a proud supporter of Ukraine. “You know, before, when I was a kid, I was always totally against, like, flags and patriots, against... everything,” he admitted, adding, “but now, I kind of ... I get it a little bit” (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). Whether informed by cynicism or mere apathy, I was told in several interviews that many Crimeans do not have strong feelings about either Russia or Ukraine. According to this perspective, the politics of nationalism are distant and abstract, with little impact on the basic aspirations and existential struggles of everyday life. Journalist Pavel Kazarin explained to me the breakdown of political views in Crimea thusly:

It’s often said that an overwhelming majority in Crimea were overjoyed when Russia arrived. This is not true. Why? In my view, the population of Crimea is made up of three big groups. The first group is adamantly pro-Russian, the pro-Moscow guys. They make up 35-40% in my assessment. These are the people who are always for Russia; whether it’s rich or poor, whether it’s fighting in Chechnya or spending petrodollars, they always support Russia. The second group is adamantly pro-Ukraine, who perceive Kyiv as their capital and not Moscow. I think that they probably make up around 20% of the population. The remaining 40% is a very situational, inert group, for whom it doesn’t matter under which flag they live. What is important for them is that there is no war, that their refrigerator is full, that there is stability, etc. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

In most cases, accepting Russian citizenship and sovereignty over Crimea was simply the path of least resistance for those who fall into this third category. “Crimeans can be so passive in terms of their political beliefs,” scoffed one interviewee, postulating that

[i]f Ukraine were to return to Crimea, people would just hand over their passports and get a new Ukrainian one. It’s all the same to them. I’ll ask my mother [who stayed in Crimea], “How are things there?” “Fine, everything is normal. After the USSR I took a Ukrainian passport because I had to. If it returns, I’ll go and return [my new Russian passport] and get another [Ukrainian] one. What’s the difference?” So, for them it makes no difference who is in charge, so long as nobody bothers them. People are closed off, they just aren’t interested in what’s happening in Ukraine. (Interview 074, ethnic Russian man, 30s)

But for hundreds of thousands of Crimeans, including those who have relocated to the mainland and those who have chosen to remain, the events of 2013-2014 pushed them squarely into the Ukrainian camp, if they hadn't already found their way there. Along with his wife, the gentleman quote above confessed to once feelingly similarly apathetic in his attitudes toward both Ukraine and Russia, but the invasion and annexation of Crimea ultimately soured their views of Russia and compelled them to relocate their family to Lviv from the Crimean resort city of Alushta. Prior to this, their sense was that,

M: *De jure*, [I was] Ukrainian, but I viewed myself as a resident of Alushta. I knew that my parents are from Russia, so therefore I am a Russian from Crimea. I didn't embrace Ukraine, it was generally the same for everybody. Of course, I can't speak for everyone, but it was this way among all the people I knew.

W: I didn't feel like a Ukrainian myself, there was never even any need to. We were just Crimeans, Russians within Ukraine, the issue of nationality never even came up. I didn't identify as a Ukrainian.

M: Because there was hardly ever anything Ukrainian there...

W: There was never any such question. There are Russians, there are Tatars, they all live in Crimea, and Crimea is an autonomy within Ukraine.

M: Everybody lives amicably, in peace, etc.

W: There was never any question. (Interview 074, ethnic Russian man and woman, 30s)

One young woman—who, at the time of our interview, had just relocated to Kyiv after having first emigrated with her family to Canada immediately after the annexation—explained that she had identified primarily as a Russian from Crimea before the events of 2013-2014 changed her outlook completely:

[My sense of identity] changed during the revolution, the Maidan revolution, and of course after the Russian invasion of Crimea. Because before that, well, I thought, yeah, I am part of Ukraine, but I'm still a Crimean, kind of separated, you know? (...) But I remember in my childhood, I was just a kid absorbing whatever was around me. And in my childhood, I viewed myself as Russian. This is what I was told, and I started exploring who my great grandparents were, who my ancestors were. So that's what I was thinking from the time I started school, from first grade. And now it's totally different. Even if I didn't find any ethnic Ukrainian background in myself, I would still consider myself a Ukrainian after

the revolution, after the invasion, just because [Russia] did this. (...) So, [my identity] shifted a lot, and after the Maidan I became really nationalistic. (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

For some Crimeans with at least a basic sense of belonging to Ukraine, the violent assault of its sovereignty and territorial integrity triggered a defensive response that (re)kindled and (re)invigorated sympathies for their besieged country. “Ukraine is subjected to this violence, to this cruel treatment, something that it hasn’t really deserved, with the annexation and the war. It’s under attack, basically,” explained one interviewee, “so, you kind of feel connected to it, you suddenly feel this love for it, like something that you love is being threatened. This love becomes even bigger, even if it was just a little bit deep down inside” (Interview 001, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). For Pavel Kazarin, a prominent journalist of Russian heritage from Crimea, the Euromaidan and the annexation were revelations, illuminating the stark differences between Ukrainian and Russian political cultures and civic attitudes. Although born and raised in Simferopol, Kazarin had been living and working in Moscow for a few years prior to the outbreak of the Euromaidan, but a newfound sense of patriotism and disillusionment with Russia inspired him to relocate to Kyiv shortly after the annexation. “Before, I viewed Ukraine and Russia as two understandably close countries,” Kazarin explained to me,

[a]nd in my view there was not much of a difference between them. Both in Russia and in Ukraine there is a high level of corruption, a high level of bureaucracy, of ineffectiveness. The problems in both countries were one in the same; economies run by oligarchs, low quality of life, etc. It was all connected. And then when the Maidan happened, I understood that people in Ukraine are completely different. People in Ukraine can stand up, they can go out into the square and say, “you cannot beat us, you cannot beat our students.” They can face gunfire and give their lives, unite in a voluntary movement and change the government on their own. They can get along without the state in the right conditions. And this really appealed to me, I wanted to be a part of this. (Interview 029, ethnic Russian man, 30s)

Those who were able and inclined to join in the Euromaidan in Kyiv similarly described their experiences as transformative. Although their participation indicates some preexisting sympathies for the movement and the vision of Ukrainian solidarity it advanced, several interviewees reported that their experiences on the Maidan stirred within them deep feelings of patriotism and civic responsibility that solidified their senses of belonging to Ukraine.

Reminiscing about her time spent on the Maidan, one interviewee explained that,

[a]fter all these events ... no, *at the time* of these events—the revolution, the Maidan—a distinctive sense emerged of who you are: you are a Ukrainian. You had already thought this before, but now there is a clear feeling, and you start to understand that there are certain things that are important to you, that you need to be aware of what is happening in the country. You need to keep your finger on the pulse; when it comes time to vote, you must know what you are doing, for whom you are voting, and not just when to show up. You must always stay abreast of these things. I learned the [Ukrainian] national anthem on the Maidan, I didn't know it before that. We sang it once every hour, that's how I learned it. I was proud of the fact that I am Ukrainian, it filled me with pride and, in principle, it still fills me with pride now. Nothing has changed, it's just gotten stronger. Something happened to my feeling of self-identity... I know who I am definitively. This is a good thing. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

Echoing these sentiments, one Crimean Tatar man also recalled the emotional experience of singing the national anthem on the Maidan, and suggested that finally learning its words marked a turning point in the development of his Ukrainian national consciousness:

I now know the Ukrainian national anthem by heart. I didn't know it before, just a few words and the melody. I would always place my hand on my heart when they would play it at football matches, but I never sang it, I just stood. I sang it with soul for the first time when I was on the Maidan, when almost a million people were singing it. I understood it then, and for me that was a moment of clarity, that I am a Ukrainian citizen just the same. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Thus, while much of the rhetorical justification for the annexation of Crime hinged on the inherent Russian-ness of the region and its people, it is crucial to also recognize the distinctive current of Ukrainian-ness embodied in the identities of its people as well. Some Crimeans have

consciously identified with Ukraine since even before it became an independent state, while others experienced periods of slow gestation before a clear sense of Ukrainian identity began to take shape. For the Crimean Tatars, what began as a pragmatic decision to support Ukraine as a bulwark against Russian influence in Crimea has developed into a genuine patriotism, especially among the generation born and/or raised in a Ukrainian Crimea. For others, it took the seismic political upheavals of the Euromaidan and the Russian annexation of Crimea to ultimately push them toward full-fledged acceptance and embrace of a Ukrainian identity. While Ukrainian identities persist quietly in Crimea under threat of persecution, the spirit of Crimea's Ukrainian-ness has been mostly transplanted to the mainland, where Crimean IDPs have become key figures in the proliferation of a freshly civic-minded discourse of Ukrainian identity. However, as Ukrainian identities undergo re-evaluation and re-definition, exactly what it means for Crimean IDPs to express, perform, and embody Ukrainian-ness can be slippery and contentious. With this in mind, I now turn to the question of what it means for Crimean IDPs to be Ukrainian in post-annexation Ukraine.

### **Embracing, Embodying, and Performing Ukrainian-ness**

Many Crimeans identify as Ukrainians, but these identities have been somewhat stunted in a region with a strong Russian identity where Ukrainian-ness is often met with stubborn resistance. Prior to the annexation, the reach of Ukrainian policies and institutions related to language use, cultural and historical education, and civic engagement had been limited in Crimea due in part to the largely pro-Russian politicians who led Crimea's autonomous government, and by a frequently disinterested public. The absence of Ukrainian culture and the invisibility of the Ukrainian state were even more pronounced in the virulently pro-Russian enclave of Sevastopol,

as one former Sevastopol resident now living in Lviv noted to me when discussing impressions of her newly adopted home:

The feeling of Ukrainian pride is so apparent here, wherever you go. Whenever there is a holiday, the people wear their *vyshyvankas*. The people cherish and nurture their culture. I think this is really wonderful. (...) We were brought up differently. In Sevastopol we knew Russian history, but it wasn't ours, it wasn't about us or about the people I talked to. We knew it because Sevastopol is overflowing with this history, with the Russian fleet, with everything Russian. We somehow knew it all, but it wasn't ours, and there was nothing Ukrainian there. We didn't learn the Ukrainian language in school, we hardly learned any Ukrainian history, and we were never introduced to the culture, so we were caught somewhere in between. Of course, the problem begins with the fact that nobody really paid attention to Crimea when it was Ukrainian. We needed some propaganda, we needed some kind of positive activity [oriented toward Ukraine]. There was none of this, and look what happened. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

### *Developing Ukrainian-ness Through Domestic Travel*

According to several interviewees, part of the reason why Ukrainian-ness had such difficulty taking root in Crimea was because so few Crimeans ever bothered to travel beyond the region to see the rest of Ukraine for themselves. The combination of a strong regional identity, Russian cultural affinities, and lingering resentment over the Soviet collapse deterred many from venturing past the Isthmus of Perekop—beyond which, the saying goes, there is no land for Crimeans. “There is a kind of island mentality” in Crimea, one interviewee lamented,

the youth never had much inclination to travel beyond Crimea. There were few who dared to travel anywhere, to Kyiv or to Lviv, anywhere. So, these people never saw Ukraine. My classmates, all the people with whom I went to university, they've all lived in Crimea for 25 years, and only a few ever traveled in Ukraine, even though it was so cheap and accessible. It was so inexpensive to travel, if you had a student ID a train ticket cost just kopeks. You could go to Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, wherever you wanted, just for a laughable amount of money. [My friends and I] took advantage of this, we traveled all over Ukraine—we saw the west, the east, the center, we saw it all. But the majority, 90% of our classmates, never bothered. They just lived passively in Crimea, and continue to do so. And when



the annexation happened, they didn't even understand what they had lost. They never saw this Ukraine. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

In the more cynical view of one interviewee, Crimeans and Ukrainians from all regions have been prohibited from traveling within the country due to a lack of suitable infrastructure and financial resources intentionally perpetuated by Ukrainian and Russian officials to keep the population divided:

If there had been a more open society in Ukraine, if we had all been able to travel more and get to know each other, never in our lives would the Donbas have stood in opposition to Lviv. They planted these seeds with their policies; a lack of roads, a lack of domestic flights, a lack of... I mean, the impoverishment of the population was government policy, thanks in part to our neighbors [i.e., Russia]. And they have the same kinds of policies there too—imperial policies, divide and conquer. Everything was done to keep people from communicating with each other and to pit them against each other. (Interview 059, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

Whether or not their lack of intrastate mobility was the intended outcome of divisive politics, making the effort to travel to more locations within Ukraine has become an important component of reasserting Ukrainian identity for many Crimean IDPs. Furthermore, experiencing first-hand the distinctive regions, landscapes, cultures, histories, and peoples that make up Ukraine has become something of a moral imperative for those who celebrate Ukrainian diversity and advance a discourse of national inclusivity. “I want to explore Ukraine, I want to travel, to see people in different places,” commented one interviewee living in Kyiv, adding, “I want to go to Lviv, to different cities, and learn more about the culture, more about the history” (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s).

For those who haven't already made it their new home, Lviv has emerged as one of the most desirable travel destinations among Crimean IDPs. This in part reflects Lviv's rise in recent years as one of Ukraine's premier tourist destinations, attracting visitors from around the world

("Number of tourists..." 2018), but the city holds a certain significance for Crimeans seeking to nourish their Ukrainian-ness. Despite its long history as a Polish city with a strong Jewish influence, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lviv was transformed into the hearth of Ukrainian national identity (Amar 2015), and now supposedly embodies the perceived aggressive Ukrainian nationalism that many Crimeans imagine and fear. One interviewee described his qualms about Lviv before his first visit to the city years earlier:

In 2008 I went to Lviv with my brother, and we were apprehensive, thinking that we might be attacked or something for speaking Russian. We even discussed it while we were on the train, it was hanging over our heads. Then we arrived in Lviv and nothing of the sort happened, we spoke to people in Russian and everything was great. It was then that we understood that we had had this vague image in our heads of these "*Banderites*" that just isn't correct, it's absolutely unfounded. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian man, 20s)

For many Crimean IDPs seeking to dispel such misconceptions once and for all, or for those simply wishing to revel in an environment brimming with the invigorating new spirit of Ukrainian pride, Lviv has become something of a pilgrimage site. For those who have resettled in Lviv, the surrounding environs of Western Ukraine—with its scenic Carpathian Mountains, diverse communities of ethnic minorities, and numerous points of historical significance—have a similar draw. I grew accustomed during fieldwork to seeing social media posts from Crimean IDPs visiting new cities and points of interest around the country, and enthusiastically sharing their impressions of a Ukraine that had seemed so distant until very recently. As one interviewee suggested, the perception of Ukraine's sudden accessibility has helped strengthen her sense of national belonging:

Ukraine, as a country, has become much closer to me. There is this kind of peculiarity about Crimeans, that they generally never traveled outside of Crimea. The thing was, Crimea was always enough for us, but after all these events [Ukraine] has somehow become closer. You can see a lot of interesting things in Ukraine, and it's not too far. You can go to the mountains from here [Lviv]. We

never even had the thought to travel [to the mainland] before all of this, only when it was necessary. (Interview 074, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

### *Engaging with Ukrainian National Symbols*

In addition to domestic travel, an increased reverence for symbols of Ukrainian state and nationhood is a key factor in how Crimean IDPs perform and engage with discourses of Ukrainian-ness. Following the events of 2013-2014, Ukraine has seen a general explosion in the use of imagery and symbology associated with the state, namely the iconic trident—known as the *tryzub* in Ukrainian—that adorns Ukraine’s coat of arms, and the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian state flag. They had long been ubiquitous, banal symbols of the Ukrainian state, but during the Euromaidan they became powerful symbols of national solidarity and defiance against the corrupt policies of the state itself, reclaimed in a delirious moment of “hot” nationalism (Billig 1995). As before, these symbols still appear ubiquitously throughout Ukraine, but now they are just as likely to adorn a t-shirt or a keychain as they are a government building (Figure 10). Like so many of their fellow citizens, Crimean IDPs have also been swept up in the pride and pageantry now associated with these symbols. “Ukraine has become a symbol of freedom for me, and the Ukrainian flag and the *tryzub*—symbols of freedom,” one interviewee



**Figure 10:** An example of a stylized *tryzub* t-shirt now worn by many young Ukrainians, who have reappropriated and revitalized the traditional symbol in recent years as an expression of Ukrainian patriotism. (Photo source: <http://patriotka.com.ua>)

proclaimed proudly as she showed me the stylized *tryzub* pendant dangling from her necklace (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

Many of the IDPs I spoke with have taken to displaying the Ukrainian flag both publicly and privately as a gesture of national solidarity and an expression of personal conviction. “In Crimea I never had many [Ukrainian] state flags, I had just one at home,” confessed one Crimean Tatar man living in Lviv, “but now I have one in my car, one at my work desk, one at home, and for me this is very important” (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s). Even for some Crimeans who had a well-developed sense of Ukrainian identity prior to 2014, the state flag did not stir the same feelings of patriotism that they might have in other regions of Ukraine, or in the way that flags are generally meant to do. Both the flag and the coat of arms were displayed on government buildings and official state documents in Crimea the same as anywhere else in Ukraine, but to many Crimeans they symbolized the imposition of an unfamiliar culture by an undesirable state, and in places like Sevastopol they were outnumbered by the Russian tricolor. One interviewee told me that despite becoming conscious of her own Ukrainian identity at an early age, she had never developed a particular reverence for the state flag until she took part in the Euromaidan. However, she explained that it was during a visit to the United States just months before the Euromaidan began that she first began thinking critically about the meanings embodied in national flags, and her own relationship to the Ukrainian flag:

I remember there was a moment, when I was walking around the streets of America and saw the flag everywhere, and I thought, why do they love their flag so much? We don't feel anything like this about our flag, for us it's just the opposite; for many people in Crimea it was just like a red cape [*krasnaia triapka*], there was no love for it. (...) So I thought to myself, what is going on with this [American] flag? They all find it so beautiful, it's made from some kind of special fabric, and we don't have anything like this [in Ukraine]. (...) I returned [to Ukraine] in the beginning of September, and the Maidan started in November, just a couple months later, and sometime in December or January I started to understand why you [in America] love your flag so much, because we started to

love our own. Well, I saw that there were a lot of people who already loved the flag before the Maidan, for whom the flag wasn't just some red cape. Maybe I just wasn't fortunate enough to see it before, I usually saw people who treated this state symbol with disdain. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

References to flags appeared frequently in my interviews with Crimean IDPs, often serving as a type of short-hand for the state and the ideas it represents. I heard it used in both positive and negative contexts; on the one hand, interviewees referred to the Russian flags now flying over Crimea and the ruin they have come to symbolize for them. "I don't want to return [to Crimea], where there are Russian flags, where Putin now sits," commented one interviewee (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s), while another stated firmly that "I don't want to live there and see all these Russian flags. When you walk down the street and see the flag of a



**Figure 11:** Two Slavic Crimean men displaying their Ukrainian patriotism. The t-shirt of the man on the right reads, "Crimean Ukrainian." (Photo by author)

foreign country in your city, this is really irritating and unpleasant" (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). On the other hand, I also encountered frequent references to the Ukrainian flag that equated it with the spirit of freedom and solidarity inherited from the Euromaidan. Asserting the right to free speech that she had lost in Crimea, the same interviewee quoted above proclaimed proudly that "here [in the mainland] you can take the Ukrainian flag in your hand and say whatever it is you need to say without fear that your neighbors will beat you" (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). Journalist Pavel

Kazarin told me that, for him, “a state identity has emerged. Ukraine has ceased to be some kind of abstract concept. The Ukrainian flag is no longer some abstract piece of multicolored cloth, I now understand that it is mine” (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin). Thus, the state flag has emerged as an important symbolic, discursive, and material component of how Crimean IDPs—along with their fellow Ukrainians—experience and perform Ukrainian national identities (Figure 11).

Along with the state flag and the *tryzub*, the *vyshyvanka* has become a powerful emblem and marking of Ukrainian national identity for Crimean IDPs. Traditionally worn as a loose-fitting shirt decorated with colorful embroidered patterns specific to different Ukrainian regions, the *vyshyvanka* is a quintessential element of Ukrainian folk costumes, and has long been associated with Ukrainian ethnic identity and political resistance. Since independence, the

*vyshyvanka* had mostly been worn to mark special occasions and on holidays such as Ukrainian Independence Day or the Day of the *Vyshyvanka*, an annual holiday held in May. But since the Euromaidan, the *vyshyvanka* has been reappropriated as an everyday symbol of national solidarity and affirmation of Ukrainian identity. Many Ukrainians, both men and women, now wear *vyshyvankas* on a regular basis, and have access to an expansive new variety of styles and symbols as the popularity of *vyshyvankas* has skyrocketed (Figure 12). Even the word



**Figure 12:** A Ukrainian family poses in their matching *vyshyvankas*. Many Ukrainians have taken to wearing the traditional garment on a regular basis. (Photo source: [https://www.instagram.com/p/BjmF7SWnRUD/?utm\\_source=ig\\_share\\_sheet&igshid=10pqe8rw4hujj](https://www.instagram.com/p/BjmF7SWnRUD/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=10pqe8rw4hujj))

itself has recently been incorporated into politicized discourses of national identity in response to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia; fervent Ukrainian ethno-nationalists are sometimes labeled *vyshyvats*—a play on the word *vatnik*, which is a cheap cotton-lined winter coat that is also used as a pejorative term for extreme Russian nationalists, whose heads are said to be full of cotton.

As with other symbols of Ukrainian-ness, *vyshyvankas* appeared far less frequently in Crimea, and those who chose to wear them were typically met with bemusement or suspicion. “For people in Kyiv, it’s difficult to understand. They don’t know what it was like to wear a *vyshyvanka* in Crimea before it became mainstream,” explained one interviewee and proud *vyshyvanka* owner of many years, who shared with me the story of her first *vyshyvanka* and the controversy it stirred:

Sometime around 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, when I was maybe 12, I got a *vyshyvanka*, the first in my life. I had gone to Lviv with my mother, we went on excursions around the city, and I got a *vyshyvanka*. It had blue embroidery, and I loved to wear it with jeans. I went to school dressed like this—just a girl getting up in the morning, putting together an outfit, and going to school. The shock that resulted from my appearance was rather interesting. [The school officials] commented, “oh, it’s very beautiful, very nice, but why?” I said, “what do you mean, “why?”” “Why did you decide to wear this?” “Well, isn’t it beautiful?” “Yes, it’s beautiful.” “Do you like it?” “Yes, it looks great.” “Then what is the problem?” It was obvious that something was running through their heads. They didn’t understand, it didn’t add up for them. To them it seemed like some conscious decision [on my part], some kind of statement. I told them, “I’m not making any statement, I just like it.” It was always a problem. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

More recently, a cultural event held in the Crimean city of Yevpatoria to celebrate the *vyshyvanka* triggered a political backlash that was partially responsible for the organizers’



decision to relocate to Kyiv. The wife of the event's head organizer explained the situation to me:

People started to write denouncements to the FSB about my husband because he had been the organizer of a pro-Ukrainian cultural event, the "Mega March in *Vyshyvankas*." The event was non-political, without commentary, just people gathering together to march in these folk costumes, just a cultural celebration. We held this event in September 2013, and we had planned another one for the Spring of 2014. Even though the occupation had already started by then, we still asked for permission to hold the event, but for obvious reasons we were refused. (Interview 04, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s)

However, not all the IDPs I spoke to were pioneering early adopters of the *vyshyvanka* in Crimea. One interviewee recalled a moment from her youth when *not* wearing a *vyshyvanka* became a point of pride and assertion of Crimean regional identity:

When I finished school in 2005, I won a local competition to travel to Kyiv and represent Crimea in a national history competition. We all had to walk out and introduce ourselves to the audience, and all the girls were wearing *vyshyvankas*—that is, this [Ukrainian] national costume—and I arrived wearing a normal jacket, just something casual. I was taken aback when I saw them all dressed this way. I said, "what are you all doing?" They looked at me with disdain and asked, "where's your *vyshyvanka*?" I stood proudly and proclaimed, "I am from Crimea, I don't have a *vyshyvanka*." (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

But her attitude has since changed. "Now, I have two of them," she beamed.

Once an emblem of Ukrainian *ethnic* identity, Crimeans of all ethnic backgrounds have taken to wearing the garment both for special occasions and as part of their everyday wardrobe in a display of national pride or proclamation of Ukrainian-ness. In one small example of the new meanings that the *vyshyvanka* has come to embody for Crimean IDPs, a Crimean Tatar man told me about his appearance on a local television program in the small Western Ukrainian city where he had relocated with his family; he asked the host whether he should plan on wearing a *vyshyvanka* on set, to which the host replied that it was not necessary, because he was already Ukrainian enough (Interview 068, Crimean Tatar man, 40s). As he told me this story, the man



was wearing a t-shirt featuring both a *tryzub* and patterns mimicking the embroidery of a traditional *vyshyvanka*—a gift from his teenage son (Figure 13). In another example, an ethnic Russian woman from Sevastopol now living in Lviv admitted to me with a small degree of shame that she did not yet own a *vyshyvanka* for herself, but that she was working on it:

I don't have a *vyshyvanka*. I bought them for my whole family, I bought a *vyshyvanka* for my husband and my son, but I have a blouse that looks similar to a *vyshyvanka*, so I wear this whenever there is a holiday or something. I just haven't been able to get one for myself yet. I really like them, I thought that I might like to get a shirt or a dress [in the same embroidered style], they are so beautiful. I just need some time to decide. All the women here [in Lviv] have them. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)



**Figure 13:** A Crimean Tatar man shows off his t-shirt with the Ukrainian *tryzub* and patterns mimicking those of a *vyshyvanka*. His ring features the Crimean Tatar national emblem known as a *tamga*.” (Photo by author)



**Figure 14:** Anatolii Zasoba, founder of the Organization "Krymskaia Diaspora," stands in the organization's office with the banner used in the "Crimean Vyshyvanka" protest in front of the Russian Embassy in Kyiv. (Photo by author)

In other instances, Crimean IDPs have mobilized the *vyshyvanka* as an explicit symbol of protest and resistance to Russia's annexation of Crimea. Three months after the annexation, members of the newly-founded social organization *Krymskaia Diaspora* held a demonstration in front of the Russian Embassy in Kyiv. The demonstration fell on June 14, which is both the Day of the City of Sevastopol—the hometown of the organization's founders—and just two days past Russia's Independence Day, inspiring organizers to dub the demonstration the "Day of Independence *from* Russia." But they also referred to their protest as the "Crimean *Vyshyvanka*," because all the IDPs who took part came dressed in the traditional garment. Here too, flags

played an important role in the symbology of the demonstration; the protesters hung a banner from the gate of the embassy that appeared to be a Russian flag, but with something hiding underneath. “We covered the banner with small pieces of paper to look like the tricolor, like the Russian flag,” explained organizer and *Crimean Diaspora* founder Anatolii Zasoba, “and every Crimean who took part symbolically tore away a piece of the tricolor to reveal a yellow and blue Crimea underneath. (...) And all the IDPs from Crimea wearing Ukrainian *vyshyvankas* signed the banner and filled in their towns on the map” (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba). As I interviewed him in the *Crimean Diaspora* offices, the same banner hung on the wall beside us (Figure 14).

### *Efforts to Use the Ukrainian Language*

Engaging with national symbology is thus an important component of Crimean IDPs’ assertion and performance of Ukrainian-ness, but language use also plays a crucial role. Large portions of Ukraine’s population—44.5% according to a 2011 poll (“Bil’she polovyny...” 2011)—speak Russian rather than Ukrainian on a daily basis, and the question of whether Russian should be recognized as a second official language has dogged Ukrainian politics since independence (Kulyk 2013). As Ukraine’s only region with an ethnic Russian majority, where the Russian language is ubiquitous, debate over language use in Crimea has been particularly prickly. Russian is the first language of most Crimeans regardless of ethnicity, and it has been used almost exclusively in regional government, media, and everyday communication. But Ukrainian is, in fact, the first language of some Crimeans, particularly those who had resettled there from elsewhere in Ukraine. One interviewee noted, for example, that he was an atypical Crimean because he came from a Ukrainian-speaking household. “My parents were both born in

Ukraine, but in different places; my father is from northern Ukraine, my mother from Western Ukraine. They came to Crime for their studies and met in Simferopol. So, I heard Ukrainian spoken at home since I was a child” (Interview 034, ethnic Ukrainian man, 30s).

Although a relatively small number spoke it at home, most Crimeans typically encountered the Ukrainian language only through the local organs of state government, in news and media distributed throughout Ukraine, and in a few local media outlets, and many were loath to engage with it when it became necessary. During the time I spent in Crimea, I often heard gripes about the local cinemas showing foreign films dubbed in Ukrainian rather than Russian, as per national policy. “In Crimea, it seems to me, the Ukrainian language was met with hostility [*vshyky vosprinimali*],” stated one interviewee, noting that, “when you started to speak Ukrainian, people would look at you like you were either a tourist or a ‘*Banderite*.’ It was always like this” (Interview 067, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). Attitudes toward the Ukrainian language were even harsher in Sevastopol; “to live in Sevastopol and have a strong pro-Ukrainian position meant to be in a constant state of war,” recalled one former resident, pointing out that, “people here [in the mainland] don’t understand this, they were never there in that kind of environment, where you aren’t able to converse in Ukrainian” (Interview 066, ethnic Ukrainian man, 50s).

Knowledge of the Ukrainian language varies widely among Crimeans. Most at least understand it at a basic level, as it is closely related to Russian and necessary for comprehending much of what was shown on television since at least the mid-1990s. “Ukrainian was never a problem for Crimeans, it’s a made-up story,” one interviewee stated, pushing back against the notion that Russian speakers in Crimea were oppressed by the imposition of the Ukrainian language (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). Although instruction in Crimean schools was conducted mostly in Russian, Ukrainian language education had been a part of the curricula

since even before independence. However, while Russian remained the official language of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian language education was not prioritized until after Ukrainian independence. As a result, the generation of Crimeans raised and educated after independence generally have a much stronger grasp of Ukrainian compared to those who attended Soviet schools. One interviewee recalled how this generational disparity in knowledge of the Ukrainian language played a role in her own family's social dynamics:

Both of my parents consider themselves Russians, they never tried to learn Ukrainian. I remember the time when the television was switched completely to Ukrainian, they were very angry, and that was very hard for them, a very hard transition. I was already in school, already learning Ukrainian from school, and it was not a big deal for me to understand both. And every time I would come visit later on, when I was in high school and I would come visit my grandparents, my grandfather would have some Ukrainian words ready for me so he could ask me what they mean, because he watched TV and he didn't understand what all the words meant. I would explain the same words to him over and over again every time, and every time he would forget, it was just so funny. And then he bought a dictionary, but he would keep asking me about those words, which was kind of cute. It was our little tradition. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

What's more, the Crimean Tatars who returned to Crimea as adults had never had any education in the Ukrainian language whatsoever. Although their children began learning it in school, most Crimean Tatars had few opportunities to familiarize themselves with the Ukrainian language in a formal setting.

But while Crimean students learned Ukrainian in school, they rarely had incentive or opportunity to use it outside of the classroom. Many viewed it as just another school subject, memorizing grammar and vocabulary for the sake of their grades, but often losing it to lack of practice once their courses were complete. One interviewee told me that

We had Ukrainian language in school, but we never practiced it, it was only at school. I would leave school with my friends, and we would speak Russian. I went to Kyiv and Lviv with my Crimean friends for the first time, and it was such a novelty [*nam bylo v dikovinku*] to speak Ukrainian. When we were speaking

Ukrainian, it was like going to America and speaking English. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

This general lack of interest in Ukrainian and resistance to its imposition meant that Ukrainian language education in Crimea was of a rather low quality, according to some interviewees. In fact, one group of young Crimeans told me that they learned Ukrainian primarily from television rather than their course work, and argued that this actually helped them learn to speak Ukrainian better than native speakers:

M1: Until about 1996, I believe, they showed Russian television in Ukraine, and we didn't have any Ukrainian television.

M2: No, there was Ukrainian television. The *Inter* network appeared in 1996. And at that time, when I started to watch Ukrainian television, that's when I started to understand [the language].

M1: Me too, by the way. I learned Ukrainian from TV ads.

W: That's right, it appears that we all learned Ukrainian from television. And that's why we speak Ukrainian a bit more properly than some native speakers, because we listened to the announcers, and accordingly, all our grammar and pronunciation is correct.

AC: And did you also learn Ukrainian in school?

M2: In Crimea, yes, they taught us Ukrainian, but the quality of education was generally...

W: ...very low. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian men and woman, 20s)

Echoing the paradoxical notion that Crimeans learned a more proper version of the Ukrainian language than its native speakers, a young Crimean Tatar man living in Lviv explained his surprise upon hearing how Western Ukrainians speak:

What baffled me when I arrived was that a lot of people speak *Surzhyk*<sup>24</sup> with a Carpathian or Polish accent. They use some of their own unique words, and it took some time before I started to understand them. I'm mostly accustomed to it now, but when I speak Ukrainian I try not to speak it like they do here, in *Surzhyk* or with some of their specific words. I just speak literary Ukrainian. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

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<sup>24</sup> *Surzhyk* Is a broad term used to describe a spoken language that falls somewhere between Ukrainian and Russian, incorporating elements of both (see Bilaniuk 2005).

While virtually all Crimeans can understand Ukrainian and most are at least somewhat conversant, many have nevertheless viewed it with indifference or outright animosity, and these negative attitudes have only been exacerbated in the wake of the Euromaidan and the annexation. However, speaking Ukrainian has become another powerful means for Crimean IDPs to express and assert their Ukrainian national identity, and they have begun using it—or at least making the effort—far more often. But depending on where they have resettled, some Crimean IDPs have begun speaking Ukrainian out of necessity and not necessarily out of principle. Especially in Western Ukraine, where native Ukrainian speakers far outnumber native Russian speakers, most IDPs have adapted to speaking the language of those around them. “It was very easy for me to adapt, and I switched immediately to Ukrainian,” said one interviewee, a young Crimean Tatar woman now living in Lviv. “It’s not even that I wanted to be patriotic, it wasn’t about that, it’s just that people around you speak Ukrainian, so you just switch.” A talented linguist who had already mastered Ukrainian before relocating, she was nevertheless enthusiastic to speak it on a day-to-day basis. “I like languages,” she added, “so I admire learning it, and I wanted to switch so much when I got here!” (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). In other cases, young Crimean Tatars living in Lviv reported that locals are frequently surprised by how well they speak Ukrainian, expecting them not to have learned it. For examples, a young Crimean Tatar couple told me about their experiences speaking Ukrainian in Lviv:

W: We speak Ukrainian perfectly, and I can say that proudly because even the people who live here and with whom we speak in Ukrainian, they know that we came from Crimea, and they are shocked. They ask us, “how do you know Ukrainian?” We tell them that we learned it in school, that we had Ukrainian language in all our schools, in university they gave us exams in Ukrainian. We speak Ukrainian fluently, and they are simply amazed and rather shocked that we are able to speak like that.

M: I’ve been speaking Ukrainian at work for about a year now. It’s no problem for me to speak either in Russian or in Ukrainian.

W: We speak only Ukrainian with our acquaintances here, and in the shops and markets. My mother came to visit us, and she understands Ukrainian but does not speak it. The first time we took her out she was also so surprised: “Oh, you speak Ukrainian so well!” (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar couple, 20s)

Despite having learned it in school, others have encountered a steeper learning curve when trying to use Ukrainian on a daily basis, including another young Crimean Tatar man living in Lviv. “I studied it in school, even at an advanced level,” he told me,

but being here for two years, it feels somehow that school was a long time ago. I probably didn’t use Ukrainian for about four years [before coming the Lviv], and in these four years I forgot some of it. So when I came here, in any case, I had to secretly study up on it. But now my knowledge of Ukrainian is at a much better level. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

In other regions of Ukraine where Russian is at least as common as Ukrainian, many Crimean IDPs have made a deliberate choice to speak more Ukrainian. As a microcosm of Ukraine itself, Kyiv is a wholly bi-lingual city where the Ukrainian and Russian languages coexist and comingle, often within a single conversation. Although they would at least need to understand Ukrainian to get by in certain situations, an IDP from Crimea would have no problems living in Kyiv and speaking Russian exclusively. Nevertheless, many in Kyiv and elsewhere in Ukraine have consciously transitioned to using more Ukrainian. This is reflective of a larger trend seen throughout Ukraine since the Euromaidan, as both a sense of national pride and a backlash against Russian influence have helped the Ukrainian language surge to new levels of popularity. “Right now, people are embracing it,” one interviewee noted. “I’ve never seen people so excited about learning and speaking Ukrainian, or about reading Ukrainian authors. I’ve never seen that before” (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s).

But for some Crimean IDPs, the decision to speak Ukrainian rather than Russian is rooted in a deep sense of patriotism and moral obligation. For example, I interviewed two separate IDPs who now refuse to speak Russian out of principle, committing to the exclusive use of Ukrainian.



One also spoke English well enough for an interview, but the other responded only in Ukrainian to the written questions I sent him through Facebook Messenger, as he was serving in the ATO (Anti-Terrorist Operation) in Eastern Ukraine at the time. “Don’t worry about your knowledge of the Ukrainian language,” he reassured me when I apologized for not knowing the language well enough, “I myself have only been studying it for a year and a half” (Interview 089, ethnic Russian man, 20s)! Most IDPs do not go so far as to excise the Russian language from their lives entirely, but many have indeed altered their linguistic habits to reflect their political convictions and national affinities. For instance, one interviewee explained that she will still use Russian in certain situations, but that she now has a strong preference for Ukrainian:

Now, I still speak with some of my friends in Russian, but if somebody starts speaking to me in Ukrainian, I always respond in Ukrainian. In public settings I just prefer to speak Ukrainian. Anyway, there is a bit of nationalism within me, I actually get annoyed if somebody speaks Russian in public places. I’m a bit of a nationalist. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Similarly, one Crimean Tatar man living in Lviv told that he now makes a point of speaking Ukrainian no matter where he may be within the country, even though his knowledge of the language was fairly weak before leaving Crimea. As he explains, deliberately choosing to speak Ukrainian instead of Russian is not only an expression of national pride or solidarity, but a highly symbolic gesture meant to convey respect for the culture and institutions of the state where he is proud to be a citizen:

[My knowledge of Ukrainian] was so-so [before I arrived in Lviv]. It’s much better now. But I still have an accent. I don’t sound like Taras [i.e., an average Ukrainian speaker]. Every time I speak Ukrainian, I do so out of principle—on public transportation, in shops, in the hospital, everywhere. Even when I go now to Kyiv or Kharkiv, even if the people there don’t speak Ukrainian, I always speak Ukrainian. I try. It’s a matter of principle for me, because we live in Ukraine but did not respect this fact earlier, and there should come a moment when language becomes a signifier of respect. It isn’t some feigned display of

patriotism like waving a flag—it's respect. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Despite their efforts and intentions, many Crimean IDPs still struggle with the Ukrainian language, especially those in Lviv. For some, a lack of fluency in Ukrainian remains an obstacle to social integration and employment. “I understand it, I write it and speak it a little bit, but not at the level necessary for normal communication,” lamented one ethnic Russian woman from Sevastopol now living in Lviv. “I try to speak Ukrainian when I can. When there are some short, uncomplicated phrases, or when I know for sure that I can say something properly, I will speak it” (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). Especially among Crimeans, Lviv has long had a reputation as a city where Ukrainian is spoken exclusively and stubbornly, where Russian speakers can expect to be met with disdain at best and hostility at worst. Fortunately for Crimean IDPs still struggling with the Ukrainian language, this turns out not to be the case. Several IDPs noted with relief that locals in Lviv are happy to accommodate them by switching to Russian in conversation, even as they try their best with Ukrainian. One ethnic Russian man told me of his experiences trying to speak to the locals in their native language:

When you address somebody on the street here in Ukrainian, they will immediately switch to Russian. I'll ask people, “why do you switch to Russian? Please speak Ukrainian, it will be easier for us.” They say, “why are you fretting over it? It's easier for us this way.” That's what the people in Lviv say, so there is no kind of aggression. (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 50s)

In another example, a Crimean Tatar man told me that his efforts to better learn Ukrainian have been continually thwarted due to the fact that those around him are more than willing to speak Russian for his sake:

To this day I still speak Russian, and for me this is a problem, but it isn't a problem for the locals. That is, I can speak a bit of Ukrainian in certain company, but I have never encountered any problems, nobody has ever reproached me [for speaking Russian]. When I first arrived here, I wanted to immediately start

studying the language, but the locals and my circle of friends always spoke Russian to me. I asked them to speak Ukrainian, and they said, “we can speak in Russian, and in English, and in Polish ... see what kind of savages we are?” More often than not, people will speak to me in Russian, and I will answer in Ukrainian. I have come to understand that I will have to study it quietly on my own!  
(Interview 054, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

Even if unsuccessful, making a concerted effort to speak Ukrainian is one important way that Crimean IDPs assert their belonging to the Ukrainian state and nation. But crucially, the mainstream discourses of Ukrainian nationalism to emerge since the Euromaidan dictates that knowledge of the Ukrainian language is not a litmus test for membership in the Ukrainian nation, nor is Ukrainian ethnicity (Kulyk 2016a). The argument that the Ukrainian nation should encompass more than just those who are ethnically or linguistically Ukrainian was not born on the Maidan; acknowledgement of the diversity found within Ukraine’s borders and the advancement of an inclusive, civic-based Ukrainian national identity date to the earliest years of Ukrainian statehood at least (see Mal’gin 2005). But such discourses of Ukrainian nationhood have always been checked by competing discourses of Ukrainian ethno-nationalism, which argue that Ukrainian identity is rooted in language, ethnicity, and culture, and that non-Ukrainians—especially Russians and Russian speakers—are alien to the Ukrainian state and nation. These ideas have not gone away entirely, but the Euromaidan and the events that followed seem to have foregrounded civic notions of Ukrainian nationalism while pushing ethno-national visions of Ukrainian-ness farther to the fringes. As one interviewee pointed out, “there are Russian-speaking patriots, and there are Ukrainian-speaking patriots. The Maidan showed us this” (Interview 025, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s).

As it so happens, the community of Crimean IDPs are the quintessential emblem of this post-Maidan vision of Ukrainian-ness; not only are they ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and culturally diverse, but they are proven supporters of the Ukrainian state who actively chose

to live in Ukraine over Russia. Moreover, the majority of Crimean IDPs are themselves staunch proponents of an inclusive, political Ukrainian-ness that is, in accordance with the agenda of the Euromaidan, oriented toward Europe and assertive of its own European-ness. In this sense, Crimean IDPs perform and express their Ukrainian-ness not only by engaging with national symbology or embracing the Ukrainian language; they do so by participating in the national conversation about what Ukrainian-ness *means* in the post-Maidan era.

### **Asserting the “What” and “Where” of Ukrainian-ness**

With parts of Ukrainian territory now beyond the state’s control, a basic but unfortunately necessary component of defining Ukrainian-ness in the post-Maidan era is simply asserting *what* Ukraine is and *where* its borders are, especially with regard to Crimea. With only a few exceptions,<sup>25</sup> the vast majority of states in the international community continue to recognize Crimea as the *de jure* territory of Ukraine, even though it is now *de facto* a part of Russian territory. Official statements and media rhetoric emanating from the Russian Federation are generally blunt and confrontational in their assertion that Crimea’s belonging to Russia is final, unquestionable, and irreversible (“Net takikh obstoiatel’stv...” 2018). The slogan “Crimea is Ours” [*Krym Nash*] has become a popular slogan in Russia, and a defiant refrain against all those who may think otherwise (Suslov 2014).

“*Crimea is Ukraine...*”

For Ukrainians, declaring one’s patriotism and support for the state means reasserting its territorial integrity now that it has been violated. As Crimea becomes ever more deeply

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<sup>25</sup> Aside from the Russian Federation itself, the only states to recognize Crimea as part of Russia as of 2018 are Afghanistan, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea, Syria, and Venezuela.

entrenched within the Russian Federation, and as global opinion slowly shifts towards acceptance of Crimea's *de facto* status as a part of Russia, the need to reaffirm Crimea's *de jure* status as Ukrainian territory becomes all the more imperative. Naturally, Crimean IDPs play a central role in advancing this message. For many, the idea that Crimea is a part of Ukraine is self-evident and indisputable, as it had been that way all their lives. "I always considered Crimea to be Ukraine," one interviewee asserted, because

From the day I was born I never heard that Crimea was a separate state or that Crimea is part of Russia, or anything like that. Crimea is Ukraine, and it had always been like this. It is written in my birth certificate, "Crimea, Ukrainian SSR," the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, there was no third place listed. And when they tell me that Crimea is Russia or something else, this just doesn't make any sense to me. (Interview 024, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s)

In other cases, interviewees expressed a sense of resentment over the notion that Crimea is not a part of Ukraine, or even in regard to the suggestion that Crimea is somehow separate or distinct from the rest of the country. Crimea has long been portrayed as unique, a region and territory unto itself with its own distinctive characteristics, but after the annexation such narratives can seem counterproductive to the argument that Crimea is an inherent part of Ukraine. "I never distinguished Crimea as being somehow separate [from Ukraine]," scoffed one interviewee, "I had one single country and I never looked at it as though Crimea is autonomous, as some kind of separate thing" (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). Of course, Crimea indeed was autonomous within Ukraine's administrative structure, but the sentiment is meant to counter the suggestion that this status rendered Crimea less Ukrainian than the rest of the country.

In many of my interviews, Crimean IDPs explained that they felt a certain responsibility to demonstrate to their fellow citizens that the Ukrainian spirit is alive and well within them, and within Crimea itself. In the words of one interviewee, "I feel that being Crimean today in Ukraine means showing the rest of the Ukrainian nation that we are also part of the Ukrainian



**Figure 15:** Press conference announcing the "Crimea is Ukraine" ad campaign, held in Kyiv in February 2016. Participants include Krym SOS co-founder and editor-in-chief of *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk (right); First Deputy Minister of Information Policy of Ukraine, Emine Dzheppar (third from right); and Mejlis member and editor-in-chief of the QHA Crimean News Agency, Gayana Yuksel (fourth from right). (Photo by author)

nation, and we have always been, and we will always be” (Interview 007, Crimean Greek woman, 20s). In these efforts, Crimean IDPs have been aided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Information Policy, who have spearheaded a public advertising campaign to reassert Crimea’s place in Ukraine. The campaign’s slogan, “Crimea is Ukraine” [*Krym – tse Ukrayina*], is meant as a response to the Russian taunt of “Crimea is Ours,” and it has become the standard refrain used on billboards, posters, television ads, and demonstrators’ signs to help ensure that the subject of Crimea and its importance to Ukraine is not forgotten (Figure 15). One of the primary

components of this campaign was a series of billboards featuring prominent cultural and media figures from Crimea now living in the Ukrainian mainland, each with the phrase “Crimea is Ukraine” along with some other description of what Crimea means to them, such as “Crimea is my first love,” “Crimea is where the heart is,” or, “Crimea is when we are together!”

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine has become the more urgent crisis demanding the Ukrainian public’s attention and support, but the “Crimea is Ukraine” campaign has helped keep the topic of Crimea in the foreground of Ukrainian politics. However, at least one Crimean IDP I spoke with expressed a sense of resentment over this campaign, as she feels it is not doing enough to help resolve the issue of Crimea’s annexation:

I am critical of the “Crimea is Ukraine” campaign, of these billboards. On the one hand, this is necessary, but I see that it is an irritant for certain groups of people on Facebook, and it irritates me when you say, “Crimea is Ukraine.” To me it is already just a cliché. I want there to be a next step, I want us to do something more than just simply say that it’s Ukraine. (...) For example, I saw that the National Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine is working on setting up an FM radio transmission to broadcast in Crimea. They are going to build a transmitter on the mainland that will broadcast a signal to Crimea. There is already Ukrainian radio available in Crimea, but you have to get it with a special receiver or over the internet. Lots of people listen to the radio in their cars, so the FM signals will let Crimeans listen to Ukrainian radio while driving in the car, they can tune in and listen with no problems. If we take this step, that’s already better than just saying that Crimea is Ukraine. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Exactly how Ukraine can regain control of Crimea remains an unanswered question with an increasingly bleak outlook. But in the meantime, continually reaffirming that Crimea is part of Ukraine has become an important rhetorical component of Ukrainian national identity since the Euromaidan and the annexation. As proud representatives of Crimea and advocates of the region’s Ukrainian-ness, Crimean IDPs play an indispensable role in ensuring that Crimea remains central to this national dialogue.

“...and Ukraine is Europe”

In addition to these reaffirmations of *what* Ukraine is and what constitutes its borders, the question of *where* Ukraine is situated—in a geopolitical and socio-cultural sense—is also a fundamental component of Ukrainian national identity discourses in the post-Maidan era. Though some Ukrainians may still feel otherwise, the broad national consensus to this question since the Euromaidan is that Ukraine is a part of Europe, or at least it should aspire to become a more deeply integrated part of Europe. Nobody would deny that Ukraine is located within Europe in a literal sense, but the Euromaidan offered a definitive answer to the long-debated question of whether Ukraine should continue to nurture its ties to Russia and its own Soviet legacy, or break with the past and strive to become a more integral member of the European community—up to and including full membership in the European Union. The millions of demonstrators on the Maidan and elsewhere around Ukraine in the winter of 2013-2014 already had their answer to this question, and Russia’s aggressive response in Crimea and the Donbas helped push millions more squarely into the “Europe” camp. In the words of one interviewee, “Ukraine has always been a bridge between Russia and the European countries. But it doesn’t want to be a bridge anymore. We don’t want to be a bridge” (Interview 007, Crimean Greek woman, 20s).

Virtually all Crimean IDPs strongly support Ukraine’s westward trajectory, having each personally rejected Crimea’s backslide in the opposite direction. Joining their fellow citizens in the push for deeper European integration is therefore another important way that Crimean IDPs express and participate in (re)defining contemporary Ukrainian-ness. Many Crimeans were strong supporters of the Euromaidan and its pro-European agenda from the very beginning, including one interviewee who told me that



When the Revolution of Dignity started in Kyiv, I was very involved in the demonstrations [in Simferopol], and of course I wanted to make it happen in Crimea, because it was very important for me, the integration of Ukraine—and of Crimean Tatars as a part of Ukrainian society—into Europe and the EU. So, I felt very embarrassed when they didn't sign the EU Association Agreement. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Viktor Yanukovich's decision not to sign the EU Association Agreement was the initial spark that lit the fuse of the Euromaidan, and through the demonstrators' efforts the agreement was ultimately enacted. But this victory was bittersweet for many pro-European Crimeans, who watched helplessly as their home region was dragged backwards just as the rest of Ukraine made a decisive leap forward. Journalist Pavel Kazarin eloquently conveyed to me this sentiment, shared by all pro-Ukrainian and pro-European Crimeans whether or not they left after the annexation:

I really love Crimea, it's my home. I lived there for 28 years. This is something you can't erase from your memory. Like any other Crimean, I think that I want what's best for Crimea. But do you know what was the tragedy of the annexation, in my view? When the Maidan started, we had this feeling that, little by little, this train [i.e., Ukraine] is starting to move westward, toward western values, towards western principles of living. And there was this hope that Crimea—even if it is the very last carriage on the train—will also be heading west along with the rest of the train. And then along came Russia, and they disconnected this carriage from the train, and attached it to their own train heading in the opposite direction, back to the Soviet Union. It is so insulting to see how your home region is living in opposition to everything you believe in. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

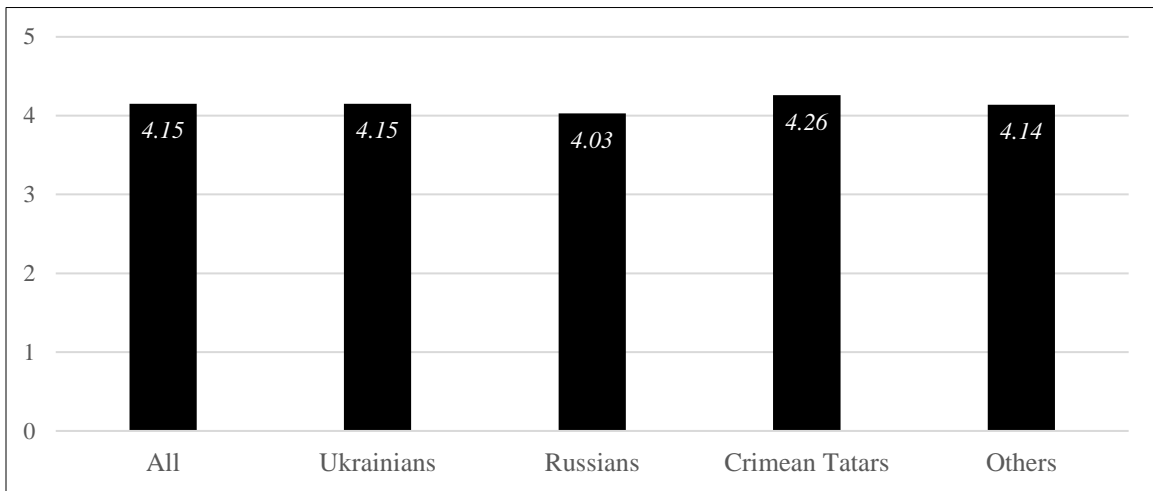
In a striking parallel to the sloganeering surrounding Crimea and its place in Ukraine, the phrase “Ukraine is Europe” [*Ukrayina – tse Yevropa*] has emerged as a popular slogan seen everywhere from official advertisements to graffiti and protest signs, as Ukrainians strive not to lose their westward momentum. For most of the Crimean IDPs I spoke with, these two declarations dovetail into a singular truth about the hierarchical “nesting” of their senses of territorial belonging, i.e., that Crimea is Ukraine, and Ukraine is Europe (see Herb and Kaplan 1999). Notably, this is a narrative I heard most frequently from Crimean Tatars, who have been

particularly vocal in asserting Crimea's Ukrainian and European pedigree. "Today, we know that our future is with a European Ukraine," said Emine Dzhappar, Deputy Minister of Information Policy and initiator of the "Crimea is Ukraine" campaign, referring specifically to Crimean Tatars (Interview 031, Emine Dzhappar). Parroting this sentiment, one prominent veteran of the Soviet-era Crimean Tatar National Movement explained to me that, "yes, we say we are a part of Ukraine, but along with this we emphasize - what kind of Ukraine? We say a pro-European Ukraine, not just any Ukraine" (Interview 032, Crimean Tatar man, 60s).

As a Muslim, Turkic-speaking ethnic group from the European fringes, the Crimean Tatar's strong sense of European belonging may appear counter-intuitive; but due in part to their deep distrust of Russia, their cultural and linguistic affinities with Turkey, their strong support for Ukraine, and their strategy of appealing to the international community to support their national cause, the Crimean Tatar community is adamantly pro-European, even slightly more so than other Crimean IDPs as survey results suggest (Figure 16). In a few cases, Crimean Tatar interviewees pointed to their national history as a source of their European credentials. "Crimean Tatars were always pro-European," I was told in one interview, because, "their children were educated in Europe and in Turkey. As far as I know, the majority of Crimean Khans wrote poetry. It was a very educated nation" (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s). Parts of this argument seem dubious, but it nevertheless speaks to the Crimean Tatars' self-concept as a European nation nested within the larger European state and nation of Ukraine.

But while much of the rhetoric surrounding Ukraine's relationship to Europe suggests the country is striving to reach or *become* a part of Europe, other interviewees emphasized the fact that Ukraine already *is* a part of Europe, and that it simply needs to bring its standards of living up to the levels seen elsewhere in the continent. Annoyed by the suggestion that Ukraine is not

yet a European country, one interviewee remarked emphatically that, “people say that we are yearning to join Europe. What Europe? You want to *join* Europe? This is the very center of Europe! Build it here” (Interview 068, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)! Indeed, one of the proposed geographic centers of Europe is the small village of Dilove in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine (Magocsi 2008, 317); yet, ironically, this location works as a geographic center only if western Russia is included in the definition of Europe.



**Figure 16:** Average survey response rates (scale of 1 to 5) to the question, “How important is living in Europe to your self-identity?”

For other Crimean IDPs, the perception that Ukraine already is an inherent part of Europe is informed by their Crimean vantage point, from which the rest of Ukraine appeared far more advanced, progressive, and indeed European. Crimea, it seemed to many, was still stuck in the post-Soviet rut, unwilling to join the rest of Ukraine in taking steps—however small—toward embracing the political and social values associated with European-ness. The fact that Crimea so easily succumbed to Russia’s efforts at holding it back offered further proof of the region’s arrested development. Thus, for many the decision to leave Crimea for the Ukrainian mainland was tantamount to choosing Europe over Russia. As one Crimean Tatar mother told me, referring to life in Russian-occupied Crimea, “I didn’t want such a future for my children, so I brought

them to a normal European country, further away from this Russia” (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s).

I also heard from interviewees in both Kyiv and Lviv that their adopted cities seem very European. Even for one woman originally from Romania, Kyiv seemed to have blossomed into a truly European city in the two years she had been living there. “I’m a bit amazed about Kyiv,” she exclaimed, “I think it’s gotten more European than I could have ever dreamt! I think it’s changed so much in the past two years, I wouldn’t have expected it” (Interview 086, Romanian woman, 40s). Although Kyiv may indeed be undergoing a transformation into a more “European” capital since the Euromaidan, Lviv has long been considered Ukraine’s truly European city, with the history, architecture, and culture to back it up. While Kyiv is dominated by Soviet architecture and bears many of the hallmarks of Soviet urban planning, Lviv’s relatively short-lived stint as a part of the Soviet Union has helped it retain its Austro-Hungarian charm. “The less time a territory was under Soviet rule, the better,” joked one interviewee about what makes Lviv different from Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities (Interview 041, Crimean Tatar man, 40s).

Whether it is embodied in specific urban environments or in the state as a whole, and whether viewed as something to strive for or something already achieved, European-ness has emerged as a primary component of post-Maidan discourses of Ukrainian national identity. For Crimean IDPs, who come from arguably the least European region of Ukraine, asserting Crimea’s place within Ukraine and Ukraine’s place within Europe are two sides of the same coin. In this sense, Crimean IDPs are active and essential participants in the national dialogue (re)affirming both the *what* and the *where* of contemporary Ukrainian national identity. But the crucial missing component here is the *who*—that is, whom is included in post-Maidan framings

of Ukrainian nationhood. More so than the *what* and the *where*, the question of *who* in contemporary discourses of Ukrainian-ness has undergone a dramatic reevaluation since the Euromaidan, and Crimean IDPs have played a pivotal role in both the debate and the answer.

### **Constructing Ukrainian Political Nationalism**

Discourses of Ukrainian nationalism emerging in response to the Euromaidan have been multifaceted and contradictory. Some have reacted to Russia's meddling and aggression with a renewed commitment to an ethnically-defined Ukrainian nation, excluding from their vision of Ukrainian nationhood the millions of ethnic Russians, Crimean Tatars, Jews, Belarusians, Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, and dozens of other minority communities found throughout Ukraine. Newly-founded groups of militant ethno-nationalists like the *Pravy Sektor* and the Azov Battalion have served the state as paramilitary combat units in Eastern Ukraine while espousing xenophobic beliefs in Ukrainian superiority (Karagiannis 2016), and established political parties like *Svoboda* have reasserted their ethno-centric platforms (Ishchenko 2016). Images and memories of historical Ukrainian nationalist figures like Stepan Bandera and the organizations he fronted have been controversially reappropriated as defiant symbols of Ukrainian ethnic identity.

### *Rejecting Ukrainian Ethno-Nationalism*

Fortunately, it appears that only a small minority of Ukrainians now promote this model of nationalism, and their message seems to have lost traction in recent years; neither *Svoboda* nor *Pravy Sektor* secured enough votes to pass the required 5% threshold for seating deputies in the 2014 parliamentary elections. As one interviewee commented,

Not many people in Ukraine support such radical politics. Take *Svoboda* for example—this was a party that scared everybody, that said they wanted to ban the Russian language and that they wanted to re-introduce the “ethnicity” line [in Ukrainian passports]. This was really what they wanted, and they would slip it into all their demonstrations. But what became of this? Not one of them won in the parliamentary elections, because the majority in Ukraine do not support such radicalism in regard to questions of ethnicity. Their position was that the nationality is Ukrainian, so this means that everything should be for this titular nation. Where are they? None of them are in power, the people don’t support them. I think this is good. (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s).

The rhetoric of these radical ethno-nationalist parties and movements has found little support in Crimea in particular, where many are decidedly pro-Russian and those who do support Ukraine come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Virtually all the Crimean IDPs I spoke with were dismissive of these groups’ ethno-centric agendas, and of their influence in contemporary Ukraine. “There are a lot of people who are radical, who think we should be a ‘clean’ nation, or something like that,” remarked one young Crimean Tatar woman, referring to the notion of an ethnically pure Ukraine. She dismissed this idea on the grounds that diversity and multiculturalism are sources of strength and vitality:

I don’t support this. I don’t like the idea of being “perfect.” I mean, life is not perfect. That’s the point of life. I don’t know, that’s what I always say. I don’t think it’s good. Perfect is death, because there is nothing left. Like, there is no good and no bad, there is nothing, you just don’t care. To live is to not be perfect, and in that case we should understand that interaction is a way to get to this point where we are not perfect. (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

In a similar argument, another Crimean Tatar interviewee pointed to the diversity and hybridity of identities in the United States as an inspirational model for how Ukrainian nationalism should be constructed. Momentarily reversing the relationship between researcher and research subject, he asked me about my own heritage as a jumping-off point for his argument about American national identity:

AC: I know that there are groups like the Azov Battalion and *Pravy Sektor* who say...

M: “Ukraine for Ukrainians.”

AC: Yes.

M: No way. In this regard, we need to look at the experience of the United States. Why? Because America is a melting pot, where everybody is mixed together. Let me ask you a question, where are your roots from?

AC: I’m half French Canadian, one quarter Jewish, and the rest is a big European mix.

M: There it is! Why do I like this so much? You guys say, “I am an American, and I am proud of this!” So many [American] volunteers here say, “I am an American,” and when I ask where their roots are from, they’ll say, “I’m Irish” [for example]. One of them was Polish, he smiled right away and said his roots were from there... A lot of people say Ukraine is for Ukrainians. No, impossible!

Ukraine should be open! (Interview 068, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

### *Ukrainian-ness as a Set of Values*

These views reflect a larger societal shift taking place in Ukraine in the wake of the Euromaidan, wherein discourses of national identity have decisively moved beyond the notion of a “Ukraine for Ukrainians.” “In general, the ethnic state is an archaic concept,” journalist Pavel Kazarin stated bluntly. “And what did the Maidan create? It created a space for the birth of a political nation, one that is brought together not by blood, not by ethnicity, but by political convictions and values” (Interview 029, ethnic Russian man, 30s). Echoing this sentiment, well-known Crimean Tatar actor and film director Akhtem Seitablayev informed me that, “today, to be a Ukrainian is not just an ethnic affiliation, it is a choice between the past and the future. It is a civilizational choice between values and a lack of values” (Interview 049, Akhtem Seitablayev). Along with the idea that Ukrainians share a commitment to a certain set of values, some interviewees also framed Ukrainian-ness as a state of mind that can be achieved regardless of ethnicity. “You can be a Ukrainian in essence [*po suti*], not because of your ethno-national affiliation, but because of your mindset [*myshlenie*],” explained one Crimean Tatar interviewee

(Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). Under this rubric of Ukrainian-ness, religious differences are also rendered inconsequential so long as peoples of different faiths are united in their support of Ukraine and the values it has come to embody. Although he is originally from Donetsk and not a Crimean Tatar nor a Crimean of any stripe, Sheikh Said Ismagilov, Mufti of the “Ummah” Religious Administration of Muslims in Ukraine, is one of the country’s most prominent religious figures and an active proponent of a pluralistic, civic-minded Ukrainian national identity. According to him,

Ukraine is a very tolerant country, where people get along with each other. The source of conflict in our country is not religious principles—“I am Christian and you are Muslim”—but political principles—“I am for Ukraine and you are against Ukraine.” Everybody who supports Ukraine is one of your own [*svoi*], regardless of whether they are Muslims, Jews, or non-believers. Everybody who is against Ukraine are the others [*chuzhie*]. So this division of people into “yours” or “others” now happens according to self-identification, not according to religious or ethnic characteristics. (Interview 038, Mufti Said Ismagilov)

The subtext of these quotes, with their focus on “values,” “mindset,” and “supporting Ukraine” as core tenants of a forward-looking Ukrainian national identity, is less a counter-argument to the vision of an ethno-centric Ukraine than to the alternative vision of a Ukraine embedded within a broad “Russian World”—the vast swathe of Eurasia, including the former Soviet Republics, in which the Kremlin seeks to exert its political and cultural hegemony (Laruelle 2015). Promoters of this values-based Ukrainian nationalism certainly reject the ethno-nationalist model, but the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the Donbas have demonstrated that Russia poses a much more urgent, existential threat to Ukrainian state- and nationhood. Even before the Euromaidan and Russia’s forcible “reclamation” of pieces of Ukraine’s territory, Russian political discourses have worked to rhetorically undermine the very existence of a Ukrainian state and nation. President Putin famously told US President George W. Bush in 2008 that Ukraine is “not even a state” (“Blok NATO...” 2008) and has more recently



referred to “territories now called Ukraine” (Osborne 2017). Moreover, the Kremlin has argued repeatedly with regard to Ukraine that it has a duty to defend the interests and wellbeing of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers living outside of its borders, effectively denying Kyiv’s sovereignty over millions of Ukrainian citizens (Lally and Englund 2014). In addition to Russia’s annexation of Crimea and agitations in the Donbas, the short-lived revival in 2014 and 2015 of the toponym *Novorossiia*, or “New Russia”—once the name of an area annexed by the Russian Empire in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that now makes up much of southern and eastern Ukraine—is one clear example of Russian attempts to subvert Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity by promoting the idea of a “Russian World” expanding beyond the border of the Russian Federation (O’Loughlin, Toal, and Kolosov 2017).

It is mostly in response to such discourses about the illegitimacy or inauthenticity of the Ukrainian state and nation that the post-Maidan vision of a political, values-based Ukrainian identity has coalesced. The antidote to Russian efforts at weaponizing ethnicity, language, and culture to drive wedges into the Ukrainian citizenry is to advance a pluralistic discourse of national identity that celebrates Ukraine’s diversity, and upholds citizenship and support for the state as criteria for inclusion rather than ethnicity. Moreover, the values that undergird this discourse of Ukrainian political nationalism are similarly antithetical to the Kremlin’s model of authoritarianism and regional hegemony—values such as cultural pluralism, democracy, freedom of speech, civic agency, political transparency, public accountability, territorial integrity, sovereignty over domestic and foreign affairs, and European belonging. According to journalist Pavel Kazarin, this post-Maidan discourse of Ukrainian political nationalism signifies Ukraine’s emergence as a locus of values, beliefs, and principles that stand in direct opposition to those

embodied in the so-called “Russian World”—indeed, he declares it the birth of an alternative “Ukrainian World:”

Russia has tried to demonstrate that, within the post-Soviet space, it represents a concentration of values—the “Russian World” and all that—and around it are ethnic states; Kazakhstan is an ethnic state, Uzbekistan is an ethnic state, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, etc. And only Russia could be a space of values, not just an ethnic space. In my view, the Maidan became a moment that demonstrated that a “Ukrainian World” has appeared alongside the “Russian World,” and it is also a space of values where you can simply accept them regardless of what your ethnicity is, regardless of what letters your last name ends with, or regardless of the language in which you were sung to as a child in your cradle. This is the appearance of an alternative to the “Russian World,” the “Ukrainian World.” What kind of values are these? Treating politicians like managers, not like some kind of saintly figures whom you are forbidden to criticize. It’s the development of horizontal connections, where people can unite and work together as volunteers without the state, where they can go out and protest, and many other things. I suddenly discovered that Ukraine has grown into a space that isn’t defined by ethnicity, but by values, and these values are so close to me. I understood them, accepted them, and allowed them to pass through me. These are my values. (...) Ukraine has become a type of magnet that attracts not only Ukrainians themselves, but others around it too. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

Another interviewee similarly argued that Ukraine represents a moral counter-balance to Russia and a beacon of civic-minded values within the post-Soviet space, and stated that his sense of kinship and solidarity with others depends only upon whether or not they support Ukraine:

If people want to make Ukraine strong, then they are my friends, they are my allies, and it is not important what their ethnicity is. Crimean Tatars, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Chechens, Georgians, it doesn’t matter. If we want the same thing, then we are on our way, and we will go there together. If there are people who have a different point of view, then I propose that those people go wherever it is they want; if you want to be in Russia, then you should pack your things, buy a ticket, and go to Russia. Don’t tear away our land and bring it to Russia along with me, because I don’t want to go there, that’s not going to work. (Interview 066, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s).

*Ethnic Russians, Crimean Tatars, and the Embrace of Multicultural Nationhood*

Although the term “Ukrainian World” does not appear to have caught on, the notion that Ukraine is a territory where the values of plurality and inclusivity prevail over divisive ethnic politics certainly has. Crimean IDPs who identify as ethnically Russian play a very important role in advancing this narrative; more so than any other part of Ukraine, Crimea has been portrayed as an essential piece of the “Russian World” due to its ethnic Russian majority and important role in Russian historiographies, and both of these points were used to justify the annexation. Ethnic Russians within the community of Crimean IDPs have therefore been forceful in promoting an ethnically and culturally inclusive Ukrainian nationhood, and asserting their own place within it. For example, Anatolii Zasoba, an ethnic Russian from Sevastopol who founded the organization *Krymskaia Diaspora*, insisted that

Regardless of the fact that we live in Crimea, regardless of the fact that we are Russian speakers, I believe that Ukraine is for Russian speakers just the same. And Ukraine is for [ethnic] Russians [*dlia russkikh*] just the same, not for Russian citizens [*ne dlia rossiiian*]. (...) I can be Russian [*russkiy*], but I am not a citizen of the Russian Federation; I love Ukraine and I want to live here. And Ukraine is for Russians [*dlia russkikh*], just as it is for any given ethnicity in the world, in my view. It is for any race, and for representatives of any given minority, nationality, or people. (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba)

As he explained, identifying strongly as a Ukrainian citizen and member of a Ukrainian political nation does not preclude his self-identification as an ethnic Russian. Rather, it is merely subsumed by a broader sense of Ukrainian-ness:

I know for certain that my ethnic background is secondary. Socially, I’m probably Russian, I am Russian by my upbringing, but spiritually and mentally [*dukhovno i dushevno*] I am more Ukrainian. I grew up in a Russian environment, in the Russian city of Sevastopol, but in my soul and according to my values, Ukrainians and Ukraine are closer to me than Russia. (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba)

But perhaps the clearest sign that Ukrainians have embraced a more inclusive and pluralistic form of national identity is the prominent new role that Crimean Tatars play in

Ukrainian culture, politics, and discourses of nationalism (Wilson 2017). Although the Crimean Tatars have been strong supporters of Ukraine since their return to Crimea, for many years their reception among the Ukrainian public had not been entirely reciprocal. The lack of assistance from Kyiv while the Crimean Tatars struggled to rebuild communities in their homeland was one matter, but they also had to contend with the suspicious attitudes of average Ukrainians both in Crimea and elsewhere in the country. Despite proclaiming and demonstrating their loyalty to Kyiv and support for Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea, many Ukrainians suspected that the Crimean Tatars' loyalties lied elsewhere, particularly with Turkey. As the argument goes, the Crimean Khanate had once been a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire, and as Turkic peoples the Crimean Tatars and the Turks share many cultural, religious, and linguistic characteristics. Turkey also emerged as a strong patron and financial supporter of the Crimean Tatars in the post-Soviet period, much as it became for other Turkic peoples in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Bilgin and Bilgiç 2011). Furthermore, Turkey is home to a large Crimean Tatar diaspora, whose population far exceeds that within Crimea itself.

Many Ukrainians therefore assumed that the Crimean Tatars' true affinities lie with Turkey and not with Ukraine, and that if given the chance they would move to separate Crimea from Ukraine and unite with Turkey. "[People in Ukraine] always think that Crimean Tatars want Crimea to go to Turkey, but they never wanted this," lamented Ayder Muzhdabaev, director of the Crimean Tatar television network ATR. He continued,

Crimean Tatars generally don't want to live in Turkey and never wanted to unite with it, never, this is all the lies of Soviet propaganda. The Crimean Tatars were deported because Stalin feared that there would be a war with Turkey. These are such old, stupid myths, but they are still repeated." (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

The myth of Crimean Tatar aspirations for unification with Turkey has deep roots, with some arguing—as alluded to in the quote above—that removing them from Crimea as a likely “fifth column” ahead of a potential war with Turkey was one of the primary factors motivating Stalin to order their deportation in 1944 (Williams 2015, 97–98). According to Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev, Ukrainian politicians inherited these same suspicions from the Soviet era, and therefore advanced a narrative of distrust toward the returning Crimean Tatars. “Generally speaking,” he told me, “there was a certain strategy that [Ukrainian leaders] borrowed from Russia, to say that the main danger to Ukraine was the Crimean Tatars; they want to separate, they want to unite with Turkey and all this nonsense, and everybody bought it” (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev). Because of these misperceptions, many believed that Crimean Tatars were a threat to Ukrainian sovereignty in Crimea, as *Mejlis* member Eskender Bariev explained:

Earlier, information about how the Crimean Tatars were the main threat to the territorial integrity of Ukraine and how they threatened to destabilize the situation in Ukraine was always driven into the Ukrainian masses and into the Ukrainian political establishment, including the SBU.<sup>26</sup> And so they viewed Crimean Tatars as the largest threat, it was always like this. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

Despite these suspicions, Crimean Tatars remained steadfast and persistent in their support for Ukraine and for its territorial integrity, including in Crimea. As an example, former *Mejlis* member Nadir Bekirov forcefully asserted the Crimean Tatars’ unrequited support for Kyiv in a 1995 interview:

The relationship between the Crimean Tatars and the Ukrainian state is totally asymmetrical. The national movement of Crimean Tatars and its representative institutions—the Kurultai and the *Mejlis* [sic]—support Ukrainian state sovereignty. The president, the people who support him, and the majority in parliament do not understand that we are a strategic ally and partner. (...) We are not just a group of people who happen to live in Crimea. According to international and natural law, we have the right to be treated as a nation and to play a real role in the political life of Ukraine. The politicians in Kiev [sic] tend to

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<sup>26</sup> The Ukrainian Security Services [*Sluzhba Bezpeki Ukrainy*].

consider the Crimean Tatars simply as a national minority, or just another group of people. This is a mistake. (Doroszevska 1995)

But if there is any silver lining to the annexation of Crimea for the Crimean Tatars, it is in the fact that Ukrainians have finally come to recognize their loyalty, and have accordingly embraced the Crimean Tatars as full-fledged members of a Ukrainian political nation as never before. The Ukrainian public saw that Crimean Tatars were among Crimea's most vocal supporters of the Euromaidan, that they put up the strongest fight in opposition to the annexation, and that they now suffer for their support of Ukraine under Russian occupation, thereby shattering the misconception that they are not true Ukrainian patriots. Refat Chubarov, leader of the *Mejlis* and deputy of the Ukrainian parliament, summarized for me the shift that has taken place in Ukrainians' attitudes toward the Crimean Tatars:

After the tragedy that was the occupation of Crimea, Ukrainians began to better understand the Crimean Tatars. Many of the negative myths surrounding Crimean Tatars necessarily disappeared with the occupation. Before, there were many in Ukraine who believed that Crimean Tatars posed a threat to Ukraine, that they are potential separatists. Many [in Ukraine] thought that their relationship with Russia and Russians assured a certain Slavic unity, that it would guarantee a peaceful future. As it turns out, it was the other way around. Those who were considered separatists emerged as the only ones who stood up and defended the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and those who were considered brothers turned out to be enemies. The relationship toward Crimean Tatars and understanding of Crimean Tatars became much better. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

On the one hand, some argue that this newfound affection for the Crimean Tatars is mostly a response to the annexation of Crimea and display of respect for the Crimeans who opposed it. "After the occupation, the problem of Crimea has naturally become an all-Ukrainian problem, and it is natural that the Crimean Tatars occupy an exalted position within this niche," explained Sergei Kostinsky, an ethnic Russian Crimean now working in Kyiv for the Ukrainian Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting. He added, "so, you could say that the Crimea

problem has been scaled up [*masshtabirovali*], and the groups of people who are fighting for a solution to the problem have been scaled up too. It is very logical that it has happened this way” (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky). To his point, Crimean Tatars are not the only Crimeans who have been greeted with respect and admiration for their opposition to the annexation. The majority of Crimean IDPs I spoke with, regardless of ethnicity, reported that they have felt welcomed in the mainland as true patriots for their decision not to remain in occupied Crimea. This observation is often made in comparison to IDPs from the Donbas, whom many Ukrainians view with more suspicion and hostility due to the fact that they were mostly displaced involuntarily, not because they necessarily prefer or support Ukraine as the Crimean IDPs clearly do. “I think the treatment of people from Donbas and people from Crimea here is very different,” noted one interviewee,

[B]ecause most people here know that if you see a person from Crimea living in Kyiv, that's probably because they were against the annexation, and they are ideologically against Russia, so they are just like us. What I see in the Donbas, I think there is an idea that they are all “*vatniks*” fleeing the war, and I know that they face a lot of discrimination. (Interview 016, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Hence, the celebration of Crimea’s patriotic IDPs is certainly not limited to the Crimean Tatars.

But on the other hand, most of the Crimean Tatars I spoke with reported that they felt a genuine sense of respect, admiration, and kinship from their fellow Ukrainians since arriving in the mainland. As two Crimean Tatar women noted during a focus group session, this is due in part to the new realization for many Ukrainians that the Crimean Tatars were their allies all along:

W1: [Ukrainians] really respect our culture.

W2: [They respect us] for our pro-Ukrainian position.

W1: They started to respect us, because before they feared us. Earlier there were fears that Crimean Tatars are closer to Turkey than to Ukraine, that they will give Crimea away. But now they understand that Crimean Tatars see themselves as part of Ukraine—not Turkey, not Russia, not America, not anywhere else. We

only see ourselves as part of Ukraine, and this has had a really positive affect on their relationship toward us. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar women, 30s-40s)

Indeed, there appears to be a general consensus among Ukrainians of all ethnic backgrounds that the Crimean Tatars have finally “arrived” as full-fledged members of a Ukrainian political nation after more than two decades fraught with distrust and misunderstanding. In hugely important and symbolic moves, the Ukrainian government passed resolutions in the months after the annexation recognizing the Crimean Tatars as both an indigenous people of Ukraine and the victims of a genocide from their 1944 deportation—two statuses that Crimean Tatar leaders have long hoped to secure. In the poetic words of one of my Crimean Tatar friends, “in the dance of Ukrainian society, Crimean Tatars are now having a solo.”



*Figure 17: Two girls feed pigeons while sitting atop a large Crimean Tatar flag painted along the popular riverside pedestrian zone in the Kyiv neighborhood of Obolon. Crimean Tatar national imagery can now be seen more frequently in the cultural landscapes of mainland Ukraine. (Photo by author)*



Evidence of the fact that Crimean Tatars have taken the spotlight can be seen increasingly in Ukrainian cultural landscapes—at least in Kyiv and Lviv (Figure 17). Several new Crimean Tatar restaurants have recently opened in both cities, with the most celebrated, Kyiv’s *Musafir*, becoming so popular that the owners opened a second, much larger location in the city center in 2017. The works of displaced Crimean Tatar artists and musicians are now in high demand, available for purchase at a popular Crimean Tatar art gallery and souvenir store on Kyiv’s main drag. The displaced Crimean Tatar television network, *ATR*, has become a prominent feature of Ukraine’s media landscape. Public advertisements depicting Crimean Tatars and elements of their visual culture have become ubiquitous in central Kyiv around important dates, such as the anniversary of their deportation on May 18, and the official Day of the Crimean Tatar Flag on June 26. Public events with Crimean Tatar authors, historians, politicians, and cultural and religious figures are held regularly in Kyiv, Lviv, and other Ukrainian cities. The endangered Crimean Tatar language can now be heard in mainland Ukraine, with President Poroshenko now symbolically including a greeting in Crimean Tatar during his annual televised New Year’s Eve addresses. There is even a growing interest among Ukrainians in learning the Crimean Tatar language and about their national culture, according to a language instructor now living in Lviv:

There is a lot of interest in studying the Crimean Tatar language, thanks largely to Ukrainians. They are interested. They say that we have lived alongside each other for so long and for some reason it is only now that they have become interested in the kind of language we have, the kind of literature we have, our traditions and our culture. (Interview 078, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Even more significant is the fact that average Ukrainians have begun to recognize Crimean Tatars as familiar and integral components of the people, history, and culture of Ukraine. This is rather remarkable considering that even just before the annexation Crimean Tatars were still mostly misunderstood or barely known by many outside of Crimea. “Today in

Ukraine, even a first grader in some remote village knows that there are Crimean Tatars,” stated one Crimean Tatar man proudly during our interview. This hypothetical first grader

knows that the Crimean Tatars have a blue flag that is similar to the Ukrainian flag. He knows that Crimean Tatars now have problems in Crimea. He’s heard the Crimean Tatar language spoken on television, he’s heard, “Crimea, Crimea, Crimea,” and so on. He has maybe even heard our music, our melodies, and he knows something about it. He didn’t know any of this two years ago. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

In a less hypothetical example, a group of mothers and teachers at a Crimean Tatar school told me about an event they had held the day before our focus group, in which they and the school children gave a presentation about Crimean Tatar history and culture to a group of Ukrainian students at a library in Kyiv. The students’ responses—and the impressions they left on the parents and teachers—were profound, and speak to the gradual discursive merging of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars into a unified political nation:

W1: There were high school students there from two of the best schools in Kyiv. These students sat for the entire hour and heard about our history and our culture, and the Crimean Tatar children gave a presentation. They listened with their mouths agape, with a sense of compassion. One of them even started crying. I commented to the librarian about how the students had listened so attentively, how they had seemed so interested. The librarian said that this was a really rare moment, that kids don’t usually care about the fate of other peoples. The stereotypes are starting to fracture. These students already understand, they know what happened to us. (...)

W2: We are hopeful because those students who listened to us will grow up, and we will live together in one country. Our children will study together, they will live together and work together, and there will be an equal relationship. It won’t be like, “oh, you are a Crimean Tatar, that means that you belong to some other class. You’re black,<sup>27</sup> you’re Muslim, you’re strange, we don’t understand you and we don’t want to.” It was once like this.

W1: We went through this as children returning to Crimea. They used to throw rocks at me, I remember this well from the late 1980s.

W2: But at least now they want to understand us. They accept us, and here we feel as though we are one family. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar women, 30s-40s)

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<sup>27</sup> Some East Slavic ethno-nationalists are known to use “black [*chernyi*]” as a racial slur against peoples—typically Muslims—from regions such as the Caucasus or Central Asia, not only against Africans.

*Crimean Tatars (Re)Discover Their Bonds with Ukrainians*

As Ukrainians have finally come to recognize Crimean Tatars as members of their national “family,” so too have Crimean Tatars begun to feel a stronger familiarity and kinship with their fellow Ukrainians. One Crimean Tatar interviewee commented that

You know, to my surprise—and it is so wonderful to see this—there is a special relationship toward the Crimean Tatars now, even among the whole Ukrainian population. There is more respect. I have yet to meet a person who has expressed disapproval that the Crimean Tatars are coming to the mainland. On the contrary, they want more to come! Now there are so many conferences and events being held that are connected to Crimean Tatars—not to Crimea, but specifically to Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people. Ukrainians are coming to know us because of this, and us Ukrainians. (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Crimean Tatars have supported the Ukrainian state for decades, but many felt they had lacked a real sense of connection with other Ukrainian citizens outside of the Crimean Tatar community, nor were they properly familiar with or appreciative of Ukrainian culture and traditions. As the same interviewee quoted above continued, she explained that it was only after the annexation of Crimea that she began to develop a true affinity for Ukrainians and a consciousness of her own Ukrainian-ness:

I realized that I didn’t know any Ukrainians in Crimea, even though officially there are 700,000 Ukrainians living there. I met and communicated with Ukrainians after I came to Kyiv, and understood that they are a wonderful people, they are very kind. I realized that I hadn’t known Ukrainians in Crimea, and that they didn’t know us. Now they are finding out. Now, even though such terrible events have occurred with the annexation and occupation of Crimea, from another point of view it turns out that we have become closer to one another, learning more about each other’s history. Things are now probably being restored to the way they should have been 20 years ago. From my perspective, Ukraine is only now coming into formation. It’s been happening for two years, a consciousness is forming. (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Similarly, another Crimean Tatar interviewee explained that he has found within himself a newfound sense of empathy and emotional solidarity with his fellow Ukrainians, which emerged in response to the support he has received from them:

I have certainly come to better understand Ukrainians and their way of thinking. I have started taking more pride when a Ukrainian boxer wins in the ring, and in the achievements of Ukrainian sports teams or Ukrainian singers. There will probably never be another country that is closer for me than Ukraine. And this has all happened as a kind of thankfulness, as a reciprocal gesture for the fact that [Ukrainians] understand me and understand my pain. I know that even a dentist can't understand tooth pain, only the patient can, and somehow they can't necessarily commiserate—it hurts them, not you. But right now we feel pain simultaneously and identically. Ukrainians are dying every day ... just the other day 3 men from Lviv were killed in the ATO. This is also painful for me, and if I were to attend the funerals I too would kneel and feel the pain. When the next Crimean Tatar goes missing or is killed in Crimea, I know that Ukrainians will empathize, I know they will support us. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

In another telling sign that Crimean Tatars are coming to understand themselves as part of a Ukrainian political nation, some have even started to identify themselves not simply as Crimean Tatars, but rather as “Ukrainians of Crimean Tatar origin” [*ukraintsy krymskotatarskogo proiskhozhdeniia*].

However, one of the more fascinating ways that Crimean Tatars are discursively constructing their own Ukrainian-ness is by revisiting their own history and retracing the development of their national culture, (re)discovering important connections and synergies with Ukraine along the way. Crimean Tatar historiographies have tended to emphasize their own independence and political agency during the period of the Crimean Khanate, mostly in response to the argument that its vassaldom under the Ottoman Empire rendered them politically and economically dependent. Asserting the strength and independence of the Crimean Khanate has also meant underscoring its formidable power in the steppes to the north of Crimea, where they Crimean Tatars frequently raided and fought against Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, other Turkic

tribes, and the Cossacks—generally viewed as the progenitors of the modern Ukrainian nation. But there were also moments of cooperation and partnership between the Crimean Tatars and their adversaries in the steppe, including with the Cossacks. While Crimean Tatars have been proud of their ancestors' military prowess and might have once foregrounded their victories over groups like the Cossacks, they now speak more of the times when the two worked together, particularly when they were united against Russia. Crimean Tatar actor and director Akhtem Seitablayev proudly told me his rendition of the historical partnership between early Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, united against their mutual enemy:

The whole history of the Crimean Tatars' relationship with the Kremlin tells us only one thing: nothing good ever came of it. Nothing, never. It's the other way around with Ukraine. There are some difficult periods in our mutual history, times when we fought with each other, but at the same time there are many wonderful instances when we cooperated with each other, even militarily. (...) The whole history of the relationship between the Zaporizhian Sich and the Crimean Khanate shows that nobody could defeat them when they formed a union—not the Poles, not Moscow, not anybody ever. (Interview 049, Akhtem Seitablayev)

In another example, Murat Suleyman, the Imam of the Islamic Cultural Center in Lviv, mentioned the same historical partnership between Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, but added his perception of the Crimean Tatars' early presence and influence in Western Ukraine resulting from their coordinated excursions into that distant part of the Pontic Steppe. In his view, these historic instances of cooperation and mutual influence have a direct impact on the close relationship between Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians today:

I think that there were many people, especially from the Western part of Ukraine, who participated in battles during the time of the Crimean Khanate—that is, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars fighting together. I even observe here that Western Ukraine has many traditions that are similar to the Crimean Tatars', and the mentality is similar too. I even heard that there were many Crimean Tatar villages and settlements here. There were mosques and Muslim cemeteries. I can say that maybe earlier, in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, there were good relations, and so maybe now modern Crimean Tatars and true Ukrainian—by which I mean

real patriots of their country—can understand each other, think and act similarly, because it's clear that there was once a mutual relationship and love between these two peoples. This is easy to perceive, and it is something that Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians notice, especially in Western Ukraine. (Interview 077, Murat Suleyman)

The trend of Crimean Tatars (re)discovering their deep interconnectedness with Ukrainians extends to cultural realms as well. Traditional Crimean Tatar musician Dzhemil Karikov told me about his discovery of the historically imbricated musical cultures of Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, and Jews living in what is now the territory of Ukraine:

I once bought a collection of music notation called “Instrumental Music of the Jews of Ukraine,” and in this collection I noticed two or three Crimean Tatar melodies that were just labeled “street tunes” [*ulichniy motiv*]. These were collected from the Jews of southern Ukraine. But there are Crimean Tatar songs that were influenced by Ukrainian music, in the length of the songs and things like this. There are a lot of similarities to Ukrainian melodies, just like Ukrainians have lots of words of Turkic origin. This is natural, the two peoples lived side by side. There was no way the two couldn't have influenced each other, it was necessary. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)

Drawing historical connections between Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars has also been a strategy used to assert Crimean Tatars' place within the territory of modern Ukraine. While its capital Bakhchisarai was located near the southern tip of Crimea and the peninsula itself formed the core of the Crimean Khanate's domain, its territorial reach stretched well beyond the Isthmus of Perekop into the steppes of what is now southern Ukraine, butting up against the territory controlled by the Zaporizhian Cossacks. Some Crimean Tatars therefore argue that both they and Ukrainians can rightfully claim belonging to Ukraine because they are both descended from groups who ruled over lands centered within the territory of modern Ukraine, which implicitly includes the Crimean Peninsula. This is the assertion of Eskender Bariev, member of the *Mejlis* and founder of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center in Kyiv, who explained his views regarding

the mutual roles played by Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in the development of Ukraine's territory:

There are experts, including Ukrainian experts, who say that there are two titular groups in Ukraine—Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, the two nations that played a role in the formation of the Ukrainian state itself. If we take an historical view, a large part of modern Ukraine was once part of the Crimean Khanate, and so the Crimean Tatars came into formation in this territory, we had our own state, and so Ukrainians should understand that this is our common state. (...) We should understand what we mean for Ukraine. (Interview 048, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Thus, to bolster mutual affinities with their fellow Ukrainian citizens and affirm their inherent Ukrainian-ness, Crimean Tatar IDPs are looking to their own historical past and highlighting those connections with early Ukrainians—military, diplomatic, cultural, and territorial—that suggest an historical trend toward convergence between these two peoples into a singular political nation with a common identity rooted in the territory of modern Ukraine.

## **Conclusion**

The Euromaidan was indeed a watershed moment for Ukraine and for the development of Ukrainian identities. On the one hand, it indirectly triggered events leading to the annexation of Crimea and the separatist conflicts in the Donbas, profoundly altering Ukraine's *de facto* borders along with its internal political, social, and cultural dynamics. On the other hand, it forced Ukraine's citizens to reaffirm *what* Ukraine is in terms of the territory it encompasses, *where* Ukraine is located geopolitically and socio-culturally, and *who* constitutes the Ukrainian nation. Rejecting both radical ethno-centric narratives of Ukrainian nationhood and Russian efforts to rhetorically subjugate Ukraine under its own vision of an expansive "Russian World," the broad consensus that has emerged in the aftermath of the Euromaidan is that Ukraine is a political nation consisting of many different ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious communities who

share a sense of patriotism for the state of Ukraine. According to this discourse of national identity, Ukrainian-ness is no longer an exclusively ethnic or linguistic concept; it is rooted in a sense of loyalty to the territory of the Ukrainian state and all those who dwell within it, and a commitment to a set of values and principles that unite Ukrainians and place them squarely within Europe, including the rule of law, civic agency, human rights, social pluralism, and freedom of speech. Ukrainian language and culture are still vital components of Ukrainian national identity, but do not constitute the totality of what—or who—is Ukrainian in a political sense.

Crimean IDPs play a vital role in developing and advancing this post-Maidan discourse of Ukrainian-ness. They have consciously chosen to leave Russian-occupied Crimea to remain a part of the Ukrainian national community and are rightfully recognized by their fellow citizens for this difficult but patriotic decision. They also strengthen Ukrainian claims to Crimea by demonstrating that the Ukrainian national spirit is alive and well in the region despite its fervent Russian nationalism. As a diverse community consisting largely of ethnic Russians and Crimean Tatars who have demonstrated their loyalty to the Ukrainian state, Crimean IDPs are also the poster children for an inclusive multicultural Ukrainian national identity. As a group whose loyalty and support for Ukraine had long gone unrecognized or underappreciated, that Crimean Tatars are now celebrated as a key constituency within this pluralistic narrative of Ukrainian nationalism, and the community of displaced Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine have achieved a remarkable new prominence in the social, political, and cultural life of the state. Crimean IDPs of all backgrounds have expressed and performed their own Ukrainian-ness by engaging more with national symbology and traditions, and by committing to more frequent use



of the Ukrainian language. But more importantly, they are active and influential voices in the very project of (re)defining what Ukrainian-ness is in the post-Maidan era.

But while Crimean IDPs have done much to demonstrate and build a sense of unity, kinship, and solidarity with their fellow Ukrainians, they nevertheless retain a sense of Crimean regional identity that continues to set them apart. They may strongly assert their belonging to the Ukrainian nation and within the Ukrainian state, but they are still displaced from their homes and from the region to which many also feel a profound sense of belonging. Mirroring the discussion of Ukrainian-ness offered here, in the following chapter I examine how parallel discourses and practices of “Crimean-ness” and “Crimean Tatar-ness” play out within the community of Crimean IDPs, and how these discourses and practices both converge and diverge among different subsects of this community.

## **Chapter Six: On Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-Ness**

Internally Displaced Peoples from Crimea have arrived in the Ukrainian mainland at a time of great social and political transformation, when the substantive meaning of Ukrainian-ness is undergoing major re-evaluation and reconstruction. Crimean IDPs—especially Crimean Tatars—play a crucial role in new these discourses of Ukrainian nationhood and statehood emerging since the Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea itself. But while Crimeans figure prominently in these discourses as intrinsic members of a pluralistic, pro-European Ukraine, many nevertheless view themselves as different, set apart from other Ukrainians. With its ethnic Russian majority and indigenous community of Crimean Tatars, Crimea’s demographics are certainly unique among the regions of Ukraine, and these distinguishing ethnic characteristics are one key reason why Crimea and Crimeans have become so important in post-Maidan discourses of Ukrainian civic nationalism. But beyond its unique ethnic composition, Crimea is imbued with particular and profound sets of meaning for those who call it home, and most Crimeans contend that a distinctive regional identity sets them apart from their fellow Ukrainians.

The strength and salience of Crimean regional identities have been well documented in a number of studies and surveys (Kisileva 1999; Sasse 2007; Efimov 2008; Korostelina 2008; Knott 2015b), and this has been a major focus of my own research as well (Charron 2012, 2016). My findings from a 2011 survey of Crimeans reveal that “living in Crimea” is a highly salient factor of self-identity regardless of ethnic background, and that a majority or plurality from each of Crimea’s major ethnic groups consider Crimea alone to be their homeland (Charron 2016). Moreover, survey results also reveal that a preference for Crimean regional autonomy is far stronger than preferences for the region’s inclusion either within Ukraine or Russia, which I

argue points to a recognition of Crimea's unique regional characteristics and a desire to enshrine them administratively (2016). For the most part, the importance of Crimean regional identities has been lost somewhere in the heated, conflicting rhetoric of Russian and Ukrainian nationalism since the annexation, as the question of where Crimea and Crimeans belong has overshadowed the sense of belonging to Crimea itself.

Upon first glance, the assumption could be made that those Crimeans who left the region for the Ukrainian mainland after its annexation to Russia do not feel a particularly strong attachment to Crimea, or at least that their affinities for Ukraine far outweighed any sense of regional belonging. If they truly consider Crimea their homeland, and if living in Crimea really is a crucial component of their self-identity, then one might assume that they would be willing to endure the hardships and inconveniences of Russian occupation in order to remain in Crimea. After all, with the exception of those who have faced direct persecution for their political or religious beliefs, Crimea has remained mostly free of violence and fundamentally livable since the occupation began, unlike parts of the separatist-occupied areas of the Donbas. But neither affinities for Ukraine nor a willingness to leave occupied Crimea negate the powerful sense of regional identity that most Crimean IDPs maintain and continue to nurture. Crimean regional identities and senses of Crimean-ness indeed prevail among those displaced to the Ukrainian mainland, and even motivated them to relocate in some seemingly contradictory cases, including that of one young ethnic Russian man from Simferopol:

I had this identity of a Crimean, and it's still the same. And maybe it's a paradox, but it was because of this identity that I left, because if I hadn't loved Crimea, I wouldn't have cared. I would have looked calmly at everything that happened, and I would have been able to stay. But that's not how it is. I see what happened, and I really don't like it, and so it's better not to look. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian man, 20s)

But like Ukrainian-ness, Crimean-ness is a complex and multifaceted concept, meaning different things to different people at different points in time. As I have argued elsewhere, Crimean regional identities are colored by particular national narratives about the region that highlight its significance for broader discourses of nationalism (Charron 2012, 2016). The Russian national narrative of Crimea—which emphasizes the region’s important role in Russian and Soviet militaristic and imperialist exploits, tourism, nostalgia, and literary and artistic traditions—has been masterfully manipulated and exploited by Russian officials to justify their annexation and occupation of Crimea (Charron 2016). Accordingly, those in Crimea with strong Soviet and/or Russian identities and who view Crimea through this particular “national lens” are likely to have celebrated Crimea’s “reunification” with Russia, and rather unlikely to have left for mainland Ukraine.

The Ukrainian national narrative of Crimea has had far less time to develop than the Russian national narrative, as the region had been administered from Kyiv for only 60 years prior to the annexation and for only 23 since Ukraine gained independence. Some Ukrainian scholars have strived to locate deep Ukrainian roots in Crimea’s history (Lukiniuk 2000; Mindiuk 2000; Serhiichuk 2001), but Crimea has figured in narratives of Ukrainian national identity primarily as a token of the country’s regional, ethnic, and cultural diversity—elements of Ukrainian state- and nationhood that have grown especially salient since the Euromaidan. Hence, it is those who view Crimea within this Ukrainian context who make up the majority—but not necessarily the entirety—of Crimeans who left the region for mainland Ukraine in response to the annexation.

However, as the region’s largest and most prominent indigenous community, it is the Crimean Tatars who possess the richest and most deeply-rooted national narrative of Crimea. Crimean Tatar national identity is inextricably interlinked with the Crimean homeland: it was in

Crimea where the Crimean Tatar ethnos first coalesced from an amalgam of different ethno-cultural groups (see Williams 2001, 2015); it was from Crimea that Crimean Tatars were driven or forcibly removed by Russian and Soviet occupiers from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until 1944; and it was the singular, unwavering goal of returning to Crimea that ensured the cohesion and survival of the Crimean Tatar ethnic nation during decades of imposed exile and assimilationist policies in Central Asia and other far-flung corners of the Soviet Union (see Uehling 2004). More so than any other aspect of their national culture, this intimate relationship to the Crimean Peninsula is the very core of Crimean Tatar national identity. An instructive example of this relationship can be heard in the common Crimean Tatar rallying cry, which they are known to chant at demonstrations both in and outside of Crimea: “*Millet, Vatan, Qirim,*” or “Nation, Homeland, Crimea.” Because Crimea is their undisputed homeland, it essentially represents two of the three words uttered together in this ethno-political slogan.

Because Crimean Tatars have proudly embraced Ukraine and Crimea’s place within it, and especially since discourses of Ukrainian nationalism increasingly enfold the Crimean Tatars into definitions of Ukrainian-ness, the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar national narratives of Crimea have begun to dovetail. More accurately, as journalist Pavel Kazarin pointed out to me, Ukrainians have largely adopted the Crimean Tatar national narrative of Crimea as their own:

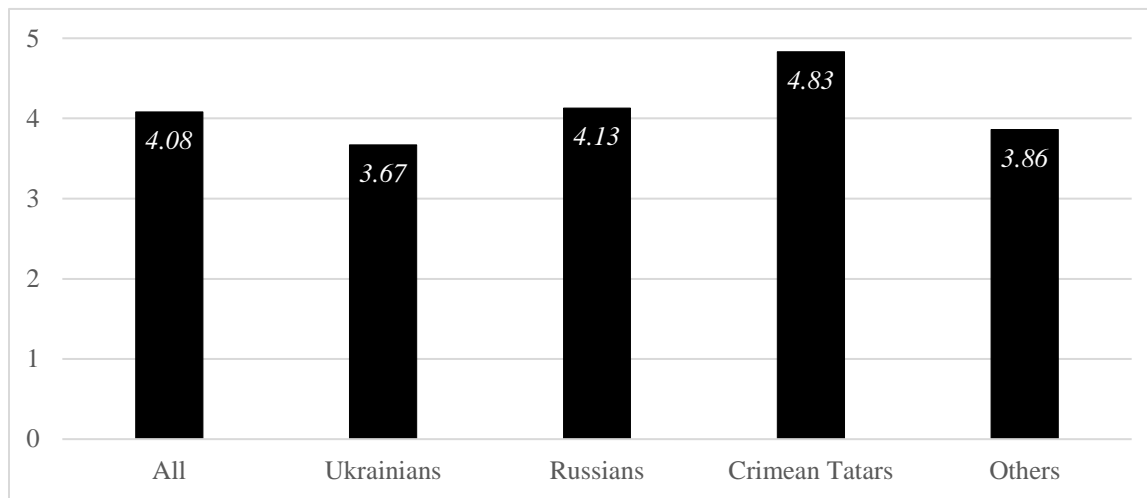
A Ukrainian myth of Crimea does not exist. There never was one. If we were to go out on the streets of Zhytomyr and ask people what a Ukrainian Crimea is, they’ll say, “summer, the sea, two weeks on the beach.” This is because they don’t have any writers or any historical events within their consciousness that are connected to Crimea. They can talk about Poltava—it has Gogol, it’s the birthplace of the Ukrainian literary language. They can talk about Lviv. They can talk about Kharkiv, that it’s the second capital of Ukraine. They can talk about a lot of places, but there’s nothing they can say about Crimea, it’s outside the bounds of their mythology. And because Ukraine doesn’t have its own myth about Crimea, it uses—it privatized [*privatizirovala*—the Crimean Tatar myth. It took the Crimean Tatar myth and said, “ok, now this is no longer only your myth, it’s our common myth, yours and ours.” It can’t use the Russian myth, because

Russia is exploiting it now, Ukraine doesn't need that myth. On the contrary, it is trying to distance itself from that empire—from Russia, from the Soviet Union. That's why it has privatized the Crimean Tatar myth, and Crimean Tatars have naturally become its allies. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

But while Ukrainian metanarratives of its national and territorial self have come to appropriate the narratives of an internal other in order to justifiably encompass Crimea, Slavic, pro-Ukrainian Crimeans nevertheless feel an intimate personal connection to the region and profess a distinctive sense of Crimean-ness nested within a broader understanding of their own Ukrainian-ness.

Regional identity is therefore highly salient among Crimean IDPs of all ethnic backgrounds, but it is crucial to distinguish the role that Crimea plays in identity discourses for Crimean Tatars from the role it plays for ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, and other non-indigenous regional minorities. Moreover, these varied meanings and relationships to Crimea have consequential bearings on how Crimean IDPs preserve and display Crimean-ness in mainland Ukraine today. To this point, I argue that a clear distinction must be made between *Crimean-ness* and *Crimean Tatar-ness*; although these concepts do overlap in some important instances, they represent two very different ways of identifying with Crimea. Crimean-ness represents the close personal and emotional connection to Crimea shared by all those who feel a sense of belonging to the region, and which frequently serves as a distinctive marker of socio-spatial identity separate from others in Ukraine. Conversely, Crimean Tatar-ness is, naturally, exclusive to Crimean Tatars, and represents the sum of elements that make up their distinctive national identity, in which Crimea itself plays an outsized role. The differences between Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness are hinted at in survey responses to the question of how important being from Crimea is to respondents' self-identity; while ratings between 1 and 5 are fairly high among

all ethnic groups, averaging 4.08 for the entire survey sample, Crimean Tatars come out far ahead with an average rating of 4.83 (Figure 18).



**Figure 18:** Average survey response rates (scale of 1 to 5) to the question, “How important is being from Crimea to your self-identity?”

In this chapter, I discuss how Crimean IDPs variably maintain, express, and perform Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness in mainland Ukraine, highlighting the ways in which they are both convergent and divergent. I will argue that Crimean Tatar-ness and the connection to Crimea that it fosters are far more resilient than Crimean-ness, which is much more precarious and susceptible to eventual dissolution among Slavic IDPs from Crimea. I begin by discussing how Crimean IDPs construct and perform Crimean-ness before shifting to a discussion of Crimean Tatar-ness.

### **On Crimean-ness**

There are virtually no ethnic or linguistic characteristics that distinguish Slavic Crimeans from those living elsewhere in Ukraine. Crimea is unique among Ukrainian administrative regions for having an ethnic Russian majority—standing at 60.4% according to the 2001 Ukrainian census (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2004)—but Russians are a sizeable

minority throughout the entire country; despite their regional majority, Russians in Crimea represent only about 17.4% of Ukraine's entire ethnic Russian population (2004). Russian is the primary language spoken in Crimea, but it predominates in many parts of southern and eastern Ukraine as well. Nevertheless, many Slavic Crimeans believe that they are different from other Ukrainians or Russians that being from Crimea imparts a special sense of identity, and this view continues to inform identity construction among those who have resettled in the Ukrainian mainland. In part, this belief may be linked to a perceived cultural distance from the rest of Ukraine rather than an identity rooted in Crimea itself, as journalist Pavel Kazarin hinted in our interview:

It's easy to be Ukrainian when, let's say, you were born in Zhytomyr, your grandmother is from Rivne, and your grandfather is from Lutsk—when they sang songs to you in Ukrainian when you were a child, and you never encountered that question of identity, of “who am I?” For me the situation was completely different. I am an ethnic Russian, my parents came to Crimea from Russia the year before I was born. I don't have any relatives in Ukraine. (...) My friends and I had discussed the fact that for Crimeans—including those with a pro-European outlook and so forth—Ukraine was ... Ukraine is what it is [*est' i est'*]. It was not completely valuable to us. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

On the other hand, many of the Slavic Crimean IDPs I spoke with certainly do believe in an inherent Crimean-ness that sets them apart. Two friends, both ethnic Russians from Simferopol now living in Kyiv, made plain to me their belief that being from Crimea makes them special:

M: Crimeans definitely still view themselves as something separate.

W: Very separate.

M: Like some kind of sub-ethnicity, and probably all the more for those who are here [in the mainland] now.

AC: Do you feel this difference more now than before?

W: Of course, but at the same time... I don't know. I mean, we were always different, 100%. I started traveling around Ukraine when I was probably about 13, and I traveled all over Ukraine, literally. Before university I had already been everywhere, I already had friends throughout the whole country—in the west, in the east, wherever you like. And wherever you go, whomever you interact with, you understand that you are different, that you are really, really different. I mean, they're all great, they are all your friends, but you are different from them all the



same, in principle, and by default. And we always understood this. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian man and woman, 20s)

But what, in their view, makes ethnic Ukrainians and Russians from Crimea different from those living elsewhere in Ukraine or Russia? On what grounds does being from Crimea constitute a separate sense of identity? On the one hand, Crimea itself is distinguishable from the rest of Ukraine by virtue of its unique history and physical landscape, which helped foster the comingling and interfusion of diverse peoples for millennia. As a peninsula that is just barely connected to the mainland, there is no ambiguity about where Crimea begins and ends; while the modern borders of most other Ukrainian regions were determined by Soviet-era functionaries for administrative purposes, Crimea's borders are defined by its coastline and have thus remained the same for as long as humans have inhabited it. As such, most Ukrainian regions are named after their administrative centers—the Odessa Oblast, the Vinnytsia Oblast, the Kharkiv Oblast, etc.—while Crimea has retained its historical name as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or the Crimean Oblast before that, never becoming the “Simferopol Oblast.” As one interviewee pointed out to me, the standard demonym “Crimean”—*krymchanin* in Russian and Ukrainian—therefore denotes a person from anywhere in the region while similar demonyms from elsewhere in Ukraine refer to a person from a given city and not the surrounding region:

People who live in the Zhytomyr Oblast are not called “Zhytomyrans” [*zhitomiriane*]. A Zhytomyran is a resident of the city of Zhytomyr, and a “Kyivan” [*kievlianin*] is not a resident of the Kyiv Oblast, it's a resident of the city of Kyiv. Or an Ivano-Frankivian [*ivanofrankovets*], this is a resident of the city of Ivano-Frankivsk. (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)

However, this is not exclusive to Crimea; the Transcarpathian [*Zakarpats'ka*] Oblast is named for its physical location beyond the Carpathian Mountains, and the Volyn Oblast is named after the historical region of Volhynia in which it is centered. Neither of these regions are named after their administrative centers—Uzhhorod and Lutsk, respectively—and the demonyms

Transcarpathian [*zakarpatets*] and Volynian [*volynchanin*] therefore denote people from anywhere in the region rather than their administrative centers.

### *Affinities for Crimea's Natural Environment*

But as it turns out, many of the internally displaced Slavic Crimeans with whom I spoke affirmed that the region's physical landscape and its adjacency to the Black Sea have a lot to do with what makes Crimea and Crimeans special. "We love Crimea because it's beautiful," one interviewee asserted,

we love that the forest comes right up to the sea, that the sea is warm and inviting, we know this. We know that that on warm days in November you can run down to the sea and go swimming. So, we know Crimea and love it for the way it is, and not just because it's Ukrainian, either. It's beyond a national label—it's ours, we live there, and we love it. (Interview 025, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s)

During fieldwork, interviews often turned to discussions of favorite places in Crimea, and of the places interviewees miss the most. Having spent a considerable amount of time in Crimea myself, these conversations would frequently devolve into moments of mutual gushing over the places we both love, and in most cases interviewees focused on Crimea's natural environment. For example, one interviewee told me of her favorite outdoor areas in Crimea, and expressed an intimacy with these places that she does not feel for the environment of Western Ukraine near her adoptive new home in Lviv:

AC: What do you miss in Crimea?

R: The nature.

AC: What are your favorite places?

R: I love traveling toward Bakhchisarai—the Blue Valley, the mountains, where the mountains begin between Simferopol and Bakhchisarai. I really love this area, it is so beautiful. The sea... I really like Yevpatoria, the western seashore, where there are big, long beaches with few people.

AC: The mountains are beautiful...

R: The mountains there are ancient. In summer there are lots of tourists. But there are so many places that are beautiful on their own, if you go past Yevpatoria the

beaches are so wide a long, they're just great, I really love it. There are just so many beautiful little places, Novy Svet is really beautiful...

AC: Have you been to the Carpathians since you came here [to Lviv]?

R: Yes.

AC: The mountains there are probably different.

R: They are different, yes. The Carpathians are very majestic. In Crimea the mountains are like your buddies, they're your friends, but the Carpathians somehow stare down at you from above. They are bigger, but they are also very beautiful. I was in the Carpathians in the winter, I haven't been in the summer. It's so beautiful when there is a lot of snow, with all the pine trees. But it's different, of course, it's different. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s)

The Crimean Mountains are certainly an alluring and beloved component of the landscape with which Crimeans feel a special bond, but the vast majority of interviewees expressed affection and longing for the Black Sea more than anything else. It was no revelation for me that Crimeans feel a close connection to the sea; in one section of my 2011 survey of Crimeans, I asked respondents to write three to five words that characterize Crimea in their view, and "sea" [*more*] was far and away the most common word, written by 47.7% of all respondents. At 18.4%, "mountains" [*gory*] was a distant second (Charron 2012). In several cases, interviewees said that being separated from the sea and from Crimea's beaches has been one of the most difficult aspects of adjusting to life in mainland Ukraine, and substitutions simply do not suffice. "For me, Crimea is the sea, the sun, the sand," one interviewee stated, lamenting the fact that she no longer has access to the Black Sea from her new home in Kyiv:

We've been here for a year without the possibility to go to the sea, let alone to Crimea, and without the sea I just can't get by, it's been very difficult. I even went swimming in the [Dniro] river, and we went to a lake, but the fresh water just can't compare to the Crimean sea. And you get a different sun, the sun is different. Somehow everything is different, so I would say that I yearn for Crimea. (Interview 024, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s)

In another case, one interviewee from Simferopol expressed a strong affinity for the sea that framed a powerful sense of yearning for her estranged Crimea:

AC: What does Crimea mean to you?

W: First of all, the sea. For me this is the first association with Crimea. I can't really say that I love Simferopol itself. Simferopol is a small city, it's dirty, and unfortunately the people... I've lived in Lviv now, and I see how the people who live here have a completely different relationship to their city. I didn't grow up in Simferopol itself, I moved there when I was 11 years old. I was born 70 kilometers from Simferopol, I remember the fields and the apple orchards. It was north of Simferopol, near the North Crimean Canal, where we used to swim. And the sea is my first association because we always waited for summer, and then spent it at the seaside. The first year [in Lviv] was difficult for me because I left Crimea in May and didn't get to go to the sea. Last year I visited the Baltic Sea first, and then Crimea only after that. I don't know how to explain this sensation. The sea just always called to me, and the water gives me a calming feeling, it gives me strength. There's nothing like that here. It's different here, there are mountains... but I think that everybody who grew up near the sea feels like I do. Crimea is for me, first of all, nature, mountains, the sea, everything around. Last year, when I hadn't been home for one year, I would dream of that serpentine road from Simferopol to Yalta. I saw the road in my dream, and I missed home so badly. (Interview 067, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

In one sense, Crimeans' attachment to the sea and other elements of the peninsula's natural environment may indicate an internalization of the meanings attributed to Crimea from outside the region—by the millions of Ukrainians, Russians, and others from across the post-Soviet space who vacation there. Crimea's reputation as a tourist destination both before and after the Soviet collapse plays an important part in the Russian national narrative of Crimea, but until the annexation Ukrainians made up a significant portion of its annual tourists, so Russia has no such monopoly on Crimean sentimentality. As one interviewee suggested, average Ukrainians also revere Crimea for its natural beauty and now feel a profound sense of loss following the annexation:

W: People [in Ukraine] are generally sentimental about Crimea, you know, they used to go there every year. In Ukrainians' imagination, Crimea is all about the sea, the mountains, you go there to have fun in the summer, you had your first kiss there or something like that.

AC: Do you think that the average Ukrainian feels a certain sense of loss for Crimea, even if they are not from Crimea themselves?

W: Yeah, oh definitely. Well, for the territory at least, maybe not so much for the people in Crimea! (Interview 016, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Accordingly, some interviewees hinted that a certain awareness of how other Ukrainians view Crimea's unique charms colors their own impressions of Crimea and contribute to their sense of regional identity:

We are from Crimea, and we are always a bit proud of this. It's not that this is undeserved, it's just that it's so beautiful there; we have the sea, everything we have is so great. But you go somewhere like Donetsk, and there's black snow on the ground, and it's just like ... come on, guys. So, we always had this feeling of superiority, that what we have is so great, everybody comes to visit our region, that we are such happy and warm southerners and so forth. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

### *"Why Leave Crimea?" Crimeans' Self-Imposed Regional Isolation*

According to several interviewees, the perception that Crimea and Crimeans are a separate entity from the rest of Ukraine is reinforced not only by its physical geography, but by the fact that most Crimeans rarely ever left the region or even felt an inclination to venture beyond it. "What is common to a lot of Crimeans is an island psychology," one interviewee explained,

but this is not connected to the fact that it is a peninsula as such, not with the geographic location of the territory, but with the fact that so few people from Crimea ever left the country or even visited the mainland. This is a different question. I'm not sure that they would even go outside of Crimea if it were connected to Ukraine not be an isthmus, but by some wider administrative border. It's not a problem of geography, the problem is in their worldview. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Even within the community of Crimean IDPs, who were ostensibly motivated to relocate to the mainland in part by some Ukrainian affinities, many confessed to having rarely visited the mainland or being interested in doing so prior to the annexation. For example, even Sergei Kostinsky, a state employee at the Ukrainian Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting,

admitted to me that he had had no desire to travel to other parts of Ukraine before the annexation:

I am a real Crimean with a very deeply-rooted regional identity, because I never had any particular desire to leave Crimea. So, for example, before 2013 I had never been in Lviv, in Odesa, in Dnipropetrovsk, or in Donetsk. The only city that I visited periodically was Kyiv, everything else was of no interest, because there was Crimea. So, this was very logical to me. (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)

According to the testimonies of several interviewees, many Crimeans really do live by the old credo, “there is no land for us beyond the Perekop.” While this philosophy reflects many pro-Russian Crimeans’ general cynicism toward Ukraine, it also articulates a certain belief that Crimea is simply better than other nearby places, that Crimeans themselves are somehow privileged to be from there, and that there is no point in experiencing the world beyond it. In this sense, Crimean-ness may be reified by a self-imposed isolationism, a stubborn refusal to engage directly with the people and places beyond one’s peninsular confines. One group of interviewees described this outlook when I asked them why they thought so many Crimeans are loath to visit the Ukrainian mainland:

W: Well, what we have is already so great, we have the warm weather, the sea, the sun. And [in the mainland] ...

M1: What for?

M2: Crimea really has everything you need, you don’t need to go anywhere else. I’m serious.

M1: It’s got the sea, the mountains, the rich culture.

M2: It has different cultures, people come to see it. So, people travel outside of Crimea only if they have relatives in Ukraine or in Russia, only then do they ever leave. Crimeans going to see Lviv is very rare, it’s considered an exotic thing to travel to Lviv. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian men and woman, 20s)

If Crimeans are negatively biased toward other places in Ukraine, then the bias is never challenged if they choose not to travel beyond Crimea and experience those places for themselves, and this feedback loop is not necessarily exclusive to Slavic Crimeans. I interviewed a young Crimean Tatar university student who was born and raised in a small village in northern

Crimea, and who had never once left the peninsula before moving to Lviv to continue his higher education. His opinions of Ukraine and specifically its government had been rather cynical, but as he explains, his outlook changed dramatically once he finally ventured beyond the Perekop:

I had only ever been in Crimea [before relocating to Lviv]. I had thought, to hell with this lousy government of ours! I had always thought—and I wasn't the only one who thought this—why can't they invest some money here, in Crimea, so that they can make it more beautiful and attractive to tourists, seeing as how this is such a unique peninsula, rich with nature. I thought they could have done more. Why didn't they do more so that Crimea could really attract tourists, put some effort into making Crimea some kind of “flower of Ukraine?” I thought that our Ukraine would never become a good country with such a government. I always thought of Ukraine as a third-world country, something like that. But when I came [to Lviv] ...maybe it's just due to the fact that I had never been in a city like Lviv or Kyiv. Here in Lviv I see a much higher level. There is a much higher level [of development] in Western Ukraine than in an “Eastern” life and all the rest. There are way more cultured [*vospitannye*] people here in comparison. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

### *A Simple Sense of Place*

But while experiencing other parts of Ukraine may have the effect of breaking the isolationist worldview that supposedly influences self-perceptions of Crimean-ness, a strong sense of pride and attachment to place nevertheless continues to inform Crimean IDPs' senses of regional identity. In many cases, the connection to Crimea is very personal and sentimental, and does not necessarily reflect a belief in the region's inherent specialness or superiority, but rather a simple sense of place attachment that would be familiar to people the world over. When asked to recall their favorite places in Crimea, some pointed not to revered locations along the seashore or in the mountains, but rather to the seemingly banal sites that were part of their everyday routines and lived experiences, as in the following example:

AC: So, what are some of your favorite places in Crimea, the places that you miss the most?

W: I mean, they are personal places, not just cities or something. In Simferopol, for example, my favorite bench, I had a favorite one. Or the forest that I lived next to—I loved this forest, I always went walking there. So, just the places where I was maybe alone, maybe with someone else, maybe I just walked or listened to music. It's just something that I miss the feeling of, not the place itself, but the feeling of being there. (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Interviewees frequently spoke of their intimate connection to Crimea in terms that could be applied by just about anybody to the places where they feel a sense of attachment or belonging. For example, journalist Pavel Kazarin spoke nostalgically of Crimea as a place imbued with the memories of his youth. “Crimea means so much to me,” he mused, explaining that “this region has a monopoly on my childhood memories. I could live in New York for 30 years, I could live in London for 20 years, or live out the rest of my years in Kyiv, but these cities will never have my childhood memories, they are all in Crimea” (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin).

But this sense of intimacy is not exclusive to those who were born and raised in Crimea; interviewees who had moved to the region later in their lives were just as likely as those who were born and raised there to profess a strong sense of attachment and belonging to Crimea. Strikingly, some of the Crimean transplants with whom I spoke even referred to the region as their homeland. Take, for example, the case of Volodymyr Pritula, chief editor of the Kyiv-based, Crimea-focused news outlet *Krym.Realii*, a division of the US-funded news agency Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Born in the Volyn region of northwestern Ukraine to ethnic Ukrainian parents who had been deported from Poland to the Soviet Union in the 1940s, he also spent part of his youth and early adult years in the Odesa region before relocating to Sevastopol and later Simferopol as a young adult. As he explained to me, Pritula feels a profound sense of belonging to Crimea despite making it his home only as an adult:

I consider myself a Crimean because I lived there for practically 30 years. I spent a large portion of my life there. I had a house there, a garden, and my children were born there. I had a career there. Crimea is practically a homeland to me. It's



understood that I consider Ukraine my country, I am an ethnic Ukrainian. I was born in a different region, but I consider myself a Crimean based on the fact that this is my regional ethnicity [*regional'naia etnichnost'*]. Yes, I am an ethnic Ukrainian, a citizen of Ukraine, but I am a Crimean nevertheless, and I will remain one. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

In another case, an interviewee with mixed Ukrainian and Greek heritage, who was born in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol and moved to Crimea only at age 16, similarly concluded that Crimea was her homeland after pondering the question of where she hopes to one day be buried:

A person's homeland is not just the place where he was born, but the place where the graves of his ancestors are located, or the place where he wants his grave to be. So, this is the place or the territory with which either his past or, let's say his future prospects, are connected. It's the place where he wants his children to be born or where he wants to settle down. And it's interesting that even in the Paleolithic era, regardless of where they migrated, people brought their dead to be buried in their ancestral cemetery. So, in this way a feeling of a "native territory" was formed, a "native land." There is a time in our lives when we start to lose those close to us, when the older generations of our loved ones begin leaving this world, and so you start thinking for the first time about where you might want your own grave to be located, because we are all mortal, we will all leave this world sometime. So, when I started thinking about these questions, it was very difficult and philosophical. I thought about Mariupol, where some of my ancestors are already buried. That's where my father is buried, and other loved ones. Maybe in the Vinnytsia Oblast, where my grandfather and grandmother are buried along with many of my ancestors. Or, what about Crimea? I understood that Crimea is the answer, and this was also a very important moment of understanding for me, that this is now my homeland, it's my land. So, I will say that I was not born in Crimea, I come from a different territory, but if you ask me what Crimea is for me, for me it is my homeland, regardless of the fact that I was not born there. This is the land where I am comfortable, and this is the land where I feel like myself. (Focus Group 001, Ukrainian Greek woman, 40s)

While Crimean Tatars universally view Crimea as their homeland, acceptance of Crimea as a homeland is, in fact, common among Crimeans of all ethnic backgrounds. Although both Russian and Ukrainian state rhetoric have portrayed Crimea as one small piece of larger ethnically or civically defined homelands, Crimeans themselves often understand the region to be their homeland unto itself (Charron 2016).

### *A Growing Sense of Crimean-ness*

For some Crimean IDPs, this powerful sense of territorial belonging has not only endured after their internal displacement to mainland Ukraine, it has actually grown stronger. Volodymyr Pritula explained that his attitudes toward Crimea have fluctuated greatly since relocating to the mainland—first to the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson and then to Kyiv. “The annexation was such a shock,” he told me.

For the first month I felt like I was going to wake up and this horrible dream would go away, everything would go back to normal, it would only have been a dream. By the time I left with my family for Kherson, it seemed to me that Crimea was the worst place in the world, it’s just horrible, and thank God we left this awful place where there are no prospects, it’s just a dead end. (...) Kherson seemed like such a bright city to me, everything was good there, and in Crimea everything was bad and Crimea itself was bad. But then after about a year, it all came back to me, and I understood that Crimea is a very good place and that I want to go back there. That’s how it was! (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

After his negative views toward Crimea had subsided and his longing for the region set in, Pritula came to understand that he now feels more attached to Crimea than ever before, and that his sense of Crimean-ness has only grown stronger:

I feel more Crimean here. There, in Crimea, I felt more like a citizen of Ukraine, of a big Ukraine of which Crimea was one part. So, for me Crimea was a little homeland. For example, I also consider Odesa my city, it’s where I lived and studied for seven years. I consider it to be more my city than, say, Kerch. Yes, I considered myself a Simferopol person. Simferopol and Sevastopol—these are my native cities, with which my life is connected, where I had a lot of friends. But I considered myself more of a Ukrainian, a citizen of a big country. Now, I feel that I am more connected to Crimea. So, it seems to me that my Crimean-ness [*krymskost*] has grown stronger since I was forced to leave. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

Similarly, another interviewee argued that she and her fellow IDPs are in fact more authentically Crimean than those who remained after the annexation, because, as she sees it, their concerns for Crimea’s well-being are more critical and sincere than those who welcomed the annexation:

We've preserved this feeling [of being special] of course, but with a certain longing for the time when we were still there. And now we also add to this a very strong political identity—we are still Crimeans all the same, and we are different, but we are here. It seems to us that we are much truer Crimeans—if I can say that justifiably—than those who accepted [the annexation] and drifted toward Russia along with the flow. This is important for me, and I know that I will continue to say that I am from Crimea, and people will keep asking me a million questions. This is my function as a person, to answer completely openly and in a way that is understandable why I am here and why I am not the only one, that there are so many of us, and that we Crimeans are not like those who went for Russia, we are authentic. Everything there is the best—it's so cheerful, with the sea and the mountains—but we just happen to be here now. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

As the previous quote suggests, representing Crimea and Crimeans in a positive light is another important way that IDPs now maintain and assert their Crimean-ness. Ukrainians' perceptions of Crimea's people have understandably soured in response to the enthusiasm with which many of them received the Russian occupiers. Crimean IDPs therefore feel an obligation not only to reaffirm that Crimea is a part of Ukraine, but to demonstrate solidarity with their fellow citizens in an effort to prove that Ukraine has not completely lost the battle for Crimean hearts and minds. Moreover, reasserting these positive aspects of Crimean-ness is meant to ensure that the issue of Crimea and its de-occupation does not slip from the public's consciousness or from the national political agenda. "It's very important to show that not everybody supports that referendum or what happened, just to show that there are more Crimeans who actually understand what's happening," one interviewee asserted, adding that,

It's important to talk about it so people don't forget, so the government doesn't forget. Ukraine should not forget what happened. I mean, we need to do something about it. It can't be that in the 21st century some country comes and grabs a piece of land and gets away with it, and nobody has done anything about that for two years now. Where are we heading with that, you know? Should we just shut up and not talk about it, because it's uncomfortable? I don't agree, we should still talk about it, even if it's uncomfortable. And there are other issues in the country, but it's not ok, we should keep talking about it until there is some clear vision for how it should be resolved. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

### *The Special Case of IDPs from Sevastopol*

The imperative to embody and project positive aspects of Crimean-ness is even stronger for some IDPs from Sevastopol. Given the city's strong associations with Russian and Soviet militarism, Ukrainian stereotypes of people from Sevastopol are particularly negative, and so IDPs from Sevastopol often feel obligated to serve as positive spokespeople for their frequently maligned hometown. "When people ask me where I am from, I still say that I am from Sevastopol," one interviewee stated proudly, noting that,

There is a very big differences, because I do not say I am from Crimea, I say Sevastopol. There are certain stereotypes about Crimeans, and I would not want to be seen as a typical Crimean, and I expect people to understand that if I came to Kyiv from Sevastopol—despite all the stereotypes—that I have certain points of view that made me come here. I don't want them to ask questions like, "oh, so are you, like, pro-Russian?" You know I'm not, I'm here, come on. (Interview 042, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

But being from Sevastopol has also become a source of shame for others. One interviewee from Sevastopol now living in Lviv expressed a sense of regret for having lived most of her life in the extremely pro-Russian city without making an effort to engage her friends and acquaintances with her decidedly pro-Ukrainian outlook:

Earlier I would say with pride that I am from Sevastopol, and now of course I will still tell people that I am from Sevastopol, I don't hide where I am from, but it's a bit shameful for me. I lived in this city, I lived alongside these people, I was a part of everything that happened there and what it all led to. I didn't do anything to somehow make things different. It turns out that even with my very close friends, we had completely opposite viewpoints, and we never talked about the topics that we should have been talking about, in theory. Now, I lower my eyes when I say that I am from Sevastopol, because it's nothing to be proud of. It's all very sad. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

But while some feel a sense of shame for being from Sevastopol, for others it remains a source of pride and an important component of identity. People from Sevastopol often profess a distinctive sense of identity tied to the city itself more so than to Crimea as a whole, and this

appears to endure alongside Crimean regional identity for IDPs from the city. Intriguingly, those interviewees who professed a sense of Sevastopol identity cited many of the same aspects of the city's history and culture that undergird Russian national narratives of Crimea and Sevastopol, despite rejecting the Russian occupation. For example, one young woman from Sevastopol who moved to Kyiv to attend university told me that

I'm proud of my city, because due to the wars it was a very heroic place, there are a lot of heroes there, a lot of very important battles. And I'm very proud because the land where I was born is very ... you know, it's memorable. And when I say that I am from Sevastopol, I kind of feel proud, not because of the current situation, but because of the past. (...) The city itself, the buildings, the sea, they are not guilty of anything, right? So how can I be mad at them? (Interview 042, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

For another former Sevastopol resident now living in Lviv, the cultural and political gulf between these two cities often creates a feeling of discomfort. Although she stands firmly against Russia's actions in Crimea and feels a strong sense of political solidarity with her fellow Ukrainians, her Soviet upbringing in the "city of Russian glory" still has a profound impact on her sense of identity and territorial belonging:

I was raised on the ideals of Admiral Nakhimov, of the Defense of Sevastopol in the Crimean War, of the Monument to Sunken Ships.<sup>28</sup> Bandera will never be a hero to me, I have my own attitude toward heroes, and I can't break from this. I am very tolerant, I get along easily with people, I pay attention and I study the history—I know some of those Ukrainian songs they sing like "*Lenta za lentoiu*," I learned it here along with my son.<sup>29</sup> I am obligated to know because I knew so little about Ukraine before—Lesia Ukrainka, Taras Shevchenko, that was it. I've already discovered here Vasyl Stus and some other Ukrainian poets. There are a lot of interesting things in the history here that I need to know about, but I was raised on a different history. In my blood there will never be any kind of *Pravy*

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<sup>28</sup> The interviewee is referring to different components of the legend surrounding the defense of Sevastopol in the Crimean War. Admiral Pavel Nakhimov was a pivotal military figure in the devastating Siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War, and he is honored with a monument in the center of Sevastopol's central square. The Monument to Sunken Ships is perhaps the most iconic of Sevastopol's monuments; consisting of a pillar topped by a statue of an eagle, sitting on a rock in the water just off the city's harborside promenade, it commemorates the decision in the Crimean War to block the entrance to Sevastopol Harbor with dozens of sunken Russian ships.

<sup>29</sup> "*Lenta za lentoyu*" is a patriotic Ukrainian song associate with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which fought against the Red Army during World War II.

*Sektor*, UPA, or “Glory to the Heroes!” We say it when we visit the “Bunker” restaurant, but these just aren’t my heroes.<sup>30</sup> (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

That IDPs from Sevastopol revere and identify with their city for the very same reasons that adamantly pro-Russian Crimeans do speaks to the complex meanings of Crimean-ness among the Slavic Crimeans now displaced in mainland Ukraine. For some, the narrative instilled in them from a young age of Crimea’s great significance to the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union remains an important component of their sense of Crimean-ness, and difficult to denounce despite a strong affinity for Ukraine and rejection of the Russian occupation. But for most Slavic Crimean IDPs, who generally reject the Russian national narrative of Crimea and relate to it from a more Ukraine-centric perspective, Crimean-ness is rooted primarily in an intimately personal and emotional connection to the region that is often significant enough to make it a homeland. This connection is frequently informed or bolstered by prevailing discourses of Crimea’s specialness, or through a lack of experience traveling outside of Crimea, especially to other parts of Ukraine. Crimean-ness is linked through memory and nostalgia to specific sites within Crimea, be they significant places of natural beauty near the sea or in the mountains, or the mundane, everyday places imbued with personal meaning. For IDPs, Crimean-ness has also taken on a certain political meaning, whereby they feel an obligation to serve as positive representatives of the region to a Ukrainian populace turned bitter toward the majority of Crimeans for their support of Russia’s annexation. Moreover, Crimean-ness for IDPs also means making sure that Ukrainians do not forget about or give up on Crimea amid the country’s many pressing political and social issues.

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<sup>30</sup> *Kryvyka*, or “Bunker,” is a popular UPA-themed restaurant in Lviv. Hidden behind an unmarked door just off the city’s central square, patrons are met by a man dressed as an UPA soldier who shouts the slogan, “glory to Ukraine,” to which they must respond with the standard, “and glory to its heroes,” before they are allowed in.

Crimean-ness denotes a distinctive sense of regional identity linked to Crimea in a variety of personal and emotional ways, but these connections are rather thin when compared to Crimea's deep cultural, historical, and spiritual meanings for Crimean Tatars. Crimea and any number of specific sites within it may certainly carry personal and emotional meaning for individual Crimean Tatars in ways similar to their Slavic counterparts, but their collective sense of belonging to Crimea is far more complex and profound.

### **On Crimean Tatar-ness**

While Crimean-ness represents a powerful sense of identity rooted in place, it does not encompass any particular ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or religious elements that distinguish Slavic Crimeans from Ukrainians or Russians outside of the region. Crimea is but one small corner of a vast territory inhabited by these two East Slavic peoples, with little more than its local histories and regional eccentricities to set its Slavic residents apart from the rest. But Crimea is also home to no less than three indigenous ethnic groups who are autochthonous to the region and who maintain very distinctive national cultures and identities. Two of them, the Karaites and the Krymchaks, are Turkic speakers belonging to different Judaic sects, and both groups are extremely small, with fewer than one thousand members each left in Crimea. Their small numbers unfortunately make them difficult to examine in their own right, especially within the community of Crimean IDPs; to my knowledge, only a single Krymchak and no Karaites number among the internally displaced from Crimea. But as the largest and most influential of Crimea's indigenous groups, the Crimean Tatars are a vital component of the Crimean population on both sides of the Perekop. Unlike Slavic Crimeans, Crimean Tatars are a wholly distinct people with all the trappings of an ethnic nation.

As Sunni Muslims who speak a Turkic language, Crimean Tatars are eminently distinct among the peoples considered native to the territory of Ukraine, who are mostly Slavic and Orthodox Christian. Crimean Tatars also poses a unique culture that encompasses elements of cuisine, music, art, dance, clothing, architecture, literature, folklore, and tradition that are completely different from those associated with Ukrainian and Russian cultures, and that connect them with Turkey, the Middle East, and Central Asia. But the true core of Crimean Tatar-ness, the thing that grounds and sustains their collective identity more than any other component of their national culture, is their profound and unshakable connection to the Crimean Peninsula. It was in Crimea where a unified Crimean Tatar ethnos first materialized from the various nomadic, sedentarized, and merchant communities that had settled in Crimea over the course of centuries. In essence, Crimean Tatars owe their very existence as a coherent ethnic community to the specific historical, cultural, geographical conditions that converged within Crimea, and they are acutely aware of this fact. Although not an IDP but rather an ongoing resident of Crimea whom I met while she was visiting Kyiv, one Crimean Tatar interviewee explained to me in rather playful terms the origins of the Crimean Tatars and her own particular lineage, highlighting both the diversity and indigeneity that ground Crimean Tatars' understandings of themselves:

Understand that we have a very specific connection to our land, and to this you can draw a parallel with the American Indians. It's the same thing, we are indigenous. The fact is that if you want to trace the existence of the ancestry of the Crimean Tatar people, we came from the Neolithic Era. Crimean Tatars are kind of like the effusion from a volcano. When the lava flows, the rock gets stronger through the layering. There's one flow of lava, then another, and then the volcano will go dormant. Do you know what obsidian is? Oh of course, you are a geographer! When you cut open the obsidian, it is very beautiful, with pearly swirls. We Crimean Tatars are like this, with these layers. Take me, for example; this is why I say that I could pass for a Spaniard or an Italian. It's because in me there is Italian blood, and Greek blood, and German blood. Crimean Tatars have a lot of this [variety]. There is Seljuk Turkish, Arab, Mongol... what *don't* we have



[in our lineage]!? Guys, we are a unique nation! In principle, we are a very unique nation. (Interview 021, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

Because Crimean Tatars consider themselves both indigenous and autochthonous to the peninsula, they are firm and unambiguous in their understanding that Crimea, and nowhere else, is their homeland. Indeed, 78.3% of Crimean Tatars in my 2011 survey indicated through a freestyle mapping exercise that Crimea alone is their homeland, far higher than every other ethnic group included in the survey (Charron 2016). References to their homeland and specific affirmations that it is Crimea appeared consistently in my interviews with Crimean Tatar IDPs, even from those with a more cosmopolitan worldview, such as Alim Aliyev, a prominent Crimean Tatar activist and one of the founders of the NGO, *Krym SOS*. In response to my question regarding the meaning of homeland, Aliyev explained that,

This is my home, my universe, my natural surroundings. This is when I arrive somewhere and feel that everything is imbued with something very familiar, and it is all invisibly, spiritually familiar. Of course, this is your family, your friends, your sea, your city, it's the smells. Before this whole situation, I was very globalist. I felt great in Istanbul or in New York—and why lie, I still feel this way. But I understood that when you do not have access to that one small little specific scrap of territory in the world, that you can really suffer because of this. This, certainly, is a homeland. (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev)

When asked for confirmation that he was speaking about Crimea, he responded, “Crimea, yes,” as if the answer were so obvious as to require no additional clarification.

### *An Inherited Belonging to Crimea*

Many Slavic Crimeans also claim Crimea as a homeland, but Crimean Tatars' understanding of homeland goes much deeper than the personal and emotional bonds that some Slavs have with the region. Crimean Tatars maintain that their attachment to homeland is inter-generational, an idea passed down from parents and grandparents to their children and

grandchildren, and which does not erode even if they are removed from Crimea for multiple generations. This sustained connection to Crimea is not merely hypothetical; during roughly 45 years of imposed exile, the Crimean Tatars demonstrated a remarkable resilience and defiant resistance to Soviet policies aimed at erasing their national identity and assimilating them into the ethnic groups among whom they were resettled, and their tireless campaign for the right to return to Crimea was the lynchpin of their resilience. Tragically, their native language and elements of their material culture proved less resilient during this period, losing much of their vitality but not disappearing completely. But the belief that the Crimean Tatars belong in Crimea and the hope of one day returning were passed down to the generations born in exile, and proved to be the glue that held their ethnic community together through decades of hardship and the threat of their cultural extinction.

The Crimean Tatars I interviewed often spoke of their connection to Crimea as something more than personal, as something they felt collectively, and which is either encoded into their genetic makeup or instilled in them from a very young age—or both, in the case of one interviewee who spoke of her experiences growing up in Uzbekistan:

I would always talk with my grandmother, and she would constantly be saying that our homeland is Crimea. So, as it happens, I received the idea that Crimea is my homeland from my mother's milk. Yes, in Uzbekistan we had everything—enough to eat, work, a home, etc. But all the same, there was something missing, and as soon as we arrived in Crimea, we really breathed a sigh of relief. We were home! I don't know, but it seems like we are genetically linked to Crimea.  
(Interview 070, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

I frequently encountered this trope of “mother's milk” [*moloko materi*] as a vector for the inherited connection to Crimea between generations of Crimean Tatars, both in reference to how interviewees came to know their own relationship to Crimea, and to how their children have come to understand it, as in the following example:

All of us certainly, from our mothers' milk, we know that Crimea is our homeland. Our children are like this, and we were like this. I always remember how my grandmother cried as she remembered the place from which she was deported, we listened to her every day. We probably didn't fully understand this feeling until we arrived in Crimea ourselves, and especially now that we have come to be in this situation, we ourselves think about Crimea and we understand that we are the same [as our grandmothers]. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

The claim that a connection to Crimea is passed through "mother's milk" was even repeated by younger Crimean Tatars from the first generation born in Crimea after their parents' and grandparents' return. For instance, two Crimean Tatar men in their early 20s, both born in Crimea, described their sense of homeland to me during a focus group session with Crimean Tatar youths:

M1: We consider our homeland to be our most native place, which is Crimea. We were born there, and we consider this a real homeland, where we were born and where we lived. And our parents consider this their homeland because it was passed to them through their mothers' milk. A person born in any given location will not necessarily consider that place his homeland, but instead the place where his parents or ancestors come from. We completely consider ourselves Crimean Tatars because we were born in Crimea and lived there, and this is all connected.  
M2: I think that for us the main thing is Crimea, the homeland of all Crimean Tatars. I mean, we call ourselves Crimean Tatars, we came from Crimea, and so Crimea is the main thing for us. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar men, 20s)

Significantly, this generation never experienced the collective longing for homeland that sustained the Crimean Tatars through their decades of exile, but were instead fortunate to be born and raised in the homeland itself. Unlike their parents and grandparents, this generation knew Crimea directly and intimately throughout their upbringing, having many of the same personal experiences that helped build a strong sense of place attachment for Slavic Crimeans; yet they still describe their relationships to Crimea using the same language of collectivity and inter-generational inheritance as their elders.

### *A Deeper Connection to the Land*

Although the narrative of collective belonging to Crimea passed down through generations has proven resilient and foundational to a sense of Crimean Tatar-ness, an intimate relationship to the land itself is also a crucial element therein. This relationship goes beyond the sentimental feelings aroused in other Crimeans by their favorite sites and cherished locations around the peninsula; it is rooted in the centuries the Crimean Tatars spent tending and cultivating their native lands, transforming Crimea into the bountiful “garden” that so appealed to Catherine II in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Schönle 2001). Crimean Tatars claim a unique symbiotic relationship with Crimean lands; they may preserve and protect Crimea’s natural vitality, while the land in turn sustains them both physically and spiritually. They also argue that Russian and Soviet rule over Crimea led to the degradation of these lands, as Moscow sought only to exploit them rather than cherish and conserve them. A lingering resentment over the Russian and Soviet transformation of their homeland, especially in their absence, still informs many Crimean Tatars’ attitudes toward the region’s non-indigenous peoples. “The majority of people who live in Crimea are those who came from elsewhere [*prishlye*], who are not aboriginals of this land,” Crimean Tatar musician Dzhemil Karikov explained, “so they have a different relationship to it. Crimean Tatars know how to extract the water in Crimea, they knew the secret, because it is their flesh and blood, they are the stewards of this land” (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov). Another interviewee even made the dubious claim that Crimea’s climate improved in response to the return of the Crimean Tatars at the end of the Soviet period; “the climate in Crimea even started to change,” she insisted, arguing that, “it had been a bit colder, but with the arrival of its indigenous people it started to change, in Crimea it became a bit warmer and more comfortable, certainly” (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s). While the claim itself is suspect, it

nevertheless speaks to the belief in a powerful and reciprocal bond between the Crimean Tatars and their beloved homeland.

This intimate relationship with Crimean lands, however, is deeply interwoven with Crimean Tatars' inter-generational narrative of longing and belonging for their homeland, especially following their decades of exile. The descriptions and stories of the fabled homeland that elders passed down to their children and grandchildren told of Crimea's beautiful landscapes, its sacred sites, and the private spaces of homes and gardens that were lost with the deportation. The process of (re)discovering these places upon their return to Crimea had a reinvigorating effect upon the Crimean Tatars' relationship to their homeland. Many Crimean Tatar interviewees spoke of their feelings toward Crimea in ways that seamlessly blended the inter-generational narrative of collective belonging passed down to them with the personal and emotional attachments they have formed for themselves. In one example, a Crimean Tatar man who was born in Uzbekistan and moved to Crimea with his family as a teenager explained his relationship to Crimea and the homesickness he now feels while living in Lviv:

For 23 years I traversed all of Crimea, I visited the whole peninsula. There isn't even a tiny little piece that I haven't visited, because I grew up on the stories of my grandmothers and grandfathers. I hadn't been in Crimea before I was 15, we weren't able to. We weren't a wealthy enough family to be able to travel to Crimea. I was born in Uzbekistan, outside of Tashkent, and for those 15 years I heard about Crimea, that there is this promised land somewhere, our homeland, where my great-grandfather and great-grandmother lived, and where my great-grandfather's house is. I heard all these stories, and I always knew that we would return, even in the 70s and 80s when I was still a little boy. We always talked about this, even when it was impossible, it was a necessity for us. And I also really love nature, I love to walk in the mountains, I love the water and the sea. Maybe this is also why I've been everywhere in Crimea. For me, Crimea, the salty sea water, the wind, it's like a way of life, a basic necessity. It was tough for me in Lviv at first, there wasn't enough sun, it was constantly rainy, and far from the sea. In the summertime you want to go swimming, but here there are only some puddles with too many people. There's no space, and there's no place where you can climb up high and have your breath taken away because you feel the power of nature below, along with all the aromas. There's nothing like that here,

the Carpathians have their own charms, but the Crimean Mountains are different. I really miss Crimea so much. I feel as though I've been dreaming about it lately. I dream about the White Cliffs, where I have been to the very top, where I explored all the caves. I dream about Demerdzhi Mountain as I approach the sea, I dream about everything connected with this. I dream about my trees that grow in my courtyard, the grape vines ... and this is all intermixed with the fact that it's connected to my grandmother and grandfather. I've started to revere this a lot more. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Certain locations in Crimea also have a powerful emotional resonance for Crimean Tatars because they are associated with their nation's history and culture, and they feel a significant connection to this collective past when visiting and immersing themselves within these sites. The city of Bakhchisarai, once the capital of the Crimean Khanate, is the true heart of Crimea from the Crimean Tatars' perspective, and perhaps no other location bears as much cultural and historical significance or is imbued with as much meaning for them. The former palace of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchisarai is the innermost sanctum of the Crimean Tatars' collective identity, but visiting it is also a very personal and emotional experience, as one interviewee recalled:

I really love Bakhchisarai. When you are feeling down, there are places there from which you can really draw strength, especially the Khan's Palace. Whenever you go there, you feel that the khans lived there, the rulers of Crimea lived there. Bakhchisarai is just such a historical place, you feel the history in all the structures, in all the architecture. You can feel how the khans wrote poetry about everything that happened there. (Interview 078, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

But as Mustafa Dzhemilev pointed out to me, the Crimean Tatars' reverence for their homeland is not dependent on its enviable beauty—this is something of a fortunate bonus. According to Dzhemilev, it is the deeply historical sense of autochthonous belonging to Crimea that forms the foundation of Crimean Tatar-ness, and which exerts a magnetic pull upon estranged Crimean Tatars, drawing them back to the peninsula generation after generation:

Every nation has their land, their homeland. During the few decades after their deportation, the Crimean Tatars fought desperately to return to Crimea not

because it's beautiful there, with the Black Sea and the mountains. We probably would have struggled to return even if it was just a barren steppe, because that is where our nation was formed, that is where the graves of our ancestors are located. Any further perspectives for the existence and development of our nation are found only in our own land. (Interview 045, Mustafa Dzhemilev)

Or, as one young focus group participant stated simply and elegantly, “this is our homeland, and it pulls on us, it pulls [*tianet nas tuda, tianet*]” (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

### *History Repeating: A “Hybrid Deportation”*

Their historical experience of forced migration, deportation, and exile certainly plays a pivotal role in how Crimean Tatars understand their collective belonging to Crimea and how they define their own Crimean Tatar-ness; but Russia's latest annexation of Crimea has added a new wrinkle to this relationship, especially for those who have made the difficult decision to once again leave their homeland. “On a historical level, this is some kind of unending fate in relation to us, the Crimean Tatars,” one veteran of the Soviet-era Crimean Tatar national movement told me, “some kind of incomprehensible fate is pursuing us. You can make this connection beginning with the first annexation of Crimea going forward” (Interview 032, Crimean Tatar man, 60s). The long historical trend of the Crimean Tatars' dispossession of Crimea at the hands of Russian colonizers has further crystalized with this third moment of mass emigration, and Crimean Tatars absolutely perceive the 2014 annexation within this larger historical context. “We have had three types of deportation,” explained Lenur Isliamov, a wealthy Crimean Tatar business man and owner of the ATR television network; “in 1783 it was Catherine's deportation, in 1944 it was during the Second World War, and now today's is a hybrid deportation. So, during these 300 years they have deported us three times” (Interview 084, Lenur Isliamov).

The term “hybrid deportation” is now frequently used to describe the conditions leading to mass displacement from Crimea to mainland Ukraine since the Russian annexation. Neither of Russia’s two annexations of Crimea—in 1783 and 2014—technically resulted in the explicit deportation of Crimean Tatars, but in both cases many were compelled to leave the peninsula. Although they were not necessarily forced, tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars fled from Crimea to Ottoman-controlled regions of Anatolia and the Balkans in the decades following Russia’s initial annexation of Crimea, escaping persecution and encroaching Slavic settlement. Tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars have once again escaped persecution and the hardships of Russian occupation in response to the 2014 annexation, making their way instead to mainland Ukraine. Synthesizing the experiences of both annexations along with their literal deportation in 1944, many Crimean Tatars have begun referring to their own “hybrid deportation” to underscore the point that their displacement from Crimea was not so much voluntary as it was impelled through the repressive policies and pressures imposed by Russian occupiers. As Uehling (2017, 66) notes, Crimean Tatar IDPs’ use of the term “hybrid deportation” “transduces feelings of vulnerability and historical injustice, and captures the ways in which the choice to leave is a forced one.” Moreover, by understanding their own displacement as a form of deportation, younger Crimean Tatar IDPs may situate their experiences within the larger context of their nation’s painful history, and trace clear parallels between their own dispossession of Crimea and that of generations before them. “Now, we can call this a ‘hybrid deportation,’” one interviewee told me bluntly,

and people are using that term, "hybrid genocide" or "hybrid deportation," because now young people are leaving Crimea, now we have this same experience. And I had this feeling in my soul that I just ... what did I do to the world that was so bad that I am now repeating the destiny of my parents, you know? And not only me, it's a huge number of young Crimean Tatars who are totally repeating what happened [to their elders]. Not exactly, of course, not in the



trains like animals, but still, the sense is the same. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

In this way, the Crimean Tatars' inter-generational connection to their Crimean homeland is further cemented and perpetuated through the tragically cyclical pattern of dispossession, displacement, and deportation at the hands of Russian occupiers.

### *Torn Between Staying and Leaving*

But while their displacement may feel like a deportation to those Crimean Tatars now living in mainland Ukraine, the fact remains that the majority of Crimean Tatars have chosen to remain and endure in Russian-occupied Crimea rather than relocate. Some Crimeans, regardless of ethnicity, may wish to leave but choose to remain because of financial or familial responsibilities, or because of economic or physical limitations. But for many Crimean Tatars, the thought of leaving the homeland they fought so hard to reclaim is simply anathema, and they are ready to withstand any and all hardships simply to remain within and not relinquish their claims to it. There is in fact a serious concern within the community of Crimean Tatars that their numbers in Crimea will be depleted through emigration and further diluted by waves of Russian immigrants now moving to the occupied region ("Tainoe pereselenie rossiian v Krym..." 2018). Alim Aliyev from the NGO *Krym SOS* told me that both his organization and the *Mejlis* have taken the official stance that Crimean Tatars should try to remain in Crimea if at all possible:

People are leaving Crimea, but other people are arriving and buying property, people from Russia. Now there is a kind of population replacement, like there was with the first annexation of Crimea, and after the 1944 deportation. Of course, this is a horrible trend, and so both the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People and our organization [*Krym SOS*] publicly encourage people to stay in the homeland, to stay in Crimea if they aren't facing immediate physical threats. (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev)

For some young Crimean Tatars who were born in Crimea, an easy willingness to leave their national homeland may be due to the fact that they did not experience the deportation and exile first hand, only through the stories of their parents and grandparents. Without the visceral experience of exile or the collective ritual of longing for the homeland, the sense of Crimea's sacredness may be too abstract to members of the post-return generation, including one young woman now living in Lviv, who told me that, "[the deportation] is a tragedy, but I can't even compare. Sure, people say that it is our history, but I didn't experience it physically or emotionally. I can't remember it. I can't, for example, make my children know about it, or another generation or something like that. I didn't actually experience it" (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). In a different example, a young Crimean Tatar man explained that he feels a sense of guilt not for having left his homeland, but rather for the fact that he escaped while his family remains to face the dangerous conditions of the Russian occupation:

The main difficulty is that I feel safe, while the members of my family—my mom, my dad, and my sister—are in Crimea. I'm here in Kyiv or in Lviv, sitting, talking with some journalists or activists in a nice cafe, drinking coffee around people who think the same way as me, people who are totally pro-Ukrainian, with different values. And then I think, damn, I am here and they are there, you know? They are unsafe there, they do not feel the same sense of safety as me. So, this is a big difficulty, worrying about them. In general, all of it is difficult, but that was the main difficulty, I think. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

### *A Newfound Appreciation for Crimea and its Meanings*

But in other cases, the experience of the annexation and displacement have helped young Crimean Tatars understand the meaning of Crimea in ways similar to how their parents and grandparents relate to it, for they too now know what it means to be deprived of their homeland in a very personal and visceral way. I was surprised in a handful of cases to hear young Crimean Tatars speak of their earlier attitudes toward Crimea with a fair degree of ambivalence that

would probably make their parents blanch, but such attitudes rarely endure after the experience of displacement. One young Crimean Tatar woman aptly described the transformation of her views toward Crimea during a focus group session:

It seems to me that we didn't value Crimea before the annexation. You don't start to value something until you lose it. We didn't know Crimea's value before it was lost to us, before we understood that they could simply take it away from us, that some unknown people, those "Little Green Men," could steal it and occupy it. I didn't realize the value before all of this. I knew that my parents suffered to return there, I knew all of this, and I understood, but at the same time I didn't regard Crimea as some kind of "super land" [*ne otnosilas' k etomu kak k superzemle*], or believe that, "this is my homeland, so I should always absolutely return to it if something happens." It is what it is, and that's fine. I always knew that I did not want to live in Crimea, because there were no prospects there, for example. But now I have some kind of idea of this, and my goal is to study here [in Kyiv] and return to Crimea, to live there. On the one hand, what Russia has done has helped us understand this, and on the other hand, it has brought us closer together. So there are pluses, if you are looking for pluses in all of this. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

For other Crimean Tatar IDPs who already had a well-developed sense of their attachment and belonging to Crimea, the annexation and experience of displacement have served to strengthen this connection and make the importance of their homeland all the more apparent. One interviewee, the proprietor of a now-defunct Crimean Tatar coffee and pastry shop in Lviv, said that he now better understands the bond between Crimean Tatars and their Crimean homeland, and so does the rest of Ukraine and the world at large, and that this is one positive outcome of the annexation:

On the one hand, this situation with the annexation is bad, unquestionably. But on the other hand, there is the saying that "there is no bad without good." In other words, in this situation we have discovered some possibilities that we did not have before all of this. First of all, there is the general association of Crimean Tatars with Crimea, with "indigenous people," and so forth—not only within Ukraine, but throughout the world. Secondly, we have come to identify ourselves more acutely, our connection to Crimea has become more crystalized. It's become clearer, it's become obvious. I'm speaking for myself here. Before, I know that, yes, I am a Crimean Tatar, Crimea is my homeland, and there are many others there, so we should be tolerant. But after these events the majority of Crimean

Tatars understood—and not only Crimean Tatars by the way, a lot of Ukrainians also understood this—that Crimea needs Crimean Tatars, that only they can defend and develop it, that they love it like nobody else. Only we can ache for it, and only we have this obvious connection to the land. We understood this of course, and many Ukrainians clearly understood this, and certainly this is understood throughout the world to some degree. (Interview 061, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

Like some Slavic Crimeans who feel a deeper sense of Crimean-ness since relocating to the Ukrainian mainland, displacement has also sharpened senses of Crimean Tatar-ness and pride in being Crimean Tatar, as in the case of one Crimean Tatar man who relocated to Lviv:

Coming to Lviv somehow hasn't changed anything for me. In fact, I became prouder of the fact that I am a Crimean Tatar. I proudly tell everybody that I am Crimean Tatar, and everybody knows the Crimean Tatars now. (...) I never changed my opinion about being a Crimean Tatar, and I always tell people openly that I am a Crimean Tatar. Now, being here [in Lviv], I talk about it even more. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Thus, while Crimean Tatars do feel personal connections to Crimea and its environment in ways similar to Slavic and other non-indigenous Crimeans, Crimean Tatar-ness rests upon a much more significant, historical, and collective sense of belonging to the region that forms the central tenant of their national identity. Ukrainian sociologist Iryna Brunova-Kalisetskaya—herself an IDP from Simferopol—neatly summarized this key difference between Crimean Tatar and Slavic Crimean IDPs:

For Crimean Tatars, to move out of Crimea means to feel the pressure from the Crimean Tatar community, and to have this pressure in their own minds and feelings, because after the deportation and after the long way back home, finally they are in Crimea and they started to recover as a nation in their homeland. Now to lose the homeland is a bit different for Russians or Ukrainians, who are more atomized than Crimean Tatars, and who definitely have certain spiritual or emotional links to Crimea, but they are rather personal. (Interview 019, Iryna Brunova-Kalisetskaya)

Crucially, this collective sense of territorial belonging is an idea passed from generation to generation of Crimean Tatars, and has sustained their community through decades of imposed

exile and efforts to eradicate their national identity. Since winning the hard-fought battle for the right to return to Crimea, a new generation of Crimean Tatars born and raised in their homeland has now entered adulthood. Reared on the stories of their parents and grandparents about the times spent longing for their estranged Crimea, many young Crimean Tatars have now been driven away themselves in a “hybrid deportation”—the latest iteration of Russia’s long-term cyclical assault on the Crimean Tatars and their territorial belonging. Displacement to the Ukrainian mainland marks a new chapter in the saga of the Crimean Tatars’ enduring bond to the Crimean Peninsula in the face of outside forces threatening to break it. As it did in the past, this bond has only grown stronger for many Crimean Tatar IDPs in their absence.

But in addition to Crimean Tatars, the population of Crimean IDPs also consists of ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, and other minorities whose identities are also linked to Crimea in different ways. In some cases, these identities dovetail to form common bonds that encompass all internally displaced Crimeans attached to the region and opposed to the Russian occupation. But in other cases, these identities are divided and point to the presence of distinctive ethnic communities within the broader category of Crimean IDPs. In the following section, I discuss the grounds on which identities both converge and diverge across the Crimean IDP community.

### **Between Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness**

Although Crimean Tatars and other non-indigenous Crimean IDPs—mainly ethnic Ukrainians and Russians—relate to Crimea in different ways, there is still much that unites them. They share an affection for and protectiveness of Crimea, and a belief that it rightfully belongs as part of Ukraine, and accordingly they both reject the Russian occupation. A set of shared political principles—built around a mutual Crimean-ness and nested within a larger sense of

Ukrainian-ness—is therefore the foundation upon which Crimean IDPs construct a common identity and social solidarity. “The people who left Crimea are those who have patriotic feelings towards the Ukrainian state,” explained Tamila Tasheva, co-founder of *Krym SOS*, who added that, “this was the main factor, not whether you are Crimean Tatar or Slavic, but whether or not you have some kind of pro-Ukrainian position. This is the main factor uniting these two subgroups of Crimean IDPs” (Interview 008, Tamila Tasheva). Other Ukrainians may also share the belief that Crimea is a part of Ukraine that should be returned, but they do not possess the personal and/or collective sense of attachment that Crimeans themselves do, and thus the average Ukrainian’s sense of loss is far less potent and their commitment to the region far less enduring compared to those who have been displaced from Crimea themselves.

Moreover, the common experiences of displacement, loss, and suffering as a result of the occupation have helped strengthen the bond among Crimean IDPs. Crimean Tatars frame their displacement within the larger context of their nation’s continual dispossession of homeland, a narrative from which Slavic Crimeans are excluded, but first-hand experiences of displacement are shared by all IDPs and serve to distinguish them as a singular community. To this point, Crimean Tatar ceramic artist Rustem Skibin described the factors that unite Crimean IDPs of all stripes:

What unites [different groups from Crimea] is of course injustice and Crimea, the homeland. And moreover, the majority of people who are now located here [in mainland Ukraine] suffered in one way or another, they aren’t simply located here. These are activists, these are people with a clear political, civic position, and this also unites them. (Interview 002, Rustem Skibin)

Because the injustices of the occupation are so great and the need for political solidarity so urgent, some argue that there should be no focus placed on the differences within the Crimean IDP community, as doing so may result in social division. Maintaining a united front is all the

more critical in the face of ongoing Russian subversion and aggression against Crimea and the rest of Ukraine, as one interviewee insisted:

In the community of IDPs — Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars — there should never be any discussion about differences, because Russia might exploit them. Russian agents are trying to find the differences and use them. It might be religious differences, it might be linguistic differences, but they are always doing that. That's how separatism is working. In a time of war, with separatists in our homeland, there should not be any separatism in our community of IDPs. (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

For some, political solidarity within the Crimean IDP community is a bond powerful enough to sustain a collective identity, especially while the issue of Crimea goes overlooked or runs the risk of being forgotten by the Ukrainian public or leadership. The ultimate goal of returning Crimea to Ukrainian rule, and the activism through which this goal is maintained, creates opportunities for interaction and cooperation across the Crimean IDP community, connecting its members spread throughout the Ukrainian mainland. One Crimean Tatar interviewee told me that this solidarity and commitment to the liberation of Crimea helps promote a durable, singular identity among Crimean IDPs, distinguishing them from other Ukrainians for whom Crimea is a far less urgent matter:

For me, to be a Crimean now still means to be distinct, because as time goes on, Crimea becomes less and less important to our government and to everybody else, and it seems like this is already happening. And we Crimeans all need to stick together somehow, first and foremost. There are a lot of us, and in Crimea, for example, we might not have ever interacted with each other, but here [in the mainland] we will all interact sooner or later because we are all part of a single conglomerate with the same goal, the return of Crimea [to Ukraine]. If that's not important to us, then it won't be important to anybody. (...) It's already become clear that we have great strength, because really all of those who care about the fate of Crimea have left, and now we are capable of doing something. (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Another interviewee expressed a strong affection for the other Crimean IDPs with whom she has become close since relocating to Kyiv, and suggested that her own Crimean-ness is tied up

primarily in the solidarity she feels with all those who rejected the occupation and made their new homes in the Ukrainian mainland. “For me, Crimea was people, and it still is people,” she stated, adding that,

My Crimea left along with me, with some rare exceptions. Crimea is those people who are close to me, who weren’t close to me before but who have now become close to my heart, and we continue interacting here [in the mainland]. It’s the people who are still important to me, because they passed the test. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

The shared experience of displacement and commitment to a single political agenda are things that all Crimean IDPs share, and they serve as centripetal forces drawing internally displaced Crimean Tatars, Russians, Ukrainians, and other Crimean minorities together around a common political and territorial identity. However, these forces are often counteracted by corollary centrifugal forces that pull Crimean IDPs into separate groups and underscore important differences in how they identify. Aside from the experience of displacement and the political imperative to form a united front, there appears to be little that sustains a singular Crimean identity professed mutually by Crimean IDPs of all ethnic backgrounds. At the end of the day, Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness are two very different ways of identifying.

I came to a similar conclusion about Crimean identities in my analysis of survey data collected in Crimea in 2011. In one section of that survey, I asked participants to rate from 1 to 5 how strongly they identify both with members of their own ethnic group and with all ethnicities living in a variety of territorial scales, ranging from their town or village to the entire world. The results revealed two crucial points relevant to the identities of Crimean IDPs five years later: Crimeans of all ethnic backgrounds identify much more strongly with their own ethnic group at all territorial scales, and there does not appear to be a strong bond across ethnic communities within Crimea (Charron 2012). In other words, shared ethnicity proved to be a far more salient



basis for collective identity than shared territory, and thus there is no strong sense of a singular Crimean regional identity that transcends and unites the region's major ethnic communities. Crimean regional identity is indeed strong, but it means different things to the different ethnic groups who call it home.

### *Slavs' Superficial Connections to Crimea*

Although the methodological, territorial, and political contexts of this study are very different from my previous study (2012), my arguments about how Crimeans identify appear to hold true. Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness are more divergent than convergent frameworks of identity, as the differences between Crimean Tatars and Slavic Crimeans frequently outweigh their similarities. One important way that Crimeans themselves understand their differences is through their relationship to Crimea itself; as I already outlined in this chapter, the Crimean Tatars' connection to Crimea is far deeper and more complex than Slavic Crimeans', and both groups recognize the relative superficiality of the latter's. The ancestors of modern Crimean Tatars appeared in Crimea millennia ago, while Slavs may trace their Crimean roots back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century at the very earliest. This is not to suggest that Crimean Tatars necessarily feel a lingering resentment or hostility toward Slavic Crimeans for the intrusiveness of their forbearers; Crimea has long been a place of diversity, and Crimean IDPs generally share a common pride in this diversity. "There is an understanding that Crimea is a homeland and territory of the Crimean Tatars, the Karaites, and the Krymchaks—if we are going to talk about the autochthonous peoples who have lived there," Rustem Skibin noted, pointing to the fact that

[T]here is also an open question, which is still controversial, relating to the other people aside from the Crimean Tatars, [whose ancestors] were born there 200 years ago, and they also feel connected to this land, they accept it as their own. And this is normal, this is good, we just need to be mutually understanding and

tolerant towards each other. (...) And of course, after these 200 years a large group of people have appeared in Crimea who position themselves as Crimeans, but whose ancestors are from outside of Crimea. (Interview 002, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

But while Slavs first began settling in Crimea in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, several interviewees argued that much of the region's current Slavic population can trace their roots in Crimea back only a generation or two. In particular, the period after World War II saw a large state-sponsored influx of Russians and Ukrainians to Crimea, who were meant to replenish the region's population after it had been depleted in the war and by the removal of all Crimean Tatars in 1944 (Sasse 2007, 121). Even many of the Slavs I interviewed willingly conceded that they belong to a group with rather superficial ties to the region. "For 50 years there was really something like an overpopulation in Crimea, different people came and settled there," remarked one ethnic Ukrainian who had moved to Crimea only as a university student himself. He added that "among our [Slavic] friends and the people we interacted with in Crimea, there probably weren't any true [*chistye*] Crimeans. You could maybe count them on one hand" (Interview 062, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s). The fact that so many Slavs were relative newcomers to Crimea suggests that their ties to the region may be weakly developed.

Another crucial point is that many Slavs first arrived in a Crimea emptied of its indigenous peoples. For decades, most Crimean Slavs had never met or interacted with Crimean Tatars, and if they knew anything about them it was likely just that they had been deported for the crime of treason. Many Crimean Slavs therefore viewed the Crimean Tatars negatively upon their returned, and never fully accepted their status as Crimea's original and rightful inhabitants. Over cookies and coffee at a Crimean Tatar café in Lviv, two interviewees—an ethnic Russian couple from Simferopol with warm feelings for the Crimean Tatars—explained with some disdain the experiences and attitudes of average Slavs in Crimea:

M: What's most interesting is that when you start finding out just how "Crimean" most Crimeans are, they'll say, "I came here in 1980 from Ryazan," 100% of the time.

W: Well, maybe not from Ryazan...

M: Well, maybe 98% of the time. There are very few people who are native Crimeans. What is a native Crimean from our point of view? This is when at least your grandmother lived in Crimea. There are practically no Crimeans like this, whose parents or who themselves interacted with Crimean Tatars when they still lived there [before their deportation]. If they themselves had interacted with them or if their parents had told them the truth [about Crimean Tatars], then they would have no problems. And those who came later in large numbers, who would tell them [about the Crimean Tatars]? Can they understand what they are to [the Crimean Tatars]? Their relatives from Ryazan won't tell them about this. It's clear, because they came to Crimea in such large numbers. By the way, I haven't done any research on this, but I think there was a similar situation from the Ukrainian side.

W: They came after the war, when Crimea was empty.

M: A lot of Ukrainians came, and the Crimean Tatars never saw them either. (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man and woman, 50s)

The argument, then, is that Crimean regional identities for ethnic Russians and Ukrainians are both superficial and skewed, lacking a proper appreciation for the Crimean Tatars' relationship to the region. One interviewee even insisted that the very concept of a Crimean regional identity was created artificially and imposed from above upon the region's inhabitants in the absence of the Crimean Tatars, and that the Kremlin has leveraged this narrative of regional identity to reinforce Crimeans' distance from Ukraine:

For some reason it turned out that after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars a certain type of identity was formed, which Russia really exploits today when they speak about some kind of "Crimean People" [*narod Kryma*], like there is some united multinational People of Crimea, which is also an artificial formulation. (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)

Although this claim seems rather suspect and conspiratorial, others argued that the existence of a strong regional identity is partially responsible for Russia's easy capture of Crimea, for more Crimeans would have resisted had Ukrainian national identity been promoted more effectively in

years prior to the annexation. Surprisingly, it was a Crimean Tatar who most clearly articulated this idea to me:

Unfortunately, it seems to me that our Crimean regional identity led to this situation, even to the annexation itself, because there have naturally been measurements of the social mood [in Crimea] during all these years, and if there hadn't been such a reaction in Crimea toward these events [surrounding the Euromaidan and the annexation] and toward Russia, then the annexation wouldn't have been any more possible than a Russian annexation of part of the Lviv Oblast, for example. Yes, it would have been impossible in Crimea if Crimeans had had a different attitude toward [Ukraine]. (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

### *The Inherent Weakness of Crimean-ness*

While the argument that Crimean regional identity was somehow imposed from above seems pretty far-fetched, a number of Slavic interviewees did express a rather tenuous attachment to Crimea, and suggested that the narrative of a powerful and distinct Crimean regional identity is somewhat overblown. One interviewee stated that Crimea certainly has personal and emotional meaning for her, and even referred to it in the Soviet-era nomenclature of a “little homeland” [*malaia rodina*] (Kaiser 1994, 85–86), but she argued that this does not necessarily translate to a strong sense of regional identity:

I don't know how it is in the West, but in Ukraine and the whole post-Soviet space there is this idea of a “little homeland” [*malaia rodina*], which is used quite often. I have some sense of what this “little homeland” is—it's Crimea, just the place where you were born. I accept it as such, but I don't feel a sense of piety for this place. I don't have this special relationship, I don't feel bound to this place, to this territory. There are some native places to me that are connected to some emotional experiences or connected to certain people. I mean, I spent 19 years of my life in the peninsula, so there are certain things and certain emotions that stir me. But I can't say that I will be in tears just from looking at a photograph of some cape on the Black Sea. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

This interviewee further argued that these kinds of personal and emotional affinities that help form an attachment to place are not significant enough to generate a collective sense of identity

centered around Crimea itself, and she therefore rejects the idea of a cohesive social identity rooted in Crimean regionalism. I asked her whether she thought simply being from Crimea was enough to unite people, to which she responded

It absolutely doesn't unite anybody. Do we feel nostalgic about how we walked through the streets of Simferopol and looked at the stars? Sure. Or about how we would sit on the beach with our friends and ring in the new year? Sure. In this sense, yes, these kinds of humanistic things. But these are not the things that unite people for real. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

In a similar vein, another interviewee rejected the notion that Crimeans are somehow different from other Ukrainians because of their regional identity, but noted that a certain bond does exist among Crimean IDPs because of their shared experience:

No, I don't think that there is a difference like this. I don't think that anybody seriously makes this differentiation. Here [in the mainland] there is more of a certain spiritual connection, a communion between people for whom it was necessary to leave their native place. But to divide or somehow separate Crimeans from the rest of Ukraine's citizens, there's nothing like this. (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

Rather than feeling a common bond with other Crimeans, many interviewees told me that they now feel disdain for most of the region's people because of their actions and attitudes vis-a-vis the Russian occupation, and this has resulted in a much weaker sense of belonging to Crimea compared to their feelings before the occupation began:

I don't feel the way I always thought I would, that if I were to leave Crimea for somewhere else I would have such dreadful nostalgia, that I would fret and just want to go back to Crimea. Sure, I feel that it is my homeland, but it's the territory, not—if you'll pardon me—those people who live there now. (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 50s)

If there is nothing more to Crimean-ness than a nostalgic and emotional sense of place that does little to substantively distinguish Slavic Crimeans from others in Ukraine, this suggests it is unlikely that Crimean-ness will endure as a distinct way of identifying collectively for those who will remain in the Ukrainian mainland indefinitely. Without any exclusive elements of

culture, language, history, or an inter-generational narrative of belonging to Crimea, Crimean-ness may lose its potency and cease to function as a significant marker of identity for Crimean Slavs in mainland Ukraine—if not for this generation, then for future ones. Most of the Slavs I spoke with do still feel different for being from Crimea, but they have only recently been displaced. Although processes of adaptation and assimilation take some time, Slavic Crimean IDPs are susceptible to them nevertheless; “Slavs adapt very easily,” Sergei Kostinsky noted, “and there is really no difference whether you are from Crimea or from Lviv. Maybe just in the accent. I might not be able to speak Ukrainian, but at some point I will start to speak it easily” (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky).

#### *The Enduring Strength of Crimean Tatar-ness*

The situation is very different for Crimean Tatars. Continuing from the previous quote, Kostinsky added that “Crimean Tatars—this is a completely different culture, these are Muslims, these are traditionalists. Very few Crimean Tatars assimilate so easily, very few” (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky). Unlike Crimean-ness, Crimean Tatar-ness is a wholly distinct way of identifying that encompasses unique cultural, linguistic, religious, and historical elements, as well as a proven narrative of inter-generational belong to Crimea that has sustained the Crimean Tatar people through the most trying of times. Volodymyr Pritula, chief editor of the *Krym.Realii* news service, spoke eloquently and extensively on this fundamental difference between displaced Crimean Tatars and Slavic Crimeans:

I think that for Crimean Tatars, all their social upbringing since childhood, their social fixation, the entire idea of the Crimean Tatar national movement, was the return to Crimea. Now, when they lose Crimea while still living there, or because they are not welcomed and are forced to leave, for them this idea becomes very relevant again. Like Jews returning to Israel, like the Zionist movement, the Crimean Tatars have this movement in Crimea, the return to Crimea. Even if they

lived in Uzbekistan for a few generations, they returned to Crimea all the same. Now, if they will live in exile in Ukraine for a few generations, or anywhere else besides Crimea, for them there will still be this idea of returning to Crimea and creating their own government, for them this is a fixed idea. I think that for other ethnic groups, with time and after some generations, this idea will lose its relevance. If, for example, it's relevant for me today, in ten years it may not be so relevant for my children, or for their children. We understand that our regional identity can be lost. For the Crimean Tatars, their identity is not founded only on the fact that they lived in Crimea, it is much deeper than this—it is religious, linguistic, cultural, regional, etc. This will always motivate them to return to Crimea, and this will be preserved. I think that the [regional] identities of Crimeans from different ethnic groups will erode away with time, they will become Kyivans, Ukrainians, cosmopolitans, someone might go to Israel, some might go somewhere else. Assimilation will happen much more quickly. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

But although Crimean Tatar-ness has the legs to endure long after Crimean-ness is likely to fade, most Crimean Tatar IDPs are still concerned that their national identity may be lost to the threat of cultural assimilation. “The Crimean Tatars who came here, in principle they are very distinctive,” said *Krym SOS* co-founder Alim Aliyev, because, “they have a different culture, a different religion, a different language. When we looked into this, we saw that the question of preserving identity along with other social issues was very important for Crimean Tatars, and we didn't see this for other IDPs” (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev). During one of my interviews with Mustafa Dzhemilev, I made the embarrassing *faux pas* of referring to the assimilation of Crimean Tatar IDPs rather than their adaptation or integration within host communities, and he was quick to correct my mistake: “Assimilate, how's that? We generally do not want to assimilate. Assimilation means to lose your national identity” (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev). Other prominent members of the Crimean Tatar political leadership also expressed concern about assimilation and the preservation of Crimean Tatar-ness among IDPs. The threat of assimilation exists even in Crimea itself, where Crimean Tatars are a relatively small minority, but Refat Chubarov warned me that “those who have come to the mainland find

themselves outside of their own linguistic, national, and cultural context, outside of their community, and of course this raises the threat of assimilation” (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov). *Mejlis* member and founder of Kyiv’s Crimean Tatar Resource Center, Eskender Bariev, shared with me a similar warning about the risk of assimilation that Crimean Tatars face outside of their homeland:

If the core of our cultural is destroyed, then this is assimilation, when people lose their identity, when a nation loses its language, its culture, etc. They disintegrate into the masses and, accordingly, assimilate. This is the destruction of the cultural core. But I see integration as the preservation of the cultural core, when people live in new surroundings but preserve their identity, preserve their language, culture, etc. But we have to create the right conditions for this. Today there is a real threat of adaptation, you might say, for the people here [in the mainland] that could destroy that cultural core, it could lead to the process of assimilation. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

The threat of assimilation may be real, but internally displaced Crimean Tatars have done an impressive job resisting it and asserting their national identity outside of their homeland. Crimean Tatar IDPs have made incredible efforts both to preserve and develop their national culture in mainland Ukraine, and by all accounts their collective identity has only grown stronger. “Everybody who is able works [on Crimean Tatar issues] at some level,” proudly stated *Mejlis* member and founder of the QHA Crimean News Agency, Gayana Yuksel, who explained to me that

Some work in education, some in culture. We work in the sphere of media and information, others work in the political sphere. Another member of the *Mejlis* works with grants, he tries to get grants to solve certain problems. I see all of this, and I believe that our objective here is to not disintegrate. But we won’t disintegrate quickly because the feeling of self-identity and an awareness that we are Crimean Tatars has really risen and grown here [in the mainland]. (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel)

Crimean Tatars have also received a great deal of positive attention since the annexation of Crimea, and their plight has generated a newfound interest in their culture and traditions among



Ukrainians. Being in the spotlight affords Crimean Tatar IDPs ample opportunities to display and perform elements of their national identity to a receptive and encouraging audience. In the following section, I discuss how Crimean Tatars are resisting assimilation by preserving, developing, and performing Crimean Tatar-ness in mainland Ukraine.

### **Preserving and Developing Crimean Tatar-ness in Mainland Ukraine**

Only a relatively small portion of the Crimean Tatar population has been displaced to the mainland, but they have brought with them many of their political, cultural, and social institutions, and have established several more since arriving in cities like Kyiv and Lviv. The risk of assimilation and of losing important aspects of their national identity are still cause for concern, but Crimean Tatar-ness is nevertheless thriving in mainland Ukraine, and this is due in part to the many important political and cultural figures who rank among the internally displaced.

#### *The Mejlis and its Members*

Famously, the Crimean Tatars' two most prominent political leaders, Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov, were banned from Crimea in 2014, and now reside permanently in Kyiv. Both men are deputies of the Ukrainian Parliament and are member of the President's political party, Blok Poroshenko, while Chubarov is also the current Chairperson of the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People, their executive-representative body responsible for addressing and promoting Crimean Tatar issues at regional, national, and international scales of governance. The national *Mejlis* consists of 33 members including the Chairperson, but included within its larger structure are hundreds of local councils located in towns and villages across Crimea, with

thousands of members in total. Dzhemilev ended his long tenure as chairman of the national *Mejlis* in 2013, but symbolically remains the foremost political leader of the Crimean Tatars and a long-running emblem of their national resistance dating to the early years of the Crimean Tatar national movement.

Along with its two central figures, several other members of the Crimean Tatars' political leadership have also relocated to mainland Ukraine in response to the Russian occupation of Crimea. Tragically, the *Mejlis* itself has suffered tremendous setbacks since the beginning of the occupation: some of its members have been expelled from Crimea or arrested for activities deemed "extremist" by Russian authorities; the *Mejlis* head offices in Simferopol were seized in the early months of the occupation; and in June 2016 the Kremlin declared the *Mejlis* an extremist organization because of its pro-Ukrainian position and the political activities of its members, officially prohibiting any and all *Mejlis* operations within Crimea. But the *Mejlis* had already been effectively forbidden from engaging in political activity within Crimea even before the official ban, and its political functions had already relocated to the Ukrainian mainland along with several of its members. Chairman Chubarov described the state of the *Mejlis* to me in February 2016, six months before it was officially banned in Crimea:

The *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People is no longer located entirely within Crimea. Eight members of the *Mejlis*, including myself as the Chairperson, are not able to live in Crimea, we live in the mainland, and our 25 remaining colleagues are located in Crimea, but four of them are those who have gone to the side of the occupants. So the majority remain, 21 members there and 8 of them here, and we try to coordinate our activities as much as possible. It's understood that the types of activities for *Mejlis* members living in occupied Crimea has really changed, because the conditions of the authoritarian occupation regime do not allow many of the classic, social forms of political action, they are no longer possible. In Crimea there is no freedom of speech, there is no freedom of peaceful assembly, in Crimea it is generally not possible to demonstrate any different positions from those which the authorities allow. So the primary course of action for the *Mejlis* in Crimea is educational work, cultural work, meeting with people,

and less the demonstration of political activities. The entire burden of political activity has been transferred to the mainland. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

In the days following the annexation, the Ukrainian government finally recognized the *Mejlis* along with the *Qurultai*—the larger assembly of Crimean Tatar representatives that meets every five years to elect new members of the *Mejlis*—as official representative bodies of the Crimean Tatar people, and began subsidizing their operations ("Rada vyznala..." 2014). Thus, because of the severe limitations imposed by the occupation regime in Crimea, the institutions tasked with guiding and representing the Crimean Tatar people are now located in the Ukrainian mainland, making Kyiv the *de facto* center of Crimean Tatar politics.

In addition to their responsibilities to the *Mejlis* itself, some of its Kyiv-based members are heavily involved with organizations that promote Crimean Tatar political and cultural causes both in Crimea and mainland Ukraine. One displaced member of the national *Mejlis*, Eskender Bariev, founded the Crimean Tatar Resource Center in Kyiv in 2015, which assists Crimean Tatars both in Crimea and the mainland—especially those associated with the *Mejlis* at various administrative levels—in securing grants and other means of financial support to fund various cultural and political projects and initiatives. He explained to me the objective of the center's work:

Today we need to be thinking about how we will return Crimea [to Ukraine], and we need to think about how we will preserve our interactions with our people living in Crimea. Here, we need to think about how to prepare these people to protect their rights in Crimea, to stay safe, to do these things competently, and also to fight for deoccupation. But where do we get the resources, who will write the project proposals? A problem will be understood anywhere in the world when it is clearly explained, and when a project proposal indicates specifically how to solve this problem and how many resources are required, including financial. So that's why we made the decision here to create the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, which will assist the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People and, accordingly, work to find resources for any Crimean Tatar or Crimean initiative. This could be a cultural event, or some kind of cultural or educational program, etc. First of all, we are prepared to help people who have ideas like this but do not know how to

write up a project or don't know who to turn to or how to implement the idea. We will sit down with them, we'll discuss their idea, and help them write a project proposal, we will help them in any way we can, even help them register an organization if that's what they want. We will also help them carry out their project correctly, including preparing their reports, etc. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

Another displaced *Mejlis* member, Gayana Yuksel, is co-founder and editor of the web-based QHA Crimean New Agency, which publishes news related to Crimea and the Crimean Tatars in Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish, and English languages. Yuksel founded QHA years before the annexation with her husband, who comes from the Crimean Tatar diaspora in Turkey. "We founded QHA in Crimea in 2006," she explained to me;

In principle we have operated for quite a while, for more than ten years now, and we were a regional resource that was meant to report on Crimea and Crimean Tatars in Crimea, but primarily for an audience outside of Crimea. It was an idea that we had, and which Mustafa Dzhemilev supported as our leader, because at that time people didn't have social media and access to information like they do now. Information about Crimea came out very slowly then, and it was heavily distorted by the media outlets controlled by the local authorities in Crimea. (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel)

QHA was forced to relocate to the mainland in 2014 along with Yuksel and her husband, and it now operates out of the same building that houses the offices of the *Mejlis*, located in a residential neighborhood of Kyiv. While trying to cross from the mainland back to Crimea after a visit to Turkey in August 2014, Yuksel and her husband were informed that the latter had been declared *persona non grata* in Crimea—the third Crimean Tatar to receive this status after Dzhemilev and Chubarov—for having publicly voiced his opposition to the occupation. Devastated, they resettled in Kyiv while Yuksel continued traveling back and forth to Crimea for work, but they were eventually forced to relocate the news agency itself to Kyiv once operations were no longer tenable under the conditions of the occupation:

When all of this happened, I understood that they will not allow us to work as journalists in Crimea, because they expelled my husband, and because we, as a

news agency, wanted to be accredited to attend events organized by the Council of Ministers and the Upper Council of Crimea, and they would not give us accreditation. The biggest thing that they did in relation to all the media that they did not want to see—and they did not want to see those who did not recognize the occupation—was to simply not issue licenses to operate. So, we were also compelled to leave Crimea from a professional stand point. We re-registered the agency here, in the mainland. Now it is a Ukrainian media organization, with its center in Kyiv, and from here we continue our professional activities. (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel)

*ATR: The First Crimean Tatar Television Network*

QHA is just one of several Crimean organizations to be displaced to mainland Ukraine, and it is not even the most well-known or influential Crimean Tatar media outlet among these displaced institutions. That title goes to ATR, the first Crimean Tatar television network, which began producing content in Crimea in 2006 before transforming into a comprehensive television channel with 24-hour programming in 2012, after it was purchased by Moscow-based Crimean Tatar businessman Lenur Isliamov. Based in Simferopol, ATR broadcasted a variety of original programming and international films in Russian, Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian, and Turkish languages, and became very popular with viewers in Crimea of all ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. “This channel was no regular television network,” beamed ATR general director Ayder Muzhdabaev during our interview in the conference room at the network’s new offices in Kyiv. Muzhdabaev explained that in Crimea,

it was the only channel where Crimean Tatars saw everything—news, talk shows, entertainment programs, theater, cinema, political analysis, everything, everything, everything. It was a high-quality channel, in no way inferior to any of the central Ukrainian channels. It was a channel where 200 people worked, and it was the best in Crimea. For three years Crimean Tatars built this television network, which stood head and shoulders above anything else others were doing in Crimea. It was a Crimean Tatar television network, but it wasn’t only for Crimean Tatars. It was broadcast in three languages, so everybody watched it—Russians, whoever. All politicians participated in the talk shows, it was prestigious to appear on ATR, for people to see you there. It was the most popular

channel in all of Crimea according to the ratings. (Interview 053, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

While Muzhdabaev's assessment of the network may sound boastful or biased, other interviewees confirmed that ATR—including its associated Crimean Tatar radio station, Radio Meydan, and the subsidiary channel for children's programming, Lâle—was tremendously important and influential within the Crimean Tatar community during its heyday. One interviewee told me that ATR made certain elements of Crimean Tatar culture fashionable among Crimean Tatar youths for the first time:

You understand, for us there appeared one channel, one radio station, and this caused a certain effect, it was a kind of impetus. It became fashionable to speak Crimean Tatar, the youth started studying the language because there was now the opportunity to work and receive a good salary at the first Crimean Tatar television channel. When this money appeared, when Lenur Isliamov started to invest this money, then all these things became prestigious—there was our language, there were dancing and singing programs, there was interior design. The broadcasts showed these sets with interior design, and this has inspired a lot. (Interview 061, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

One focus group participant also explained how important it was to see the Crimean Tatar language and culture truly represented on television for the first time when ATR switched to a 24-hour format:

There was a moment when ATR first started, a lot of attention was given to this. Suddenly there appeared musical, cooking, and historical programming, they presented so much about Crimea, Crimean Tatars, and their history. It was very important to us that there was such a channel, in Crimea everybody loved it. You could hear news and programming in your native language. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

ATR came out in strong support of the Euromaidan in 2013, and its news and political programming were harshly critical of the Russian seizure and annexation of Crimea for as long as it could get away with it. But shortly after Crimea's ascension to the Russian Federation was made official, ATR adopted a much more neutral stance in order to continue its operations. The

new Russian authorities continued applying political pressure to the network and its owner, accusing them of stirring dissidence and extremism within the Crimean Tatar community. Russian authorities ultimately denied ATR a broadcasting license, and the network was forced to cease all operations in Crimea on April 1, 2015, roughly one year after the annexation. Around the same time, Russian authorities seized most of Isliamov's assets in both Russia and Crimea, and he was forced to relocate to Kyiv. But shortly after its untimely demise in Crimea, ATR was up and running again from its new Kyiv headquarters, beginning only with online broadcasts through its website in May 2015, but resuming its television broadcast throughout Ukraine by the next month (Figure 19).



**Figure 19:** ATR general director Ayder Muzhdabaev (left), and owner Lenur Isliamov (right) appear on an ATR broadcast in February 2017. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP4KKGj3QaQ>)

The network suffered major setbacks when it was shut down in Crimea, but it has slowly built itself back up and continues to grow from its new base of operations in Kyiv. General

Director Muzhdabaev, formerly a Moscow-based journalist whom Isliamov invited to join the ATR team in Kyiv, described the network's difficult situation:

Everything had to be built from scratch. You understand, we started again with nothing, everything was left in Crimea. Our building was left there, our studios, our equipment, they just seized all of it, everything that had been invested in over three years—and millions of dollars had been invested. Lenur Isliamov invested millions of dollars, and they took away his whole business in Russia, everything that he had there, the automobile business, they took it all. So that's why we had to start over again. It will all get done nevertheless, but it is difficult, of course. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

He also explained that the network has necessarily shifted its focus since relocating to the mainland, since it no longer has the budget to produce the same volume and quality of original programming as it had in Crimea, and because there is now a more urgent need to provide uncensored news and information for Crimean Tatars on both sides of the Perekop:

ATR has become more of a news channel. We do six productions in three different languages—in Crimean Tatar, in Russian, and in Ukrainian. We want to also do an evening news program in English, but for now we don't have that possibility. We still show all kinds of films with Crimean Tatar translations, and there's still a children's channel, where we show cartoons and children's films, along with all kinds of fairytales in the Crimean Tatar language. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

Despite its scaled-back operations, ATR remains extremely popular and influential among Crimean Tatar IDPs, and even among some Slavic Crimean IDPs. According to the online survey I conducted, 71.2% of Crimean Tatar respondents and 38.6% of all respondents cited ATR as a source for their news, including 25% of ethnic Russians and 29.1% of ethnic Ukrainians. By comparison, only 40.8% of Crimean Tatar respondents and 17.1% of all respondents indicated that they rely on QHA as a source of news. ATR's reporters are ubiquitous at virtually all Crimea-related events in Kyiv (Figure 20), and it sponsors numerous Crimean Tatar cultural events of its own. As it was in Crimea, ATR has reclaimed its position as a prime vector of Crimean Tatar-ness and a unifying institution at the center of Crimean Tatar social life



in mainland Ukraine. It has also become a primary means through which Crimean Tatars may present their history, cultural, and political activities to a wider Ukrainian audience. In our interview, Muzhdabaev made clear why ATR is so important to those Crimean Tatars now displaced from their homeland, referring to the network as a “virtual” substitute:

As long as ATR lives on and continues to operate, then there is a connection with Crimea, there is information, and the [Crimean Tatar] people feel like a united whole because there is hope that Crimea will return to Ukraine, and they will return to Crimea. ATR successfully became a type of center in Crimea, around which everything else was formed. It was not a political television network of some oligarch, Lenur Isliamov did not impose upon it any kind of politics. This was a television network for all Crimean Tatars, he made it as a philanthropic project, and it continues as such. It gives voice to many different points of view, it unites people. You could say [ATR] is like a virtual homeland. In Crimea everything is forbidden, but here there is a virtual homeland where there is information, where there is language, and where there are people who are forbidden [in Crimea]. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)



**Figure 20:** A Correspondent for ATR reports from a Crimean Tatar cultural event in September 2015. (Photo by Author)

### *Preserving and Promoting the Crimean Tatar Language*

For many Crimean Tatars, the most important aspect of ATR and its associated media outlets is the fact that they offer programming in the Crimean Tatar language—even though a majority of programming on the ATR channel itself is in Russian. “In Crimea we had ATR, we had Radio Meydan, which we listened to day and night,” one focus group participant told me, noting that “[w]e only listened to Radio Meydan whenever we were in the car, so we only heard the Crimean Tatar language. At home we only had on ATR” (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s). More than any other aspect of Crimean Tatar national identity and culture, I heard repeatedly of the need to preserve and revive their native language while outside of their homeland, especially since it remains endangered within Crimea itself.

One of the many consequences of the 1944 deportation was the removal of Crimean Tatars from the official list of Soviet nationalities, thereby ending the state’s support for their national language and cultural development. Soviet authorities intended for Crimean Tatars to eventually assimilate into the communities among whom they were resettled, hence why the vast majority were sent to Uzbekistan to live among other Turkic Muslims who could hasten the assimilation process (Williams 1997). Through their activism and staunch refusal to relinquish the dream of returning to their homeland, the Crimean Tatar community endured this period of exile and attempted assimilation, but their language did not fare so well. Without formal education in their native language, subsequent generations of Crimean Tatars born and raised in exile encountered it only at home while otherwise speaking Russian, Uzbek, or other national languages of the republics where they were sent. Most Crimean Tatars spoke Russian as their first language by the time they returned to Crimea, and only the elders or more determined members of the younger generations were still fluent in the Crimean Tatar language.

Crimean Tatars struggled to revive their language after returning to Crimea, but opportunities to learn it remained sparse for many years. “I remember how things were when I was still little,” recalled one focus group participant about the hurdles she encountered while trying to study the Crimean Tatar language:

We returned to Crimea from Uzbekistan after the deportation of my grandmothers and grandfathers, my parents were born in Uzbekistan. We moved to Crimea in 1989, and we had no such opportunities to study [the Crimean Tatar language], our parents didn’t have the possibility to send us anywhere. Some options appeared later, in 8<sup>th</sup> grade we were offered language lessons, but it was elective, and it was at a school that was far away, the bus never waited for us. It was very difficult to study [the Crimean Tatar language]. And so we aren’t able to pass it to our children, because we don’t know it ourselves. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

A handful of national schools offering Crimean Tatar language education did eventually open in Crimea, but according to one long-time activist, these schools were extremely subpar, underfunded, and did not actually provide a comprehensive education in their native language:

When they talk about Crimean Tatar national schools ... by and large there really were no national schools in Crimea. I will tell you why. A national school offers study of all subjects in the national language. There were different schools that gathered a Crimean Tatar contingent, where the pedagogical staff and the students were both mainly Crimean Tatars. But it was a mixed system of education, classes were taught in Crimean Tatar in the beginning, but further along they were all in Russian, and the Crimean Tatar language was just taught as a subject. To call this a national school is incorrect, it doesn’t meet all the requirements for a true national school. But there were only even 14 or 15 schools like this, and even those were difficult to open. The Crimean authorities said, “yes, you have the right [to national schools], but we don’t have the money,” and so forth. Most interestingly, there was not a single Crimean Tatar school in Crimea that had been built specifically as a national school; they were just in schools that were already really old, which should have already been demolished. This is what they gave us through government programs when the money was distributed, they just renovated these types of schools that already fell short of modern sanitation norms and requirements. (Interview 032, Crimean Tatar man, 50s)

Two young Crimean Tatars also shared their views on the woeful state of national language education before the annexation, suggesting that it should have been mandatory:

W: In school they offered Crimean Tatar language and literature only at the very end of the day, a seventh or eighth lesson, or sometimes early in the morning, when you have to get to school before dawn in order to study. What kid, especially a teenager, is going to want to come and study the language at those times when they just want to go walk around or play soccer?

M: At the beginning of the year they asked our parents, “do you want your son to go to Crimean Tatar lessons or not?” Why didn’t they ask us if we want to study the Russian or Ukrainian language? I think that if it’s a Crimean Tatar, they shouldn’t ask him whether or not he wants to learn it, they should allocate time just for the study of the Crimean Tatar language. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man and woman, 20s)

With their community under pressure in Crimea and their numbers small in the Ukrainian mainland, internally displaced Crimean Tatars feel that the preservation of their national language is all the more imperative, and some have taken impressive initiative to promote education and use of the Crimean Tatar language in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. The most urgent matter, according to many of the Crimean Tatars I spoke with, is to ensure that their children have opportunities to study the language and other aspects of their national culture while outside of their homeland, as their national identity has little hope of survival if these things are not passed down:

I think that for us, the most important thing is to not lose our identity, to not lose our language. Our children should understand who they are, they should understand where their homeland is. The most important thing for a person is to know their native language, to know their origins, their history. (...) That’s why we are teaching our children our native language, we are giving them this opportunity for—maybe this sounds pathetic—spiritual enrichment, to be replenished, so that they understand who they are. This is very important, the most important thing, I think. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

A group of Crimean Tatar parents in Kyiv have thus created a special educational program for young children with lessons in Crimean Tatar language, song, and dance to supplement their

standard education, calling it the “Crimean Homeland” [*Krymskaia Rodina*] school. The school’s director, Anife Kurtseitova, was already living in Kyiv before the annexation, and along with a few other Crimean Tatar families had founded a small Crimean Tatar dance school shortly before the Euromaidan began. Their attendance dropped to zero during the Euromaidan, as parents and even the dance instructors were too distracted by these larger events; but with the arrival of Crimean Tatar IDPs in Kyiv soon thereafter, Kurtseitova and her partners saw an opportunity to resume and expand their initiative.

I met with Kurtseitova and a small group of mothers for a focus group session at the “Crimean Homeland” school, which operates out of a few classrooms of a school building located near Kyiv’s central train station. She explained to me how the school came to fruition:

We saw that a good amount of people were arriving, and we thought that we could achieve our dream of having children participate in their own [Crimean Tatar] ensembles with singing and dancing, and so we started organizing again. But there was no place for us, there were a lot of problems. In the Nivky neighborhood of Kyiv they helped us organize a place, but there were no classrooms, just a hall where children could dance, starting with 8 or 9 children and gradually adding more. We found a teacher, and there were more and more children coming, so we understood that we had to do something more, and we started looking for school facilities. We found one and paid to rent it at first, but after a few months we made many appeals and registered the organization “Crimean Homeland.” This organization is made up of parents, but aside from the parents we are supported by active Crimean Tatars, including the youth, who helped us register and helped us find a means to pay our teachers. That’s how our organization started working. The director of the school where we operate, whom we know personally, has written a lot of letters of support to the Ministry of Education, to the Ministry of Culture, to the City Administration. She used to travel to Crimea, she knows Crimea, and she is a big patriot of Ukraine and the Crimean Tatar people. Our school is here today with the director’s participation, and with the participation of Mustafa Dzhemilev’s office and the *Mejlis*, who are also here. Now there is a school, there is a home for children’s creativity, where we can also celebrate our holiday and events. (Focus Group 003, Anife Kurtseitova)

Children who attend the “Crimean Homeland” school are taught regular lessons in the Crimean Tatar language along with special lessons in traditional Crimean Tatar song and dance, which

they regularly perform—dressed in traditional costume—at concerts and other Crimean Tatar cultural events around Kyiv (Figure 21). The children certainly enjoy these cultural elements of their education in all things Crimean Tatar, but the mothers with whom I spoke indicated that the language component is the most meaningful reason why they bring their children to the school. One mother noted how important it is that her child receive a proper education in the Crimean Tatar language, because she herself never had the same opportunity when she was a child:

Just yesterday my daughter told me, “one unfortunate thing about you, our parents, is that you didn’t teach us our language.” We know it so poorly ourselves that we can’t pass it to our children, and that’s why we bring them here [to the “Crimean Homeland” School], as much as we can, we bring them here to study. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)



**Figure 21:** Students from the "Crimean Homeland" school at an event in September 2018. (Photo Source: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/2543487-u-centri-krimaska-rodina-v-kievi-vidbulosa-vidkryta-novogo-navcalnogo-roku.html>)

Parallels between the experience of the mothers' generation and that of their children are striking and contrasting. While both experienced displacement from their national homeland at a young age, the mothers had no opportunities to study the Crimean Tatar language before returning to Crimea—and inadequate opportunities afterwards; but their children are now able to study it in an environment where their national identity is celebrated, and where resources are devoted to their national education despite the small size of their community. As Kurtseitova explained, the main objective of the school is to ensure that Crimean Tatar children do not lose sight of who they are and where their people come from, and their efforts appear to be working:

They all understand that [Crimea] is something precious, and that we should return to there. We are doing everything we can here so that when we return, we remember our native language and culture, so that we won't be strangers and we won't be dispersed. We are all very pro-Ukrainian here, we are so glad that our children attend Ukrainian schools where there isn't even any Russian language. But we should also preserve ourselves as the Crimean Tatar nation by knowing our culture, our traditions, and our language. (Focus Group 003, Anife Kurtseitova)

Surprisingly, it is not only Crimean Tatars who attend the “Crimean Homeland” school. One of the mothers who participated in our focus group was an ethnic Russian from Sevastopol, whose daughter was nevertheless an eager and enthusiastic learner of the Crimean Tatar language, songs, and dances. She explained that her daughter now feels closely connected to Crimean Tatar culture after growing disillusioned by the aggressive Russian-ness that has consumed Crimea and driven her family to the mainland:

In 2014 [my daughter] saw an advertisement for a Crimean Tatar dance troop, so we came here, and we found like-minded people, lovers of Crimea, people from Crimea who gave us the opportunity to immerse ourselves in this Crimean atmosphere that we had last. My daughter was drawn to this, and she was interested in learning the language, the history, the culture, because she understands—and so do her parents—that she doesn't want to return to that Crimea that exists now. (Focus Group 003, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)



In fact, there is growing interest generally among Slavic Ukrainians—whether or not they are from Crimea—in learning more about the Crimean Tatars, and in learning their language in particular. “There is a lot of interest in studying the Crimean Tatar language, thanks to Ukrainians,” one Crimean Tatar language teacher now living in Lviv informed me, who noted that Ukrainians often tell her that ““we have lived alongside each other for so long, but for some reason we are only now developing an interested in your language, your literature, your traditions and culture”” (Interview 078, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s). Indeed, I attended an informal lesson she gave to a small group of Lviv locals about key Crimean Tatar literary and historical figures, and I was impressed to see that her audience was genuinely enthralled with her presentation, and to learn that they were in fact regular attendees of her lessons on Crimean Tatar language and culture.

But the most prominent and far-reaching initiative to promote education and awareness of the Crimean Tatar language in mainland Ukraine—both for Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians at large—is the web series *Elifbe*. Hosted by Khalise Zinedin, a student of Turkish language and literature at Kyiv’s Taras Shevchenko University and a former television and radio personality at ATR in Crimea, *Elifbe*—taken from the Crimean Tatar word for “alphabet”—first appeared in 2015 with support from the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine as a way to generate interest in learning the Crimean Tatar language. Zinedin recounted the origins of the series:

We understood that there is a problem with our language, and there always has been, and there are people here in Kyiv who want to study the language—not only in Kyiv, in principle, but in different countries too. We wanted to create some kind of light, easily-understandable lessons that a person could use to study the language without spending a lot of time, just two-, three-, five-minute videos. So that’s how the idea of *Elifbe* was born. On June 23, 2015, we released our first edition on the *Krym.Realii* portal of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and now today [in July 2017] there are a bit more than 150 installations. We have been filming these for over two years now. (Interview 092, Khalise Zinedin)



Most videos consist of the eminently affable Zinedin standing in front of a green screen giving short lessons in Crimean Tatar vocabulary, grammar, or syntax with visual aids added in postproduction, while others show her out and about in Kyiv giving vocabulary lessons on a variety of relevant topics (see Figure 22). “We have all kinds of different themes,” she explained, “there are the normal *Elifbe* installments, and there are the special editions of *Elifbe* about the things that surround us every day—the home, day-to-day life, education, studying, sport, just really easy themes, the things we do every day” (Interview 092, Khalise Zinedin).



**Figure 22:** Screenshot from an installment of “*Elifbe*” from March 2018, featuring Khalise Zinedin teaching Crimean Tatar vocabulary pertaining to gift giving. (Source: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/video/29096900.html>)

Like the mothers of the “Crimean Homeland” school, Zinedin told me it is imperative for the Crimean Tatar youth above all others to know and speak their national language, and that helping them learn it was one of the primary objectives behind *Elifbe*:

In principle, the motivation is for people to start learning the Crimean Tatar language, those who don’t know it, those who have had problems with the language, and those who are weak speakers of the language. Absolutely, without question, I believe that a nation cannot exist without its language. If we lose our

language today, if my generation won't speak the Crimean Tatar language now, it means that in 20 years our children won't be speakers of this language. This will be the biggest problem, because everything begins with language, and if we stop speaking it, then we will lose ourselves as individuals, and as Crimean Tatars. (Interview 092, Khalise Zinedin)

However, she also stated that generating interest in their language among non-Crimean Tatars was another goal of the project, and that she and the producers design each lesson to be accessible to a wider audience:

We really try to choose a concept for each installation of *Elifbe* that people who are not speakers of the language will understand. This is a motivation for non-Crimean Tatars, for Ukrainians who are starting to study the language. So, there is really no primary focus, we want Crimean Tatars to know the language, and in any case we want Ukrainians and people outside of the country to want to learn the language. (Interview 092, Khalise Zinedin)

According to Zinedin, their efforts are working. "Ukrainians, just people on the metro will tell me that they are studying the Crimean Tatar language," she stated proudly, emphasizing that "[t]hey're not Crimean Tatars! On the metro, on the trolleybus, it's wonderful to hear that they watch *Elifbe*" (Interview 092, Khalise Zinedin).

One of *Elifbe*'s bolder efforts to promote the language outside of the community of Crimean Tatars is a series of special installments shot at various government ministries around Kyiv, wherein the ministers and their staff attempt to speak Crimean Tatar words related to the work that they do. These videos are fascinating and symbolic both of the efforts taken by Ukrainians and the Ukrainian government to embrace and support their Crimean Tatar compatriots, and of the permeation of Crimean Tatar-ness into the highest echelons of Ukrainian politics and society. Zinedin confirmed that there is great enthusiasm for this project within the ministries where they have filmed:

A lot of people ask us how the ministers reacted to the project; not a single minister refused to participate, none of them told us that they did not want to participate. Of course, it was a long process to prepare for this, the most difficult

thing was just to find the time. [Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine] Pavlo Klimkin himself told us that we should not do this only one time in each ministry, but we should do these consistently in order to make sure that our ministers are learning the Crimean Tatar language. (Interview 092, Khalise Zinedin)

That others have taken an interest in their language is certainly cause for celebration, but Zinedin is most proud of the fact that Crimean Tatars IDPs—including herself—are making a concerted effort to speak their national language in order to help preserve and develop Crimean Tatar-ness while outside their homeland. “Now, it has become fashionable to speak the Crimean Tatar language,” she told me,

For example, lately when I meet with my friends there is a very strong insistence on speaking Crimean Tatar and not switching to Russian. What else can we do? If we don’t speak our native language, this is just shameful! How can you not speak in your native language? If members of different ethnic groups happen to meet each other on public transportation—Armenians or Azeris for example—they will all speak in their native language. I understand that if I don’t start taking the initiative for myself, then how can I expect others to do it? That’s why, for example, in my family we only speak Crimean Tatar. As a child I had a problem with the language, but now I have no problems with it. (Interview 092, Khalise Zinedin)

### *The Crimean Tatar-ification of Ukrainian Culinary Cultures*

Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainians alike have increasingly looked to language as a way to engage with Crimean Tatar-ness in mainland Ukraine, but food also plays an important role. Like other elements of their national culture, Crimean Tatar cuisine differs significantly from Ukrainian and Russian cuisine, yet it is largely familiar because of its similarities to other culinary traditions popular throughout the post-Soviet space. True to their heritage and history of contact with other peoples, Crimean Tatar cuisine combines Turkish and Central Asian elements with accents of Slavic influence, such as the ubiquitous use of dill. Due primarily to their decades of exile, Crimean Tatar cuisine has adopted and modified several dishes associated most closely with Uzbekistan, but which have also become staples of pan-Soviet cuisine, such as the

rice pilaf dish known as *plov*, the lamb-filled steamed dumplings known as *manty*, the savory pastries known as *samsas*, and the tomato-based lamb and noodle stew known as *lagman*. But the most celebrated of Crimean Tatar dishes, the one most closely associated specifically with the Crimean Tatar people and with Crimea itself, is the *cheburek*, a flat pastry traditionally filled with meat or cheese, folded into a large half-circle, and fried in oil. *Chebureks* are popular throughout the former Soviet Union as a quick and tasty street food, but along with its grilled or baked cousin the *yantyk*, Crimean Tatars take great pride in the *cheburek*, revering it as a national dish (Figure 23). “The *cheburek* is kind of like a culinary calling card of Crimea, you might say,” explained one proprietary of a small hole-in-the-wall *cheburek* café—known as a *cheburechnaia*—located in a Kyiv marketplace (Interview 039, Crimean Tatar man, 30s).



**Figure 23:** Advertisement from Cafe Sofra in Kyiv, featuring a plate of Chebureks. (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/sofra.ua/photos/a.782703108483357/886755994744734/?type=3&theater>)

Crimean Tatar restaurants and food stands have long been popular and plentiful in Crimea. I myself became an aficionado of Crimean Tatar cuisine during the time I spent in Crimea, always eager to try new restaurants and dishes and to introduced visitors to these regional delicacies—typically at my favorite Crimean Tatar restaurant in Simferopol, *Divan*. Indulging in greasy *chebureks* is also an essential part of any Crimean vacation, and it was usually at some beach-side *cheburechnaia* that Ukrainians and Russians first came into contact with Crimean Tatars and their culture. “They could try [the food] when they came to relax in Crimea, and this food, this culture, it exudes some kind of exoticness [for them],” noted the proprietor of another Crimean Tatar café in Kyiv, underscoring that “even though you can include it as a part of Ukrainian cuisine, it is still an exotic cuisine [for Ukrainians]” (Interview 040, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). Moreover, the *cheburek* in particular has become an important part of the nostalgia that many Ukrainians feel for their vacations spent in the peninsula. “I see that the majority of people in Kyiv, practically all of them, have been to Crimea,” the same *cheburechnaia* owner quoted above told me,

and for all of them there is a certain place where they had the most delicious *chebureks*. They tell me how they ate them in some specific town, at some specific *cheburechnaia*. (...) They often tell me, “oh, these are just like the ones I ate somewhere near the Baydar Gate<sup>31</sup> [for example], it brings my straight back to the taste of my childhood!” (Interview 039, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

Until recently, there were few places to get Crimean Tatar food outside of Crimea. There are several Turkish and Uzbek restaurants in major Ukrainian cities that offer similar dishes, but for many years the only truly Crimean Tatar restaurant in the mainland, as far as I can determine, was Kyiv’s *Café Krym* (Figure 24). With a prime location right on Kyiv’s central Independence Square—the site of both the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan—*Café Krym* was opened in

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<sup>31</sup> The Baydar Gate is a structure built along a wide pass leading from the Crimean Mountains to the southern Black Sea coast, and is a popular tourist destination.

2006 by Elmaz Tairova, a Crimean Tatar theater student who decided to remain in Kyiv after completing her education there. With Crimean Tatars working as both chefs and waitstaff, *Café Krym* has long been a central meeting place for Kyiv’s modest pre-annexation Crimean Tatar community, and a popular place with locals and tourists alike who come to enjoy the “Eastern” atmosphere as much as the food itself. “We have Crimean Tatar guests, and we have our regulars who have been coming for nine or ten years in a row,” Tairova told me proudly. “This makes us happy, because they will discover our dishes and it is all delicious, and then we will change the menu. We always strive to maintain our brand” (Interview 085, Elmaz Tairova). Café Krym rebranded itself *Qirim* in 2017—adopting the Crimean Tatar word for Crimea—and business has continued to boom, as residents of Kyiv continue to come not only to enjoy the food and atmosphere, but to show their support for the Crimean Tatar community and get a taste of the Crimea which they now feel is inaccessible to them. As Tairova noted, “the locals are always coming, they say, ‘now we can’t go to Crimea, so we’ll just come to you’” (Interview 085, Elmaz Tairova)!

But Café Krym no longer has a monopoly on Crimean Tatar dining options outside of Crimea. With the arrival of internally displaced peoples, several new Crimean Tatar restaurants and cafes have appeared in Kyiv, Lviv, and even some smaller Ukrainian cities. In addition to two different Crimean Tatar eateries named after the city of Bakhchisarai—one that serves traditional dishes and another that just serves coffee, tea, and sweets—Lviv now boasts its own Café Krym unaffiliated with the Kyiv restaurant, but also occupying a prime location just around the corner from the Lviv Opera House. A couple hours from Lviv in the small city of Drohobych, Crimean Tatar IDPs opened a tiny stall in the local marketplace selling Crimean Tatar baked goods along with sweets and dried fruits and nuts imported from Turkey and Central



Asia. Kyiv itself is now home to at least a half dozen new Crimean Tatar restaurants, cafes, or food stalls opened by recent arrivals from Crimea. One of the first to open after the annexation in 2014 was *Sofra*, a tiny *cheburechnaia* adjacent to the market in Kyiv’s hip Podil neighborhood. *Sofra* quickly became extremely popular, attracting long lines every day around lunch time, and allowing the owners to open a full restaurant under the same name in the Lipki neighborhood of Kyiv at the end of 2015. While in Kyiv I also heard occasional rumors that somebody somewhere in the city was selling *tandyrnaia samsas*—a version of the pastry dish baked in a clay tandoori oven and considered a delicacy among Crimean Tatars, but which is usually only available in small villages or at roadside stops in Crimea. Getting ahold of a *tandyrnaia samsa* is a rare treat and a special taste of home for many Crimean Tatar IDPs living in Kyiv.



**Figure 24:** *Café Krym (Qirim) on Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Central Kyiv. (Photo by author)*

But the undisputed king of Crimean Tatar eateries outside of Crimea, dethroning even the original *Café Krym*, is Kyiv's *Musafir*. Opened in June 2015 on the busy Saksahanskoho Street just outside of the city center, *Musafir*—meaning “guest” in Crimean Tatar—has quickly become both the busiest and most popular Crimean Tatar restaurant in town, and an important center of social life within the community of Crimean Tatars in Kyiv (Figure 25). The restaurant rapidly outgrew the modest space of its original location, and in May 2017 opened a second location in a three-story building inside a courtyard near the intersection of Khreshchatyk Boulevard and Bohdan Khmelnytsky Street in the very heart of central Kyiv. Especially now in its second location, *Musafir* is where the Crimean Tatar community's biggest movers and shakers hold their meetings and banquets, and where they come rub shoulders with other IDPs and locals alike. “Politicians and stars come to *Musafir*,” bragged one focus group participant during our meeting at the original location in Kyiv, while Mustafa Dzhemilev happened to be sitting a few tables away. “I think that this restaurant with Crimean Tatar cuisine has become a part of Kyiv, it brings something to the romance of this city,” he added (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

Part of why *Musafir* has become so important has to do with its origin story, which remains shrouded in legend. Ask any Crimean in Kyiv—Tatar or otherwise—and they will tell you that *Musafir* moved to Kyiv from its original location directly across from the Khan's Palace in Bakhchisarai, making it an internally displaced restaurant, so to speak. Indeed, the same family owned another popular Crimean Tatar restaurant named *Musafir* in this location for many years, and it was considered one of the best in Bakhchisarai; but due to increased pressure and a drop in business following the annexation, the *Musafir* in Bakhchisarai closed just days before



*Musafir* Kyiv opened. But as much as Crimean Tatars want to believe that this piece of their homeland moved to Kyiv along with them, the two are not the same restaurant.



**Figure 25:** Kyiv's original *Musafir* restaurant on Saksahanskoho Street. (Photo by author)

I got the real story from *Musafir*'s co-owner, Sorina Seitveliyeva, who is Romanian but married to a man originally from the Crimean Tatar diaspora in Romania. *Musafir* Bakhchisarai was owned by her brother-in-law while Seitveliyeva and her husband still lived in Romania. They moved to Kyiv in September 2013, just two months before the beginning of the Euromaidan, and some months after the annexation of Crimea they had the idea to open a restaurant using *Musafir* in Bakhchisarai as a template. By coincidence, the Bakhchisarai restaurant closed its doors just ten days before the new Kyiv location was set to open, creating

the impression that it had packed up and moved, but in reality the two are independent entities based on the same template and with owners who are related to one another. Nevertheless, it is still considered common knowledge within the Crimean IDP community that *Musafir* moved from Bakhchisarai to Kyiv, even though the owners have tried repeatedly to set the record straight. “We kept telling everybody [that they are different restaurants], all the newspaper reporters, everybody, we kept saying this,” Seitveliyeva insisted, “but I think it's part of the legend, so it adds some sort of intriguing background, and nobody wants to believe otherwise” (Interview 086, Sorina Seitveliyeva)! Regardless of the inaccuracy, Seitveliyeva is happy to let her customers believe the legend; “I don't think it's needed” to correct people about the origins of the restaurant, she told me, “because in terms of the identity of the place, I think it has a lot to do with the Bakhchisarai location” (Interview 086, Sorina Seitveliyeva).

From the traditional outfits worn by the restaurant staff, to the embroidered clothes adorning the walls and seats, and the traditional Crimean Tatar music—sometimes performed live—*Musafir* strives to recreate a distinctly Crimean atmosphere in both of its locations. The food itself is very authentic, and Crimean Tatar IDPs are grateful to have such a place where they can enjoy their favorite comfort foods. “Here we can eat like we do at home, they have all the same dishes,” one focus group participant told me during or meeting at the first *Musafir* location in Kyiv, adding, “but of course, it’s always more delicious at home” (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

But Kyiv’s Crimean Tatars flock to *Musafir* not only for the food and the atmosphere, but for the sense of community it engenders. “You come here, and you see people you know at every table,” another focus group participant explained (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). There is no particular district in Kyiv where Crimean Tatars live compactly or in large numbers,

nowhere that could be considered a Crimean Tatar enclave or ethnic neighborhood, so the two *Musafirs* function as important nodes in Kyiv's geography of Crimean Tatar-ness. In fact, one interviewee suggested that *Musafir* is the closest thing Crimean Tatars have to their own ethnic neighborhood in Kyiv:

In the center of Kyiv, on Saksahansko Street, you can come and partake in Crimean Tatar national cuisine, you can listen to our music, etc. Of course, this is like an element of a "Chinatown," maybe not to such a degree, but some elements are there, they come together [at *Musafir*]. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)

*Musafir's* head waiter further described to me how the restaurants serve Kyiv's Crimean Tatar community as places to meet, gather, socialize, and remember:

All the Crimean Tatars come here, people are constantly meeting each other here, even running into people they haven't seen in a long time and whom they didn't even know were living in Kyiv. There are a lot of such people who meet here, the youth will gather all their friends together. (...) It's somehow easier for everybody here, when they gather and reminisce about what they had in Crimea, even though things are the way they are. (Interview 095, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Co-owner Sorina Seitveliyeva even mentioned that newly arrived Crimean Tatars will come to the restaurant to inquire about housing, employment, or other services in the city, making *Musafir* more than just a restaurant, but a crucial point of access to networks of support and social interaction within the community of Crimean Tatars in Kyiv.

#### *Preserving Traditional Elements of Crimean Tatar-ness*

*Musafir* also serves as a venue for Crimean Tatar artists and musicians to display and perform their work in a comfortable and receptive setting. Performing at the original Kyiv location every Tuesday and Thursday evening during the time of my fieldwork, musician Dzhemil Karikov is a favorite among *Musafir's* patrons, and is one of a handful of prominent displaced artists devoted to preserving elements of Crimean Tatar national culture in their

traditional forms (Figure 26). A professionally trained and highly accomplished musician and composer, Karikov has spent decades researching, recreating, cataloging, and performing the rich Crimean Tatar musical traditions that were mostly lost or obfuscated through centuries of colonization, displacement, and exile. “I am engaged in reanimating our folklore, and I am trying to do so in its purest form,” he told me during our interview, emphasizing that, “most importantly, I am trying to preserve the quintessence of Crimean Tatar music” (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov). As he explained to me, Karikov was drawn to his people’s musical traditions well before he was even able to return to Crimea from Central Asia, and felt a calling early in his career to ensure that these traditions are not lost for good:

I studied at a conservatory, I am a composer. I wrote music for the symphony orchestra and for the chamber orchestra. But even there in Central Asia, before we returned to Crimea, I felt an urgent need to preserve our musical culture. Of course it’s fine to write symphonies, to write chamber music or choir music, but I really understood that our folklore is our foundation. If our people, in their wisdom, decided to leave us with this or that song, with this or that instrumental melody, then it means that there must be great wisdom in this. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)

In a modest Kyiv studio where he keeps many of his instruments and gives music lessons primarily to children, Karikov explained to me why Crimean Tatar musical culture is unique and worth preserving:

This is a subjective evaluation, but there is a much stronger feeling of tragedy in our music [than in neighboring musical cultures]. What else is characteristically unique about it? The geographic location of Crimea itself, it is a crossroads of East and West, in my view, and there is no way that this cannot come through in our music. We have an organic synthesis of eastern and western traditions, and in this is the uniqueness and originality of Crimean Tatar music. It cannot mean the same thing to Ukrainians or members of any other nationality. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)



*Figure 26: Dzhemil Karikov performing at Musafir in Kyiv. (Photo by author)*

But according to Karikov, like so many other elements of their culture and society, much of the Crimean Tatars' musical heritage was lost through Russian and Soviet policies of displacement, assimilation, and cultural suppression:

In our musical culture there was a period of stagnation, when we did not develop whatsoever. The only thing that saved us was that we clung to our nationhood and to our folklore—I'm talking about the sphere of our music, we tried to preserve our [musical] folklore. But to this day only some pathetic pieces of the rich heritage that the Crimean Tatars once possessed have been passed down. Along the way we lost a lot of our instruments, because even before the war the Soviet authorities tried to unify everything. They offered us different musical instruments, European ones—accordions and such. And aside from this, there was the iron curtain. We lost our masters who were able to make our different instruments, for example our great-grandfathers played the *santur*, the *baglama*, and the *saz*. These instruments are found widely throughout the Turkic world, and we once had our own master craftspeople, but all of that was lost. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)



Karikov has thus made it his mission to collect and care for these instruments, and to build a comprehensive catalog and repertoire of the songs and styles his forbearers once played on them. He told me that in Crimea he had amassed over 50 musical instruments in his personal collection and had built a private studio, sacrificing even the luxury of owning his own car in order to reinvest all his earnings into his musical curations.

Karikov was well-known throughout Crimea, even hosting a regular television program on ATR where he and other musicians—including his young daughter—would perform a variety of traditional, classical, and contemporary Crimean Tatar compositions. But despite his stature and his deep devotion to Crimea’s musical heritage, the pressures of the Russian occupation were too much for Karikov to withstand, and in June 2015 he relocated to Kyiv along with his family and, of course, his prized collection of musical instruments. “I came [to Kyiv] because it became impossible [to stay in Crimea],” he stated regrettably, adding,

I looked for different opportunities, but it turns out I have one of the most democratic professions, a musician, and they didn’t even like it that I play my national music. I couldn’t do it, I had to come here because I was left without a means of existence, and aside from this, I just couldn’t live in that society. (...) I had been to Kyiv many times before, but only as a guest or participant in some festivals. I never before would have presumed that I would ever move to Kyiv and be living here. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)

Unable to continue his work in his own homeland, Karikov remains devoted to the preservation of traditional musical elements of Crimean Tatar-ness from mainland Ukraine—where Crimean Tatar music is generally perceived as “eastern” and “wild” (Sonevytsky 2012)—and regularly performs for Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian audiences at large. Ensuring that the community of internally displaced Crimean Tatars has access to this aspect of their cultural heritage is one key objective of Karikov’s work in Kyiv, but he also works to create awareness of Crimean Tatar

musical traditions as a component of Ukraine's diverse musical heritage, and to secure support for Crimean Tatar musical education in Ukraine:

We will return to Crimea someday, and Crimea will be a part of Ukraine. I want for people in the new [post-Maidan] Ukraine to understand that we need our own national music schools, we need quotas for our conservatories, where we can address the problems of Crimean Tatars. I need them to pay attention to these issues, for the Ukrainian musical elite to understand this and try to help us. Furthermore, our government has a Ministry of Culture, and I want them to pay close attention to us, because things are very disproportionate. In the whole state of Ukraine we don't have a single musical school. How many conservatories are there in Ukraine—in Kharkiv, in Kyiv, in Lviv, in Odesa, etc.? There's an institute in Dnipropetrovsk. We [Crimean Tatars] don't have anything at all. If we are small in numbers it doesn't mean that we are worse than something else or someone else, no. There are fewer of us, but we have a rich history behind us, behind my people, and it is unique. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)

In addition to Karikov, another prominent IDP working to preserve traditional elements of Crimean Tatar culture in Kyiv is ceramic artist Rustem Skibin. A good 20 years younger than Karikov, Skibin did not become interested in lost Crimean Tatar artistic traditions until after relocating to Crimea from Uzbekistan as a teenager:

I came to Crimea for the first time in 1991, and in 1996 we made our final move. We built our house over five years, every summer I came with my family. We moved for good in 1996, and in 2000 I met my teacher, Mamut Churlu, a famous artist and art critic. He introduced me to the study of our traditional, authentic Crimean Tatar culture. From that moment I started mastering ceramics, I worked in a workshop and started using the material freely. But I knew practically nothing about the artistry or the tradition, because we rarely talked about that stuff in my family. The reasons are clear—the deportation, the [first] annexation—they practically destroyed all of our material culture. We were left with no masters and no physical items. (Interview 002, Rustem Skibin)

Skibin has since spent many years working to collect, preserve, and revive Crimean Tatar material culture, focusing primarily on traditional techniques of creating painted ceramic dishes, but concerned broadly with the preservation of traditional Crimean Tatar craftwork in all its styles and media. He explained to me the work he did in Crimea along with a larger collective of devoted traditionalist craftspeople:

From 2000 I started painting and creating new forms of traditional ceramic dishes, and at that time I also started organizing a movement with students and a group of artists, we called the project “Crimean Style.” We traveled to villages and met with grandmothers, searching for all possible artifacts and information, generally everything that we could possibly find [relating to traditional crafts], both material and non-material. And we held seminars on different topics. We learned about Central Asian ceramic painting, because our techniques for painting with brushes have practically all disappeared. Masters from Uzbekistan came and introduced us to these techniques, to the language of ornamentation, the semantics of it. We studied ornaments, what they mean, what goes into them, the traditions and rituals with which they are connected. Aside from its aesthetics, every item made by a master carries its own ritual and utility. And during all that time, up until the annexation in 2014, we held lots of exhibitions, and we had some great results. We created some new styles and rehabilitated our crafts from practically nothing. They became recognizable, like a brand that became associated with Crimea even though we had only been working on them for five to ten years. (Interview 002, Rustem Skibin)

With the appearance of the “Little Green Men” and the sudden escalation of tensions in the peninsula, Skibin feared that his prized collection of traditional crafts was no longer safe in Crimea, so he moved them all to Kyiv during the first days of the occupation, becoming the very first Crimean IDP according to sources at the NGO *Krym SOS*. “At that moment, I made a decision,” he told me during our interview in his small ceramic studio in Kyiv,

I have a collection of old things, antiques of all genres—ceramics, metal, fabric, and a modern collection too. I love to collect the best examples of what our [Crimean Tatar] masters could make. I moved it all [to Kyiv], because at that moment it was unclear what could happen, it could have grown into some kind of military confrontation, and then everything would have been destroyed. (Interview 002, Rustem Skibin)

In the mainland, Skibin has remained active in creating and promoting traditional Crimean Tatar crafts, still focusing primarily on the colorfully painted ceramics that have become his signature. His ceramic plates, decorated in a variety of traditional and unique styles, are extremely popular among Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainians alike, sold in shops around Kyiv and other cities—including the specialty Crimean Tatar arts and craft shop *Sandiq*, which opened in central Kyiv in 2015—or directly from his studio or website. Skibin’s plates were the must-have items for



many of the Crimean Tatar IDPs I interacted with; I saw them decorating homes and businesses or given away as prizes and gifts frequently throughout my fieldwork, inspiring me to bring several home for myself and for my family.



**Figure 27:** Ceramic artist Rustem Skibin displaying one of his decorative plates in his Kyiv studio, and giving a pottery demonstration at a Crimean Tatar cultural event in September 2015. (Photos by author)

Beyond the lucrative business of selling his own work, Skibin is also active in educating people about Crimean Tatar artistic traditions, and often appears at events and festivals with his traditional hand-powered pottery wheel to help children create their own small ceramic items (Figure 27). He has also been involved with many public arts projects, painting murals that incorporate traditional Crimean Tatar styles and imagery in a variety of cities across mainland Ukraine, thus helping Crimean Tatar-ness penetrate deeper into Ukraine's cultural landscapes and Ukrainians' social consciousness. Above all, Skibin told me that his goal is to help preserve

the vitality and authenticity of Crimean Tatar national culture and identity while his people once again come under threat in their homeland; but as he explained to me, Crimean Tatar-ness is a multifaceted concept with many components that all demand preservation and development:

We have these different links that tie us together; one link is medicine, another is our land, our religion, our mindset, our language, our folklore, our material culture, our architecture. They are all connected, they cannot be separated. If one disappears, then the whole chain breaks apart. We need to preserve all of it, and I don't see one priority in all of this. What is most important? It seems that our land is most important. If we are outside of Crimea, we don't see the mountains, we don't see the forest, the landscape, the soil, the sea. Without this we will disappear. But if we are there and we don't have our ornaments, if we don't have our clothing and our utensils, then we aren't Crimean Tatars either. (Interview 002, Rustem Skibin)

### *Innovating and Evolving Crimean Tatar-ness*

While traditionalists like Karikov and Skibin are involved in the important work of preserving and perpetuating “authentic” elements of Crimean Tatar-ness in mainland Ukraine, others within the community of Crimean Tatar IDPs are combining traditional elements of their national culture with contemporary styles and aesthetics, creating bold new expressions of Crimean Tatar-ness and pushing its normally conservative cultural boundaries. Unsurprisingly, it is the Crimean Tatar youth—members of the first post-Soviet generation—who are leading this small cultural revolution. One such “revolutionary” is Sevilya Ibragimova, a young graphic designer living in Kyiv who has begun recreating traditional elements of Crimean Tatar visual art in modern, graphic styles. She informed me that she has a strong background in the traditional styles and techniques of Crimean Tatar art, having learned from Rustem Skibin himself:

In general, my love for Crimean Tatar art started when I lived in Crimea, when I was studying in school and worked with [Rustem Skibin], I painted plates in his workshop. (...) I earned money painting plates, and we interacted at the same time. I only painted the mini plates; there are different sizes, and nobody wanted to paint the mini ones because it is painstaking work. I took on the mini plates myself, so everybody used to call me the Queen of Mini Plates. (...) I painted

there every summer, and that's where he taught me about Crimean Tatar ornaments, about their language and meaning, their symbolism. Later, when I started working separately on my own projects, I always came back to this, and it helped me work through things easily. So, I owe him a big thanks for teaching me everything when I was little. (Interview 091, Sevilya Ibragimova)

But as much as she appreciated the traditions of her national culture, Ibragimova was interested in contemporary art and design, and felt inhibited by the rigid adherence to tradition that informs much Crimean Tatar art. "I think tradition is what it is, it's good, but the world is changing, and we need to keep up with the times," she told me, adding that

We should never forget our traditions, we should always hold them up, but at the same time, we shouldn't forget that it's worth creating new things. Otherwise, there will be a point at which everything stops, the world moves forward and everything's left behind, it isn't interesting to anybody. That's why it's better to modernize as much as possible. But people are all different, for some it's fine to just preserve traditions in their family. But all the same, people are more contemporary, the world keeps moving forward, and we can't escape that. The world moves incredibly fast, and there are so many interesting things. If you stay in one spot, at the very least it will be boring. (Interview 091, Sevilya Ibragimova)

Ibragimova's biggest project to date, which she described to me as "the offspring of my love for both design and Crimean Tatars," was the release of a graphic book structured around the letters of the Crimean Tatar alphabet, intended as a broad introduction to the language, culture, and history of the Crimean Tatar people, with information in Crimean Tatar, Russian, and English languages. The book, entitled *Selâmaleyküm*, began as the final project for Ibragimova's degree in graphic design, but once it was complete she felt compelled to share it with a wider audience in order to bring attention to the Crimean Tatar national language and culture (Figure 28). A onetime employee at ATR, Ibragimova convinced owner Lenur Isliamov to fund the publication and distribution of the book, and it appeared to much fanfare in September 2016 in a run of 1,000 copies. Ibragimova explained to me how the project came about:

I decided not to waste my time on some boring project, but rather to do something that will be useful in the future, and not just for myself. I wanted something that would be interesting for me to do, but also that would be interesting for other people to see. And of course, I picked a Crimean Tatar topic, because there are so few quality products made about Crimean Tatar topics. (...) There is the very sensitive question now about knowledge of our language; I myself know Crimean Tatar really poorly, and so an alphabet book was a big motivator for me to study it at least at a basic level. So, I chose to make an alphabet book, and not to just make it boring or something that would only appeal to Crimean Tatars, but to make it interesting to everybody, to Ukrainians and any other national group. That's why I made it in three languages, so it would be accessible to everybody. I also wanted to make it not just an alphabet book, but to include certain elements that would make it a small introduction to the culture and ethnicity of Crimean Tatars. (Interview 091, Sevilya Ibragimova)



**Figure 28:** Author and graphic designer Sevilya Ibragimova discusses her Crimean Tatar alphabet book, *Selâmaleyküm*, upon its release in September 2016. (Photo source: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/news/28024859.html>)

The book is filled with small, charming graphics depicting words and concepts beginning with every letter of the Latinized Crimean Tatar alphabet, and which pertain to different aspects of Crimean Tatar culture or history. For example, under the letter “Ç,” readers learn the words *çiberek*, *çöl*, and *çoban*, translating to *cheburek*—the famous Crimean Tatar meat pies—*steppe*,



and *shepherd*, respectively. Interspersed between these vocabulary lessons are historical photos and short texts providing additional information about the depicted words and concepts.

Although the book is meant to educate people about Crimean Tatar heritage and traditions, it is presented in a chic, contemporary style with broad appeal. Ibragimova was initially concerned that her work would displease those traditionalists who shun the incorporation of modern styles into Crimean Tatar art, but *Selâmaleykiim* nevertheless earned the approval of the modern godfather of Crimean Tatar artistic traditions:

Do you know Mamut Churlu? He first started the revival of Crimean Tatar traditional art. He was Rustem Skibin's teacher, and he categorically opposes any kind of modernization of Crimean Tatar culture. But I don't agree with him. When I was painting [at Skibin's studio], he would always correct me and tell me not to do it a certain way. When he saw my book, I thought that he would be critical, just furious about it [*prosto* "vyshhe kryshi"], but he said, "well, given my position, I still like this." This was the highest praise I ever got from him. (Interview 091, Sevilya Ibragimova)

With both traditional and innovative new representations of Crimean Tatar-ness being created in Kyiv, the community of internally displaced Crimean Tatars is proving a remarkably vital force in both the preservation and transformation of their national culture and identity while these things come under continual threat in Crimea.

Pushing the boundaries of Crimean Tatar-ness to new extremes is the Kyiv-based band, *Shatur Gudur*, who proudly bill themselves as the world's first Crimean Tatar punk band. Longtime fans of western punk, grunge, and rock music, the band's core members—brothers Dzhemil and Suleyman Mamutov—first started writing, adapting, and recording punk songs in the Crimean Tatar language in Simferopol in 2007, the same year Suleyman moved to Kyiv to attend university. Split between the two cities, the band continued playing and recording songs casually and periodically before Dzhemil relocated to Kyiv himself after the annexation in 2014. Both living in the same city again, the brothers recruited new members and began practicing

more regularly, and it wasn't long before they started attracting attention (Figure 29). The brothers made it clear to me that they are not trying to capitalize on the recent popularity of Crimean Tatar culture in Ukraine, but that this has brought them attention nevertheless:

AC: After the annexation of Crimea, after this new political situation began, do you think that singing in Crimean Tatar or presenting yourselves as a Crimean Tatar group has become more important in Ukraine?

DM: Like, a trend?

AC: Yeah, as I understand it, Crimean Tatars have become more visible.

DM: I think it's only thanks to this that they started calling us for concerts!

SM: *Shatur Gudur* itself hasn't adjusted to this, it happened naturally.

DM: We only had recordings, we never played concerts. We only did a couple shows before the annexation.

AC: After Crimean Tatars became more popular, did you then decide that you should play more concerts?

DM: We just played on our own, and they started calling us. That's the differences, we never called anybody.

SM: A lot of interest in Crimea just arose in the mainland for the first time after the events of March 2014, so that's why they started seeking us out.

DM: So, maybe if the referendum had never happened, we wouldn't be sitting here today. (Interview 071, Dzhemil and Suleyman Mamutov)



**Figure 29:** Crimean Tatar punk band *Shatur Gudur* performs in September 2018 at the "Crimean House" Cultural Center in Kyiv, featuring Dzhemil Mamutov (Right, on bass) and his brother Suleyman (second from right, on drums). (Photo by author)

Embracing a punk-rock ethos as much as an aesthetic, *Shatur Gudur*—which roughly translates from Crimean Tatar as “hustle and bustle”—reject the notion that Crimean Tatar culture should cling to tradition, instead infusing its linguistic and aural elements with the modern musical styles they grew up listening to, creating a hybrid sound that band members refer to as “ethno-punk.” *Shatur Gudur* is certainly novel when compared to the more common and traditionally conservative elements of Crimean Tatar culture, but as elder brother Dzhemil explained to me, the band’s goal is not to be confrontational, but rather to make up for the fact that Crimean Tatar culture was severely stunted for many decades due to the deportation and Russian/Soviet cultural policies. While artists like Karikov and Skibin seek to recover aspects of Crimean Tatar culture that were lost, *Shatur Gudur* imagine what Crimean Tatar-ness could have become:

If it had not been for the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, then there would have already been groups like *Shatur Gudur* and nobody would have thought anything of it, at least ideally. There was a great reserve of culture that was just cut out of our people’s development when we were in Uzbekistan, after the deportation people just tried to preserve what they had, they really didn’t develop anything new. Take Turkey for example, they had rock music in the 1960s, and alongside their rock music they were developing folk music too, and Crimean Tatars were deprived of all that. So, I don’t concentrate on the things we were deprived of, I just try to make a [musical] product as if there had never been a deportation, as if there had already been such punk rock. (Interview 071, Dzhemil Mamutov)

Dzhemil further argued that a lot of modern music—especially music made by Crimean Tatars—is either stagnantly traditionalist or banally nondescript in its cultural origins, and advocated for a middle ground where music is both progressive and mindful of the cultural heritage from which it and its creators are born:

We use a lot of different elements in our music, but five of our songs are folk songs, to show that all music—even punk rock—comes from folk traditions regardless of trends and things like that. It’s the same with blues, with country music, it was all folk music at some point, and then it became popular. On the other hand, “popular” music doesn’t mean that it isn’t folk music, because we can

find folk elements in all these styles. And what is happening now within Crimean Tatar culture, all the new songs are rarely connected with folk tradition—there are either traditional folk songs or just popular dance songs, nothing transfers over. Again, if we look to the example of Turkish music, they have rock, pop, and rap that all incorporates ethnic motifs. This is popular music, it's mainstream, but it is fundamentally folk music. This is what we are trying to do. (Interview 071, Dzhemil Mamutov)

As such, *Shatur Gudur* push back against the orthodox expectations of how Crimean Tatar-ness should be presented, both in their music and in the way they perform it. Before a highly anticipated concert at a Kyiv nightclub in April 2016, producers from ATR—who were planning to film and later broadcast the concert—requested that *Shatur Gudur* hang a Crimean Tatar national flag behind them on stage, but the band refused to comply. The flag—which features the national emblem known as the *tamga* in yellow against a light blue background—is ubiquitous at all Crimean Tatar social, cultural, and political events, but *Shatur Gudur* rejected the expectation that their performance be branded as an explicitly Crimean Tatar event:

DM: If we stood beneath the Crimean Tatar flag, that means that we are obliged to demonstrate some kind of traditional markings of our culture and our people, but punk rock is completely untraditional, it is a form of personal self-expression, and it doesn't have any kind of relationship to a flag. Language—yes, absolutely. In that case we should have hung an American flag, or a British flag. They played a role in punk rock.

SM: Sometimes [displaying the flag] is like showing off. If this had been at some international scale, then we might have wanted to highlight our national identity. But in cases where there are a lot of Crimean Tatars in attendance and everybody knows who we are and what we are doing, it's just redundant. There are always lots of other venues for us to display our national identity, express our national views, but we want to keep our music a neutral venue, just leave it as it is.

DM: We are not fostering a feeling of patriotism, we are asking more questions. (Interview 071, Dzhemil and Suleyman Mamutov)

As the members of *Shatur Gudur* see it, creating opportunities for Crimean Tatar-ness to progress, develop, and diversify in this way is crucial to the health and vitality of the Crimean Tatar nation; but while Crimea remains occupied and expression of national identity there



restricted, it is now in mainland Ukraine where Crimean Tatar-ness truly has the opportunity to develop as such:

I think that more than anything else, Ukraine provides certain conditions for the free development of Crimean Tatar culture and maybe the Crimean Tatar people in general, while there are a lot of obstacles to this in Crimea because of what has happened there. This can't be denied, no matter how much the Russian authorities say that they have given the people some privileges. (Interview 071, Dzhemil Mamutov)

As Mamutov and several others suggest, members of the Crimean Tatar IDP community in mainland Ukraine have rapidly ascended to the vanguard of Crimean Tatar politics, media, and culture—with Kyiv and, to a lesser extent, Lviv as their two centers. On the one hand, this is rather remarkable considering that the population of Crimean Tatars in these two cities was fairly minuscule before 2014, and swelled in just a matter of months with the beginning of the occupation of Crimea. With a population somewhere in the order of only tens of thousands, Crimean Tatar IDPs remain a relatively small community even today, making their recent influence and achievements all the more impressive. On the other hand, as I argue in Chapter Four, it was in large part the Crimean *intelligentsia* who fled the region with the arrival of Russian occupiers, and thus the Crimean Tatars' political, social, cultural, and entrepreneurial elites are now disproportionately concentrated in the mainland. As I outlined here with several prominent examples, this pattern of internal displacement has resulted in a rather “thick” assemblage of institutions (Amin and Thrift 1994) embodying Crimean Tatar-ness in mainland Ukraine, including political organizations, media outlets, educational and awareness campaigns, restaurants and cafes, and cultural representations both traditional and progressive.

By comparison, the institutionalization of Crimean-ness in mainland Ukraine is rather “thin,” despite the fact that the population of Slavic Crimean IDPs—while not known precisely—is comparable in size to their Crimean Tatar counterparts and similarly composed of

the so-called Crimean *intelligentsia*. The thin-ness of institutionalized Crimean-ness compared to institutionalized Crimean Tatar-ness reflects the relative dearth of historical, cultural, and material substance at the foundation of Crimean-ness, which I addressed earlier in this chapter. While Crimean Tatars are equipped with all the trappings of ethnicity that both distinguish them from other Ukrainian citizens and anchor their collective belonging to Crimea, Slavic Crimeans have little to show for their Crimean-ness beyond their entangled emotional connections to people, places, events, and things in Crimea. By no means do I seek to diminish the importance of these connections or the very real sense of regional identity that Crimean-ness fosters; but there are few opportunities to replicate, perform, memorialize, or translate these connections into institutional forms outside of Crimea. However “thin,” Crimean-ness has nevertheless taken institutional form in mainland Ukraine, but examples are much fewer and farther between, and Crimean-ness in fact proves difficult to sustain in institutional forms without leaning on elements of Crimean Tatar-ness.

### **Preserving Crimean-ness in Mainland Ukraine**

Among the many Crimean IDPs who may be considered part of the regional *intelligentsia*, journalists are particularly well represented. This is no coincidence given the abysmal state of journalism in occupied Crimea, where Russian authorities have threatened, pressured, and arrested numerous journalists who refuse to toe the party line, and have forced the closure of most news and media outlets in the region. Crimean journalists have continued working in the mainland at a variety of outlets, but one outlet has emerged as the leading source of news by Crimeans and for Crimeans—*Krym.Realii*, meaning “Crimea.Realities.” A subsidiary news portal of the Ukrainian edition of the US-funded news agency Radio Free Europe/Radio

Liberty, *Krym.Realii* was created immediately after the occupation of Crimea began, tasked with keeping readers informed of the troubling events unfolding in the region. It has since expanded into a sprawling and comprehensive online news sources devoted exclusively to issues relating to Crimea and Crimeans, with editions in Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar. While ATR has continued as an extremely popular source of news and entertainment for Crimean Tatar IDPs and some Slavic Crimean IDPs, *Krym.Realii* has emerged as the leading, authoritative source for all news concerning events in Crimea and among the internally displaced. According to survey results, 67.6% of all respondents indicated that they look to *Krym.Realii* for news about Crimea and Ukraine—far higher than any other major news source included in the question—with results from each ethnic subgroup ranging between 60 and 70%.

*Krym.Realii*'s editor-in-chief, Volodymyr Pritula, had been a long-time correspondent for the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Ukrainian and Russian language services, reporting on Crimea from his home base in Sevastopol for over 20 years. Pritula—an ethnic Ukrainian originally from the Volyn region of northwestern Ukraine—explained to me the origins of *Krym.Realii*:

When the annexation began, it was clear that interest in Crimea was very high, and the management of [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty] made a decision; problems were already starting to emerge for journalists in Crimea, and anticipating this, the management decided to create a separate project or resource specifically for Crimeans. We immediately made the political decision that if we were going to create this site, it would be in three languages [Ukrainian, Russian, and Crimean Tatar]. At first, we thought that it would be one site but with different material in the various languages, but then we decided that it would be three different sites. We already started working in March [2014], and by the end of March or early April it was already working at full-steam. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

Initially, *Krym.Realii* operated directly from Crimea, with only a couple of journalists working from Kyiv. But pressure from the local authorities quickly grew too strong, and after a few

months the decision was made to relocate most of the staff to Kyiv, leaving behind only a few journalists who continued reporting from the occupied region under false names for their own protection:

We understood that the authorities and local “self-defense” units in Crimea were exerting pressure on us and threatening us. The FSB started collecting information about us, confronting our journalists, taking them in for questioning, denying them access to different events, and arresting them. We made the decision to remove the editorial staff from Crimea, so that the editors who worked directly with journalists were not located within Crimea, because some of the journalists were already in an illegal position. They worked only under pseudonyms and hid the fact that they work for *Krym.Realii*. We also made the decision to relocate all the editors to ensure that the authorities couldn’t come to their homes and take their computers with all their contacts. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

Now operating out of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s offices in the very heart of central Kyiv, *Krym.Realii* continues to provide news, opinion, and analysis on all topics concerning events and developments in Crimea itself, and those involving Crimeans who have been displaced to the Ukrainian mainland or elsewhere (Figure 30). In line with the guiding principle of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to provide news and information to residents of states where access to such uncensored information is restricted, Pritula explained that *Krym.Realii* is intended primarily for readers in Crimea, however vital it has become to those outside the region:

We created *Krym.Realii* not just as a resource *about* Crimea. We know that most of our readers are outside of Crimea, unfortunately, and we would like for that to be the other way around, with more readers in Crimea. We created it *for* Crimea, as an alternative source of information for Crimea and for Crimeans. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

Crucially, the editorial and reporting staff of *Krym.Realii* is made up almost entirely of people from Crimea, including those who have been internally displaced and those who continue reporting from Crimea under pseudonyms. Pritula told me that *Krym.Realii* maintains a proactive

policy of intentionally hiring Crimeans in order to provide the most highly informed perspectives:

Practically all our journalists are from Crimea. We only have maybe two or three who are not from Crimea, and we have around 30 people who are now located in Kyiv or in other Ukrainian cities—we have two Crimean journalists in Lviv, in Kherson, in Henichesk. There are a couple non-Crimeans who do our social media and marketing, and one of the editors of our Ukrainian language site is from the Donbas. We choose Crimeans specifically. In the beginning we only hired people from Crimea because we understood that we might not get enough specialists, so if there was a choice between a Crimean and a non-Crimean, we would choose the Crimean. But if there is no choice, we'll take a non-Crimean. This was done on principle, so that we could feel we know and understand the whole situation, because there are not a lot of people who are familiar with Crimea's situation and what goes on in Crimea. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)



**Figure 30:** *Krym.Realii* editor-in-chief, Volodymyr Pritula (left), and video blogger Pavel Kazarin (right). Both men are IDPs from Crimea. (Photo sources: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/donbass-realii/29509116.html> and <https://ru.krymr.com/a/video/29336635.html>)

Striving for comprehensive coverage of all things Crimean, *Krym.Realii* is an indispensable resource for Crimean IDPs looking to stay informed about events and developments both back home in Crimea and within the Crimean IDP community, making it a foundational institutional pillar of Crimean-ness in mainland Ukraine. Unlike ATR or QHA, which focus specifically on issues pertaining to the Crimean Tatar community, *Krym.Realii* reports on matters concerning Crimeans of all ethnic backgrounds, thereby promoting a broad

and inclusive sense of Crimean-ness among its Crimean readership. With services in the Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar languages, and reporters, opinion writers, and bloggers from each of Crimea's main ethnic groups covering a wide spectrum of topics, *Krym.Realii* is a locus of all things Crimean and a paragon of Crimean-ness planted in the Ukrainian mainland. Reflected in this inclusiveness is the point I made previously in this chapter—that a commitment to bolstering Crimea's Ukrainian-ness and maintaining an active political stance against the occupation of Crimea are the issues around which Crimean IDPs of all ethnic backgrounds come together, and through which they may relate to one another as a multiethnic Crimean conglomerate. However, as Pritula noted to me, issues relating specifically to Crimean Tatars often take precedence in *Krym.Realii*'s reporting, both organically and intentionally:

We try to write about the problems of people of different nationalities, without paying attention to their ethnic background. But we see now that Crimean Tatars organizes themselves around their own ethnic principles and are actually persecuted because of their ethnic principles. So, we do pay attention to this. If, for example, there are problems in Crimea with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchy, then we will write about this—we have written a lot and will continue to write about it. But if Crimean Tatars are very active in their endeavors in Crimea, and if their leaders are active outside of Crimea, then we should write about this too, especially if nobody else will write about this, because [Crimea] is their homeland. We need to write about this, because all the mass media writes about the problems of Ukrainians. If we don't write about Crimean Tatars, then practically nobody else will. In any case, we consider this a priority, insofar as Crimea is the homeland of Crimean Tatars and they are very active, not to mention the fact that they provide so much material to report about. Even if we didn't specifically prioritize Crimean Tatar issues, they give us so much to write about. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

Thus, although *Krym.Realii* is often the last word in news and information related to Crimea in the broadest sense, the unique characteristics and attendant struggles of the Crimean Tatar community generally propel them to the forefront of the service's reporting, again reflecting the depth and stability of Crimean Tatar-ness as a Crimea-centric way of identifying relative to the more tenuous sense of generic Crimean-ness.

The differences between Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness are perhaps highlighted nowhere better than in the restaurants and cafes opened by Crimean IDPs in mainland Ukraine. Crimean Tatars possess a distinctive culinary tradition that Ukrainians already associate with Crimea, and since the beginning of the occupation Crimean Tatar entrepreneurs have opened at least a dozen eateries in mainland Ukraine ranging from market stalls to expansive restaurants, bringing their national cuisine to a receptive and supportive Ukrainian audience. Besides certain foods produced in and similarly associated with the region—such as wine, nuts, and fruits, for example—there is virtually no culinary culture associated with Crimea that is not linked to Crimean Tatars or other indigenous peoples of the region, making generically Crimean eateries a vague and flimsy concept. Nevertheless, at least one eatery opened by Crimean IDPs presents itself specifically as “Crimean” rather than Crimean Tatar—Lviv’s *Kryms’ka Perepichka*, or “Crimean Pastry.” Located in a quiet, recently-developed residential neighborhood far from the Lviv city center, *Kryms’ka Perepichka* opened in 2015, over a year after owner Oksana Novikova relocated to Lviv from Simferopol along with her family and several friends. In Lviv, Novikova was initially involved in activism and providing assistance to other IDPs, co-founding the short-lived NGO *Kryms’ka Khvilia*—or “Crimean Wave”—along with two other Crimean IDPs upon her arrival in Lviv. An avid baker who had run a business delivering confectionary ingredients to bakeries and cafes in Crimea, Novikova and her family decided to open a bakery of their own in Lviv where they could experiment with innovative recipes and baking techniques while highlight their Crimean roots. Over coffee and pastries, Novikova told me of the bakery’s origins:

In Crimea we had thought about opening some kind of small coffee and confectionary shop that would be like a laboratory, something for our customers, something we could show off. We had a small closed “laboratory” of our own, and we wanted to open something more, but we weren’t successful in Crimea. But

here we wanted a place not just for show, but a place to make confectionaries that are both beautiful and delicious. There is a wide variety of this in Lviv, but we wanted to bring our own identity into our shop, to tell the people of Lviv about it, and to share it with the people who live in this “bedroom community,” because we are far from the city center and we have our regular customers here. We made it so that the people who come here as guests feel like they are visiting friends at a family establishment. (Interview 059, Oksana Novikova)

While a bit inconvenient to reach from most parts of Lviv, *Kryms'ka Perepichka* offers customers a comfortable, airy, and laidback atmosphere conducive to conversation and family outings, even featuring a children's play area. In a city famous for its coffee and café culture, *Kryms'ka Perepichka* opened in a rather crowded market, but a distinctly Crimean atmosphere and theme distinguishes it from Lviv's many other cafes and bakeries. The bakery features a shelf loaded with books about Crimea and scenic images from the peninsula adorning its walls, placed alongside its trademark decoration—a large map of Crimea rendered in yellow and blue thread strung between nails on a wooden board, emblazoned with the phrase “Crimea is Ukraine” in Ukrainian (Figure 31). As Novikov explained, she and her family strive to share their Crimean-ness with their curious customers—most of whom live nearby—and to create a space for their fellow Crimean IDPs to meet, gather, and feel a sense of home:

ON: Some people think that some things here are just a marketing ploy, but we explain that we are really from Crimea, and this interests people. We have a Facebook page where we sometimes make posts on political topics [related to Crimea]. We have books about Crimea, a few of the locals have even brought us some books about Crimea or from Crimea. We set an ambitious goal for ourselves—I hope we have the strength and ability—to hold exhibitions here and to be a place for Crimeans to periodically come and meet with each other. Just yesterday, for example, our friends came in and brought some of their friends who had just arrived a few months ago from Crimea, from Yalta. They first went to Kyiv, but now they are planning to move to Lviv. They came in, we got acquainted, and they were wonderful people. (...) Sometimes [Crimeans] come and want to talk about different topics, although this depends on the person and their mood; some just want to come and complain to us, but some absolutely share positive things with each other. A lot of people have come from Sevastopol, some live nearby. Life goes on here either way. Some Crimeans just come to visit, they live in Crimea, but come to breathe the air of freedom and just walk around.



AC: It's like a little corner of Crimea here.

ON: Yes, for us it is. (Interview 059, Oksana Novikova)

Other Crimean IDPs I spoke with in Lviv agreed that *Kryms'ka Perepichka* is a special place that serves as a reminder of home and a space of respite when the realities of life as an internally displaced person weigh on them, especially for Slavic Crimeans. As one ethnic Russian IDP from Sevastopol told me,

There are Crimean Tatar cafes, and there is one café that is simply Crimean where I like to go, *Kryms'ka Perepichka*. I go there and feel as if I am home just a little bit. They create this certain atmosphere there, it's like you enter some kind of club, some organization where we gather, share some things, and support our traditions. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)



**Figure 31:** Interior of Lviv's *Kryms'ka Perepichka* bakery and cafe, featuring a large outline of Crimea that reads, in Ukrainian, "Crimea is Ukraine." (Photo by author)

But while *Kryms'ka Perepichka* has been successful in creating an atmosphere that is reminiscent of and conducive to a general feeling of Crimean-ness, it is trickier to represent Crimea through their baked goods. The bakery offers a wide selection of breads, pies, cakes, and pastries both sweet and savory, few of which can be said to be inherently “Crimean.” Alongside classics like tiramisu, eclairs, Napoleon cake, and the honey-infused cake known as *medovik* that was a staple of Soviet baking, *Kryms'ka Perepichka* features a variety of innovative creations to which the owners have given distinctly Crimean names, but which have no connection to Crimea otherwise. Examples I saw during one of my visits to the bakery included a chocolate and banana cake named “Crimean Breeze,” a layered biscuit and cream confectionary named “Tavrida” after the old Russian name for Crimea, and a cake featuring nuts and dried fruits named “Ai-Petri,” after the famed mountain that looms over the beachside resort of Alupka, not far from Yalta. Their only offerings that may be considered authentically Crimean are those borrowed from the traditions of Crimean Tatars and other indigenous peoples of Crimea—including Karaite hand pies filled with meat and onions, the Crimean Tatar staple *kobete* similarly featuring meat, onion, and potato stuffed inside a bread shell (Figure 32), and the Crimean Tatar take on baklava known as *pakhlava*, made from a knot of layered and fried dough saturated with honey.

*Kryms'ka Perepichka* is rather exemplary in successfully creating a space of Crimean-ness in mainland Ukraine; while there are hardly any tangible or otherwise recognizable cultural elements through which Crimean-ness may be performed or communicated, *Kryms'ka Perepichka* has managed to portray and embody Crimean-ness in a way that is both alluring to Ukrainian customers and recognizable to Crimeans themselves. Mainland Ukraine now features many such institutionalized representations of Crimean Tatar-ness, where Crimean Tatars display and perform the things that make them different from other Ukrainian citizens and which

connect them indelibly to Crimea. With little to distinguish Slavic Crimeans from other Ukrainians aside from their strong sense of place, Crimean-ness proves difficult to reproduce or demonstrate without relying on some trappings of Crimean Tatar-ness, as *Kryms'ka Perepichka* has done with their offerings of baked goods and confectionaries. Aside from authentically Crimean Tatar and Karaite pastries, the owners of *Kryms'ka Perepichka* have merely branded their offerings with names reminiscent of Crimea, inventing new representations of Crimean-ness for their customers' consumption. I do not mean to criticize such practices, nor to diminish Crimean-ness as somehow artificial or illegitimate; I argue only that the repertoire of Crimean-ness is rather scant, with little for Slavic Crimeans to hold up as representative of their regional identity without drawing from the far larger and distinctive repertoire of Crimean Tatar-ness. This substantive disparity between Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness can explain why the latter has taken a much “thicker” institutional form in mainland Ukraine compared to the former.



**Figure 32:** Crimean Tatar and Karaite savory pies available at *Kryms'ka Perepichka*. (Photo by author)

## Conclusions

Regional identities are indeed strong among Crimeans of all ethnic backgrounds; this was the conclusion I drew from my previous work in Crimea, and I further conclude that being from Crimea remains a crucial component of the way Crimean IDPs identify in mainland Ukraine. However, it is imperative to acknowledge key differences in how Crimean regional identity is constructed and what Crimea means to the region's different ethnic communities. To this end, I denote two fundamental types of Crimean regional identity. Crimean Tatar-ness represents the sum of cultural and historical elements that distinguish and unite Crimean Tatars around a common national identity, which includes, first and foremost, their collective sense of belonging to the Crimean Peninsula. While Crimean Tatar-ness is a concept exclusive to Crimean Tatars by definition, Crimean-ness is a much broader and more inclusive mode of identifying that is rooted in a sense of place attachment and in the emotional meanings that Crimea embodies for those who profess a sense of belonging to the region. Generally speaking, Crimean-ness defines the sense of regional identity claimed and experienced by ethnic Russian and Ukrainian Crimeans; but insofar as they too have developed personal attachments to people, places, and things in Crimea that do not necessarily align with their national identity, Crimean Tatars may also be said to experience general Crimean-ness alongside Crimean Tatar-ness. Both concepts define a sense of identity rooted territorially within Crimea, but because collective belonging to Crimea is deeply encoded into discourses of Crimean Tatar national identity, Crimean Tatar-ness represents a way of identifying that is both territorial and ethno-national.

Because Crimean Tatar-ness is an ethno-national form of identity as much as it is territorial, it is something passed down to and instilled in Crimean Tatar children whether or not they were born in Crimea itself, thus making Crimean Tatars' sense of collective belonging to

Crimea inter-generational. Evidence of this inter-generational connection can be seen in the fact that subsequent generations of Crimean Tatars born in exile after the 1944 deportation maintained a steadfast commitment to returning to the homeland of their elders and forbearers over the course of nearly 50 years. Moreover, this previous experience of deportation, exile, and return suggests that Crimean Tatar-ness and a commitment to returning to Crimea—a *Ukrainian* Crimea—will likely endure and withstand the forces of cultural assimilation for as long as Crimea remains occupied and Crimean Tatars remain internally displaced. Crimean-ness, on the other hand, denotes a sense of personal rather than collective attachment to Crimea that generally cannot be passed down between generations, especially among the displaced whose direct physical and material connections to Crimea have been severed. Compared to Crimean Tatar-ness, Crimean-ness is thus a more tenuous and potentially fleeting sense of identity, and with time it may dissolve away as a marker of difference for internally displaced Slavic Crimeans, who possess few if any distinctive cultural attributes that may withstand the erosive forces of assimilation.

Where Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness find common ground in mainland Ukraine is in the insistence that Crimea is a part of Ukraine, and in a resounding rejection and condemnation of the Russian occupation. Crimean IDPs of all ethnic backgrounds maintain a strong sense of solidarity on this political front, but elsewhere Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness generally diverge and are separately preserved, performed, and institutionalized. With a diverse assemblage of political, social, and cultural organizations and establishments that mobilize distinctive elements of Crimean Tatars' national identity, Crimean Tatar-ness has rapidly developed an institutionally "thick" presence in mainland Ukraine that will likely help it endure as a distinctive way of identifying. With few such tangible or marketable components of

identity to mobilize, Crimean-ness has developed a much “thinner” institutional foundation in mainland Ukraine, and where institutions of Crimean-ness do exist they are frequently bolstered by elements of Crimean Tatar-ness. This institutional disparity mirrors the strength and staying power of Crimean Tatar-ness when contrasted with the relatively flimsy concept of Crimean-ness, and lends credence to my argument that internally displaced Crimean Tatars are likely to resist assimilation and cling to Crimea much more tenaciously than internally displaced Slavic Crimeans.

I have thus far addressed how Crimean IDPs feel at once part of a unified Ukrainian political nation and simultaneously distinct from other Ukrainians in profound and diverse ways related to their Crimean origins. These seemingly contradictory senses of territorial and collective belonging—i.e., Ukrainian-ness on the one and Crimean-ness or Crimean Tatar-ness on the other—may be organized into hierarchical notions of “nested” identity scaled from the regional to the national (Herb and Kaplan 1999). However, the experience of internal migration and displacement, and the resulting interface between different modes of identifying, can produce a certain friction between a sense of being both in place and out of place, between inclusion and exclusion. In the following section, I address this interface between Ukrainian-ness and Crimean-ness/Crimean Tatar-ness, and discuss how the resulting friction produces an experience that is distinctly *diasporic*.

## **SECTION III: TRACING A DIASPORIC CONDITION**

### **Chapter Seven: Crimean IDPs and Diaspora's "Ideal Types"**

I have thus far demonstrated how Crimean IDPs profess and perform socio-spatial identities that are simultaneously rooted at both regional and national territorial scales, embodying diverse notions of Crimean-ness and/or Crimean Tatar-ness alongside increasingly civic-minded understandings of Ukrainian-ness. Although it has generally been accepted since the 2014 annexation that a majority of Crimeans feel a much stronger affinity for Russia than for Ukraine, many nonetheless feel a distinctive sense of Ukrainian-ness imbricated with parallel senses of belonging to Crimea. Insofar as it involves different notions of territorial belonging divided between a nation-state and a sub-state region, this paradigm fits comfortably within the rubric of "nested identities," wherein identities rooted in place and territory are ordered in scalar hierarchies ranging from the local and/or regional to the (supra)national (Herb and Kaplan 1999).

But if Crimean and Ukrainian identities once coexisted harmoniously within a scaled hierarchy mirroring the territorial administrative structure of Ukraine itself, their relationship has been thrown into dissonance with the Russian annexation of Crimea, both for those who have been displaced to the Ukrainian mainland and those who remain in Crimea but continue to identify as Ukrainians. For some IDPs, attitudes towards Crimea and especially its people have soured in response to the developments surrounding the annexation, and being from Crimea now carries additional political and emotional baggage. The act of internal migration and the everyday realities of displacement further complicate the relationship between Ukrainian-ness and Crimean-ness/Crimean Tatar-ness, upsetting the "nested" territorial order in which Crimean

IDPs were previously emplaced. What's more, this order is thrown further out of alignment by the fact that Crimea is *de facto* no longer a part of Ukraine; no matter how strongly Crimean IDPs insist or international law confirms that Crimea remains a part of Ukraine's territory, Russia is firmly in control of the region and has erected an international border where once a narrow strip of land was all that stood between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland.

A new framework is needed to make sense of Crimean IDPs' socio-spatial identities as they pertain to the relationship between Ukrainian-ness on the one hand and Crimean-ness/Crimean Tatar-ness on the other. Displaced from the region to which most feel a strong sense of belonging but remaining within the state of which they are proud citizens and patriots, Crimean IDPs are collectively suspended between states of exile and belonging, feeling as though they are simultaneously *in place* and *out of place*. Born from the tension between these two discourses of belonging, I argue, are identities and experiences that are fundamentally *diasporic*, although invoking diaspora as an analytical framework for understanding the identities of Crimean IDPs is nevertheless counterintuitive and controversial. The suggestion that Crimean IDPs constitute anything resembling a diaspora may be easily dismissed by the simple fact that they are, according to their own understanding, *internally* displaced, having never left the country they call home even as their native region is effectively enveloped by a foreign country. Diaspora can certainly be a slippery concept in its own right, but one nearly universal assertion or assumption is that diasporas are inherently transnational, appearing only outside of a migrant community's country of origin.

By invoking diaspora to explain discourses of socio-spatial identity among Crimean IDPs, I situate this study within the growing body of literature aimed at promoting *translocality* as an alternative paradigm to transnationalism, which is largely constrained by a fixation on



spatialities of nation-states and movement between them—a byproduct of the so-called “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994). Following Oakes and Schein (2006), Freitag and von Oppen (2010a), and Brickell and Datta (2016), translocality concerns the movement and circulation of people, goods, capital, and information between and among fixed locations without privileging those journeys that cross international borders. Where human migration is concerned, translocality gives equal weight and validity to the cross-cultural encounters and hybrid identities produced through both *internal* and *international* migration, and recognizes that migratory experiences are frequently shaped by both types of journeys (King and Skeldon 2010; Kalir 2013). While theories of translocality have made important progress in disrupting transnationalism’s state-centricity, they have made comparatively meager headway in loosening the nation-state’s grip on geographical imaginations of diaspora—those “exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991, 5). Some geographers have argued that transnational framings of diaspora generally serve to reinforce the very state-centric regimes of culture, ethnicity, and identity that they seek to destabilize (Nagel 2001; Dahlman 2004; Carter 2005), while scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds have freely applied the label of diaspora to groups of internal migrants—i.e., “internal diasporas”—without addressing the theoretical implications of doing so (Ahrweiler and Laiou 1998; Gregory 2005; Rabson 2012; Weber and Peek 2012; Scott 2016). However, there appear to be no prior works concerning communities of internal migrants that engage directly and intentionally with theories of diaspora to further unsettle the state-centricity of transnationalism or portray diaspora as a fundamentally translocal phenomenon.

In viewing Crimean IDPs through the lens of diaspora, I also heed the call of authors such as Gilroy (1993), Clifford (1994), and Soysal (2000), who caution against treating diaspora

as a stable, bounded category of community or identity that may be clearly defined and applied to particular groups in greater or lesser measure. Instead of pointing to “a diaspora” of Crimeans and/or Crimean Tatars as something that exists passively, I follow authors such as Mavroudi (2007) in approaching diaspora as a *process* bound up in practices and discourses of “difference” and “sameness” (Nagel 2002) among networks of migrants. Butler (2001, 194) similarly advocates for understanding diaspora as “a framework for the study of a specific *process* of community formation,” a process that Sökefeld (2006) argues requires the “mobilization” of particular practices and discourses in service of creating a diasporic consciousness, in turn “produc[ing] diasporic practices, rather than assum[ing] that its condition exists *a priori*” (Samers 2003, 353). Conceiving of diaspora as a process rather than a category also serves as a corrective to the problematic assumptions of ethnic and cultural homogeneity within diaspora, which Anthias (1998, 577–578) has criticized in her call for a formulation of diaspora “that is able to treat collective solidaristic bonds as emergent and multiple,” and which “acknowledge[s] the political dynamics of these processes.” Recognizing the potential for heterogeneous and intersectional identities under the rubric of diaspora also aligns with Brah’s (1996) assertion that diaspora encompasses a multitude of individual rooted and routed experiences that may be simultaneously divergent and convergent, and it is through the aggregated relationalities of these individual experiences that diaspora emerges. In other words,

[M]ultiple journeys may configure into one journey via a *confluence of narratives* as it is lived and re-lived, produced, reproduced, and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory. It is within this confluence of narrativity that ‘diasporic community’ is differently imagined under different historical circumstances. By this I mean that the identity of the diasporic imagined community is far from fixed and pre-given. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively. (Brah 1996, 180)

To these important arguments, I add an additional nuance concerning how diaspora is produced and experienced with specific regard to Crimean IDPs; diaspora, as a concept and a process, is produced through the friction between a migrant community's divergent discourses of territorial belonging, emerging through everyday experiences when and where the belief that they are *misplaced* from an original home(land) in some way chafes against a concurrent belief that they are *in place* in the location where they now reside. In other words, diaspora emerges in the collective dialectical encounters between *difference* and *sameness* (Nagel 2002), between *strangeness* and *familiarity* (Scott 2016), and between *exclusion* and *inclusion* experienced within communities of migrants from a location collectively understood to be a home or homeland, whether or not it lies beyond an international border. In this assessment, I join Mavroudi and Christou (2015), who argue in a similar vein that

The process of being and doing in diaspora is a constant grating of here, there, of self and other, a constructing and dismantling of binaries, essentialisms and categories. It is through the mundane, the banal, and the extraordinary or specific that development [of diaspora] as a process occurs within and across borders. (2015, 7)

Approaching diaspora in this way further alerts us to the heterogeneities encapsulated within migrant communities that may create variegated experiences and uneven opportunities for the friction of diaspora to occur; shifting internal discourses of difference and sameness may at times cohere migrants into a more or less unified diasporic solidarity, while at other times dividing them into more atomized diasporic—or non-diasporic—units.

In many cases, the social and cultural disparities between home(land) and host-land may be so vast as to produce a near-constant friction between feelings of exclusion and inclusion for migrant communities, and in these cases the processes of diaspora are likely writ large. However, in the case of Crimean IDPs who already arrived in mainland Ukraine with at least some sense of

belonging, the friction between Ukrainian-ness and Crimean-ness/Crimean Tatar-ness is generally less obvious, consistent, or intense compared to most diasporic communities.

Nevertheless, the friction does occur in important ways and in diverse configurations that create shifting and even ephemeral topologies of diaspora in mainland Ukraine. In this section, I discuss Crimean IDPs' multifarious encounters between Ukrainian-ness and Crimean-ness/Crimean Tatar-ness, and demonstrate how these encounters produce experiences that are fundamentally diasporic.

To approach these questions in a systematic way, I compare Crimean IDP experiences to an established rubric of diasporic characteristics. Aside from the presumption of transnational migration, scholars have identified a variety of characteristics and heuristic tools that may be used to determine whether it is appropriate to label different groups as diasporic. There is no general consensus on the definition or distinguishing characteristics of diaspora, and several authors have proposed their own sets of criteria (Safran 1991; Vertovec 1997; Van Hear 1998). Cohen (2008) offers what is likely the most comprehensive schema for delineating diasporas through a synthesis and expansion of previous proposals, establishing four investigative tools that may be deployed to determine whether the diaspora label is a good fit for any given group: emic/etic claims, the time dimension, common features, and ideal types. In this chapter and those that will follow, I employ these tools in order to locate and detail characteristically diasporic elements within the community of Crimean IDPs.

### **Defining the “Ideal Types” of Diaspora**

Although appearing last in Cohen's four-point schema for identifying diasporas, I wish to address the question of “ideal types” first before proceeding to the other three points, which will each require a more detailed discussion. Cohen argues that one indicator of a migrant group's

diasporic status is whether the conditions of their displacement and dispersal from an original location and their sustaining characteristics as a migrant community closely resemble those of other nominally diasporic groups. Borrowing from a Weberian approach to classification, Cohen organizes disparate diasporic communities and experiences into a loose typology that includes five distinct “ideal types” of diasporas that may serve as a template for locating or framing other groups’ nascent diasporality. This system of diasporic “ideals” is not intended as a rigid or definitive guideline for classification or even affirmation of what is truly diasporic, but rather, as Cohen argues, “a yardstick, an abstraction and a simplification, a means of showing up similarities and differences in trying to encompass an array of possibilities that would otherwise have little form or shape” (2008, 161). Cohen’s typology of “ideal types” draws attention to the range and diversity of both historic and contemporary diasporic experiences, and to the myriad ways diaspora may be produced and constructed. It is helpfully to begin the discussion of Crimean IDPs’ diasporic condition here, and to consider whether they may adhere in some measures to one or more of these ideal types.

Cohen labels the first of his ideal types “victim diasporas,” which refer to “the idea of dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland, to two or more foreign destinations” (2008, 2). Cohen further identifies this type as a “prototypical diaspora,” as traumatic events forcing the emigration and dispersal of peoples from an original homeland are responsible for the emergence of many of the world’s oldest and most well-known diasporas, including the global Jewish, Armenian, and African diasporas. While these groups were made into victims through deliberately hostile policies of persecution, expulsion, genocide, and/or enslavement, Cohen argues that trauma may also derive from other disastrous scenarios such as the Irish Potato Famine of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, during which a devastating potato blight starved to death around

one million people in Ireland and catalyzed the emigration of roughly another million or more, resulting in their diasporization. Victim diasporas therefore result when a group is either removed physically and against their will from an original location to multiple foreign locations, or when conditions in their place of origin become so dangerous or life-threatening that migration becomes the most tenable option. In both cases, the experience of emigration and/or displacement is highly traumatic and narratives of trauma and victimhood become key elements of the diasporic experience.

The second ideal type in Cohen's typology is "labor diasporas," which are made up of migrants who left their place of origin in search of economic opportunity either independently or as indentured workers, with Cohen's primary example of a labor diaspora—the South Asian indentured laborers contracted to work in various corners of the British Empire—falling into the latter category. As the pursuit of economic opportunities is a fundamental driver of migration worldwide, Cohen cautions that not all economic migrants are necessarily members of a diaspora, but rather that diasporic consciousness may materialize within dispersed communities of economic migrants when they demonstrate, "(a) a strong retention of group ties sustained over an extended period (in respect of language, religion, endogamy, and cultural norms); (b) a myth of and connection to a homeland; and (c) significant levels of social exclusion in the destination societies" (2008, 61). While Armstrong (1976) distinguishes between "proletarian" diasporas made up of unskilled and uneducated workers and "mobilized" diasporas consisting of more skilled and specialized migrant workers, Cohen argues that labor diasporas often include both, and that these profiles may shift with time as unskilled workers and their descendants become more educated and upwardly mobile within the diaspora.

The third ideal type, “imperial diasporas,” is a byproduct of colonization originating with the European governors, administrators, and settlers who came to occupy the various colonies of the great European empires. The volume of imperial emigrants from Europe varied tremendously from colony to colony and depending on the colonizing nation, and in many cases European settlers were rapidly localized or “creolized” through intermarriage with indigenous or other migrant peoples. In these cases, European settlers were integrated into local communities and largely lost their connections to their original homeland—or, in some cases, intentionally rejected their place of origin and claims of belonging to it—precluding their inclusion in an “imperial” diasporic formation according to Cohen. “By contrast,” Cohen argues, an imperial diaspora “is marked by a continuing connection with the homeland, a deference to and imitation of its social and political institutions and a sense of forming part of a grand imperial design—whereby the group concerned assumes the self-image of a ‘chosen race’ with a global mission” (2008, 69). Cohen points to the settlement of British subjects throughout the British Empire as the prototypical example of an imperial diaspora, but notes that similar diasporic consciousnesses emerged among French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Dutch, and other European peoples who emigrated to their respective colonial holdings.

Related closely to labor diasporas and, in some cases, imperial diasporas, Cohen labels the fourth ideal type “trade diasporas,” consisting primarily of a merchant class living in ports and other centers of trade around the world, who facilitate economic exchange with their original place of origin. Some of the earliest known groups considered diasporas fall into this category, including Greek and Phoenician communities peppered across the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions in trading outposts linked to a central kingdom and/or city-state. Other noteworthy historical examples of trade diasporas include Venetian and Genoese merchants in the period of

Italian mercantilism, and more recent networks of Armenian, Chinese, and Lebanese merchants and traders living in a number of global outposts. For these communities, connections to a place of origin and to other trade outposts are sustained both culturally and economically, produced through the exchange of goods and currency and the circulation of cultural artifacts and mentifacts. As Cohen notes, trade diasporas have been effective at sustaining distant economic relations because “a close degree of kinship (...) permits trusting someone with large advances for what might be long-delayed and uncertain returns,” while the durability of these diasporic communities are due to the fact that “[f]amily and kin, the creation of a common commercial culture and religion, among other factors, provide the ties that bind” (2008, 83).

The fifth and final ideal type that Cohen identifies are “deterritorialized diasporas,” for whom concepts of home and/or homeland have become blurred, obscured, or transformed through multidirectional flows of migration, multiple instances of displacement or relocation, and the syncretization of different peoples and cultures in diaspora. The very notion that diasporas may be “deterritorialized” challenges many of the assumptions about diaspora and its central tenants of connection to an original homeland and experience of displacement from it. “Deterritorialized diasporas” reflect the complex assemblages of place and belonging characteristic of a more rapidly globalized and interconnected world. As Cohen argues, deterritorialized diasporas point to the increasing fluidity of identities and place attachment, and embody the following post-modern realities of migration:

1. Patterns of international migration that once would be assumed to be merely unidirectional—‘migration to’—are being replaced by asynchronous, transversal, oscillating flows that involve visiting, studying, seasonal work, temporary contracts, tourism and sojourning, rather than whole-family migration, permanent settlement and the adoption of exclusive citizenships.
2. Diasporas are often formed not only by one traumatic event (the marker of a victim diaspora), but by many and different causes, several only becoming salient



over an extended historical period. This can lead to double or multiple displacements and in atypical cases to a ‘travelling culture’.

3. Events in the homeland can take such an adverse turn that new centers of belonging can emerge—in effect one or more sites in the diaspora can materialize as functional equivalents of the original homeland. (2008, 123)

Following Gilroy (1993), Cohen looks to the “Black Atlantic” as an extensive site of deterritorialized diasporality—particularly in the Caribbean—where flows of migration between Africa, the Americas, and Europe have produced identities no longer rooted in a single point of origin or original culture, but instead tied to multiple sites and interfused with the cultures and traditions of many different diasporic peoples. Although this is perhaps the quintessential example of deterritorialized diasporic identities, Cohen also points to communities of Roma, Muslims, and other religious communities as embodying identities that are similarly “deterritorialized.”

### **Situating Crimean IDPs within the Framework of Diasporic “Ideal Types”**

The first task in considering the diasporic condition of Crimean IDPs, then, is to determine whether they embody one or more of these “ideal types” of diaspora. Because there are no concrete boundaries or rigid criteria inherent in these forms, it is conceivable that Crimean IDPs may exhibit multiple or overlapping characteristics of two or more of these ideal types. However, we may immediately conclude that Crimean IDPs do not resemble either “imperial diasporas” or “trade diasporas” as their displacement from Crimea to mainland Ukraine is in no way an act of colonization or imperialism, nor have they engaged in establishing any official trading networks between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland as such trade is officially banned by Ukrainian law. There may very well be Crimeans engaged in smuggling goods between the peninsula and the mainland, but such instances would be rare and certainly not reflective of any

larger trends within the Crimean IDP community. Moreover, before the annexation there may have been instances of informal trade networks between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland that the annexation would have disrupted, although these networks would have been strictly internal to Ukraine and thus would not have been facilitated by a “trade diaspora” as such.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, some Crimean IDPs were motivated to leave the peninsula for economic reasons, as the implementation of international sanctions, the severing of economic ties with Ukraine, and the decline of the vital tourism industry disrupted the livelihoods of many Crimeans. 28.2% of survey respondents indicated that a “lack of economic opportunities in Crimea” was a motivating factor in their decision to relocate to mainland Ukraine, while an additional 6.8% claimed they left “to start or continue a business.” Thus, a case could be made that Crimean IDPs fit—at least in part—the ideal type of a “labor diaspora.” However, I have also argued that the Crimean IDP population consists largely of a Crimean intelligentsia, including many professional, highly educated, and upwardly mobile individuals working in information technology, education, engineering, media, and other white-collar economic sectors—i.e., following Armstrong’s (1976) schema, those that would constitute a “mobilized” diaspora rather than a “proletarian” diaspora of unskilled workers, who appear to be far less common within the Crimean IDP community. While economic considerations certainly played a factor in many Crimeans’ decision to relocate to mainland Ukraine, I maintain that these were not the most frequently cited nor the most salient motivators catalyzing their displacement. Elements of a “labor diaspora” may therefore be manifest within certain subsets of the Crimean IDP population, but this ideal type is not a comfortable fit for the community as a whole.

Although Crimean IDPs are by no means “deterritorialized” in the same way the peoples of the Caribbean or the Roma population are, this ideal type nevertheless offers a rather novel

framework for understanding Crimean IDPs' diasporic condition. On the one hand, the relationships they embody between places of origin and resettlement are fairly straightforward: they left Crimea for destinations in the Ukrainian mainland. However, applying the theoretical framework of translocalism compels us to consider the multi-sited geographies that individual IDPs may inhabit through their migratory routes. For some, displacement may involve periods of settlement in different sites where different senses of belong may materialize and/or dissipate. Among my friends and acquaintances from Crimea and those whom I interviewed during fieldwork, there are several who have relocated to different cities within Ukraine since first leaving Crimea, and some who have since emigrated from Ukraine all together. Also, virtually all Crimeans can be said to have come from elsewhere in one sense or another; most Slavic Crimeans can trace their roots in the region back only a few generations at most, while Crimean Tatars—despite being indigenous to Crimea—returned to the region following decades of exile in Central Asia and other locations around the former Soviet Union. One could therefore argue that in both cases, Crimea represents but one site in a multi-sited, inter-generational assemblage of migratory routes that have now brought Crimean IDPs to the Ukrainian mainland. Furthermore, the problem at the very heart of this study—that is, delineating the contours of difference and sameness between Crimean-ness/Crimean Tatar-ness and Ukrainian-ness—hints at a fundamental ambiguity and potential dissonance in the territoriality of Crimean IDPs' socio-spatial identities, opening up possibilities for deterritorialized and *reterritorialized* diasporic forms.

While this framework creates avenues for further investigation into the imagining of diaspora in both this case and others, it would be premature and misguided to situate Crimean IDPs squarely within the ideal type of a “deterritorialized” diaspora. For one, the period of

displacement is still very short—certainly too short for multiple, meaningful senses of attachment and belonging to form and create a collectively deterritorialized diasporic identity that obfuscates the importance of an original homeland or point of origin. The role of time, incidentally, is another important factor in understanding the production of diaspora, and is addressed in greater detail in Chapter Nine. Furthermore, while Crimeans may be said to have come from someplace else before arriving in Crimea, in most cases I see little evidence that vestigial senses of attachment to the places from which they or the generations before them migrated may rival their attachment to Crimea itself. Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan and other destinations of the 1944 deportation remained steadfastly committed to the idea of returning to their homeland, and resisted the forces of assimilation that could tether them indefinitely to their places of exile. Roughly half of the Crimean Tatars in Central Asia did not return to Crimea (Uehling 2004), and for them a meaningful sense of place attachment indeed has taken root; but Crimean Tatar IDPs come exclusively from the subset that *did* return from exile, and for them the sense of belonging to Crimea remains unrivaled. Likewise, I observed few if any instances of Slavic Crimeans professing a strong sense of belonging to a region from which they or their ancestors originated beyond Crimea. While I do not preclude the salience of any such deterritorialized senses of belonging among Crimean IDPs, the perception of Crimea as a homeland or at least a meaningful place of origin remains too deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of Crimean IDPs for a truly “deterritorialized” concept of diaspora to materialize—at least for the time being. Thus, while the framework of a deterritorialized diaspora offers challenging and potentially fruitful new ways to think about Crimean IDPs and the question of their diasporic condition, as an “ideal type” it is not quite adequate in this case.

The remaining ideal type, victim diasporas, is arguably the most appropriate framework for situating Crimean IDPs within the study of diaspora. As I discussed extensively in Chapter Four, experiences of the annexation and occupation of Crimea were emotionally taxing and, indeed, traumatic for those who opposed Russia's actions and who felt compelled to leave. For some, the experience involved direct threats, persecution, and even violence that only exacerbated the traumatic nature of events triggering their departure. 37% of survey respondents indicated that "concern for personal safety" was a motivating factor in their decision to leave Crimea, while 33% also cited "political, ethnic, or religious persecution," and a full 71.2% were motivated by "personal opposition to the occupation." As Crimean IDPs understand it, the annexation and occupation of Crimea amounted to an assault on their rights, their civic identities, their mental health, and, in many cases, their physical safety; in other words, those who left felt truly victimized under the conditions imposed by Russian occupiers in Crimea. Of course, the vast majority of Crimeans did not leave after the annexation, with many cheering or at least passively accepting the change in the region's political regime, and to them a narrative of victimhood may appear laughable or overblown. But attitudes toward the occupying regime and qualities of life under its authority vary tremendously depending on an individual's or community's positionality, and the same set of political circumstances may certainly induce feelings of victimization in some—particularly those who are most vulnerable—even as they earn the support of others.

Narratives of Crimean IDPs' victimhood may also pale in comparison to those of IDPs from the Donbas, many of whom fled desperately from the physical destruction of their homes and communities and the imminent threat of violence on a much larger scale. In many cases, residents of the Donbas had no other choice but to migrate to safer locations either elsewhere in

Ukraine or across the border in Russia, and thus their displacement was, for the most part, forced. Crimean IDPs, on the other hand, did not face the same immediate threats of destruction and violence, and for all the difficulties of the occupation they were nevertheless capable of remaining in relative peace in Crimea—with the exception of affiliates of the Islamic organization *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* and others persecuted for supposedly harboring “extremist” views. Crimeans’ displacement to mainland Ukraine may therefore appear *voluntary*, an assessment that may weaken claims of victimhood. However, as several authors have argued (Pilkington 1998; Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011; Anderson 2014; Scheel and Squire 2014), a dichotomy between forced and voluntary migration is reductive and, ultimately, untenable; except in cases where migrants are forcibly transported against their will, all migrant journeys are catalyzed by a combination of structural forces and human initiative in different measures. Whether conceived of as a process that is both reactive and proactive (Richmond 1988) or a “mixture” of structural and agentic forces (Van Hear, Brubaker, and Bessa 2009), in the majority of cases migration is never solely forced or voluntary. That Crimean IDPs had the option of remaining in Crimea should not, therefore, diminish or negate their status as victims, nor should it trivialize their decisions to relocate to mainland Ukraine, as they were nevertheless made under duress.

For Crimean Tatars, their internal displacement merely adds another layer to a long-running, inter-generational narrative of victimhood at the hands of Russian and Soviet occupiers that began with the first annexation of Crimea in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. As I have argued, Crimean Tatars see a clear continuity between this initial annexation, the 1944 deportation, and the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and thus attribute their presence in mainland Ukraine to this most recent phase in a perpetual process of persecution and victimization. For most Slavic Crimeans, the experience of migrating under traumatic circumstances and assuming the role of victim is

altogether new and, in some cases, uncomfortable. One interviewee described her initial experiences of gathering with other IDPs after first arriving in Lviv, and explained that the pathos of victimhood become too oppressive, leading her to reject the label of victim in an effort to move past the trauma of displacement and embrace her adoptive home:

In the beginning, when we all first arrived, of course we wanted to get together. It was awful for us, we were in a state of confusion, so we would gather together. [The NGO] *Krym SOS* appeared, and we were all drawn there, to feel some kind of security. They really helped us, they gave us all kinds of legal and psychological support. There were some meetings, we tried to gather somewhere, experience the local culture, we had some excursions around the city. But then when I was in their company, I started to feel a bit like we were victims, that we were all sad and looking for pity. I stopped going to those gatherings because I wanted to adapt to the city. I don't want people to talk about me like an IDP. I live here, it's just how it turned out, and there are a lot of people who live here; some from the States, from Spain, from all over, they live here and they feel fine. Generally speaking, I'm still in my country, just in a different city. I decided to no longer associate with any of those groups, although I will sometimes turn to them for some help if I need it, but I've stopped meeting with them regularly. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

Overcoming a sense of victimhood may be an objective of some, but it nevertheless remains a key component of the meta-narrative of Crimeans' internal displacement. Crimeans were not forcibly removed from the region, nor did they face genocide, famine, or any other large-scale, life-threatening scenario typically associated with victim diasporas. The ideal type of the victim diaspora may therefore be a bit of a rough fit for Crimean IDPs, but narratives of victimization remain inextricable from their experiences of displacement. This framework is therefore much more applicable than the other ideal types in Cohen's typology, and certainly helps situate Crimean IDPs within the study of diaspora, although the ideal types of labor and deterritorialized diasporas also offer useful if limited advantages. With this, I now turn to the next tool proposed by Cohen for assessing a migrant group's diasporic condition—the question of whether claims to diaspora are made from within or from outside the community.

## **Chapter Eight: Considering Emic and Etic Claims to Diaspora**

Cohen argues that when determining whether the diaspora label is “legitimate,” some consideration should be given to whether the term is applied to a group from within (i.e., *emic* claims of diaspora), or from outside (i.e., *etic* labeling). However, although he argues that “[u]nderstanding a social actor’s viewpoint is important” in this regard (16), Cohen cautions that “[n]ot everyone is a diaspora because they say they are” (15), thereby echoing the concerns of diaspora scholars such as Brubaker (2005) and Dufoix (2008) that the term has been self-applied too freely and imprecisely by a disparate range of peoples and collectives, putting “diaspora” at risk of losing its descriptive purchase. While a group’s subjective claims to diaspora should withstand objective interrogation before observers and commentators feel comfortable accepting the label, it is nevertheless instructive to consider how communities may engage with the concept themselves. Mine may well be the only voice attempting to etically inject the concept of diaspora into discussions of Crimean IDPs, but the question of diaspora has indeed been raised among Crimean IDPs themselves, and there appears to be no clear consensus on the answer.

In my online survey of Crimean IDPs, I asked directly whether respondents “consider themselves members of a diaspora of Crimeans or Crimean Tatars,”<sup>32</sup> and the results were rather telling of the ambiguity and precariousness with which the term is often deployed (Table 7). In a nearly perfect three-way split, 32.8% of all respondents answered “yes,” 33% answered “no,” and the remaining 34.2% answered “difficult to answer.” The results did, however, vary among ethnic groups; ethnic Russians felt most strongly that they are *not* part of diaspora, with 44.8%

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<sup>32</sup> In formulating this survey question, I left the distinction between a diaspora of Crimeans and of Crimean Tatars intentionally vague so as not to influence responses by privilege either notion of ethnic unity or multiethnic solidarity.



answering “no” compared to 24.1% answering “yes” and 31% suggesting the question is “difficult to answer.” Ethnic Ukrainians were the most evenly split between the three possible answers, with 28.6% answering “yes,” 33.6% answering “no,” and 37.7% answering “difficult to answer.” Crimean Tatars, on the other hand, felt most strongly that they *are* members of a diaspora of Crimeans or Crimean Tatars, with a slight majority of 51.2% responding “yes” and only 19.2% responding “no,” with the remaining 29.6% responding that the question is “difficult to answer.”

**Table 7:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, “Do you consider yourself a member of a diaspora of Crimeans or Crimean Tatars?”

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	32.8	28.6	24.1	51.2	22.2
No	33	33.6	44.8	19.2	38.9
Difficult to Answer	34.2	37.7	31	29.6	38.9

### Claiming a Diasporic Status—But Whom Does It Include?

I also provided survey respondents with additional space to optionally explain their answer to this question, and their responses offer valuable insight into how Crimean IDPs understand the concept of diaspora. Relatively few respondents who answered “yes” to the diaspora question opted to provide additional explanation—only 8 out of 163—but several of these respondents indicated that their perception of being part of a diaspora pivots on the notion that Crimea is their homeland. “Crimea is my homeland,” wrote a 20-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man matter-of-factly, while a 43-year-old ethnic Russian woman commented more elaborately that “Crimea is my homeland, I lived there for 40 years, and I plan on being there often after the annexation.”<sup>33</sup> One 42-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man simply stated, “I am a Crimean,” while a

<sup>33</sup> The respondent presumably means after the occupation of Crimea is concluded, as the terms “annexation” and “occupation” are frequently used interchangeably—however inaccurately—among Crimean IDPs.

40-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman answered rather ambiguously that “I consider myself part of the Crimean diaspora on a territorial basis,” perhaps suggesting that her displacement from the territory of Crimea indeed renders her diasporic. Others who responded “yes” to the diaspora question indicated that their answer is related more to a sense of community and solidarity; one 34-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman hinted at a diasporic condition that transcends ethnic lines, stating that “we Ukrainians from Crimea and the Tatars have a common misfortune—the occupation,” while a 22-year-old Crimean Tatar man similarly remarked that “although I am in Kharkiv and don’t interact with the diaspora of [Crimean] Tatars as a result of my isolation, I feel warmly toward my people and toward Crimeans in general.”

In addition to the survey question concerning diaspora, I frequently asked interviewees whether they believe a diaspora of Crimeans or Crimean Tatars exists in mainland Ukraine, and whether they felt that they belong to one. Similarly to survey respondents, interviewees offered a diverse range of answers to this question, including many who answered firmly that they are indeed part of a diaspora in the Ukrainian mainland; however, notions of whom this diaspora includes were inconsistent. Crimean Tatars who believed they are part of a diaspora generally adhered to an ethnic delineation of the term, understanding it to include only Crimean Tatars and not the population of Crimean IDPs as a whole. In these cases, belief in the existence of a Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine generally hinged on the perception that they are removed from their territorial homeland despite remaining in their country of citizenship. “We are undoubtedly a diaspora,” one Crimean Tatar interviewee stated without hesitation,

because the main thing that is connected with the history and the culture of my people—especially in the last 250 years since the annexation of 1783—is the constant struggle for return to our home, it is the constant struggle to return to the land of our ancestors, to be full-fledged indigenous people there, to be the stewards of our own land and not merely guests. All of this we associate specifically with Crimea, and so Crimean Tatars without Crimea are a diaspora,

even if they are in mainland Ukraine. Yes, we are citizens of Ukraine, we have civic feelings and civic positions, but this is a separate dimension [of our identity]. But my people, my land, my vineyard, my home that was built by my grandfather—this means something much deeper, and it can never be taken away from us. Therefore, Crimean Tatars who are not in their homeland for whatever reason [are a diaspora]. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

On the other hand, Slavic Crimean IDPs who affirmed that they are part of a diaspora often had a more inclusive notion of its constituent members, incorporating all those who fled Crimea as a result of the occupation. According to journalist Pavel Kazarin, Crimean IDPs constitute a diaspora not only because they have all come from the same territorial home(land), but because they were all compelled to relocate to mainland Ukraine by a common mentality and principled stance regarding the Russian occupation of Crimea:

When we meet another Crimean in Ukraine—in Kyiv, in Zaporizhzhia, in any city... if I meet another Crimean, I understand that he is probably a like-minded person, that he left the peninsula because he did not accept the annexation, and I don't feel apprehensive when I begin to speak with him. For a person from Donetsk in Kyiv, when he meets another person from Donetsk, he isn't necessarily a like-minded person. We are like-minded, and we are few, so we cherish our meetings with each other. We have a lot to talk about. We have a lot of nostalgic moments to discuss, things to chat about. Therefore a "diaspora" format is possible, because this is a diaspora of like-minded people. We aren't just united by geography, we are united by values. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

But the clearest example of the term "diaspora" being applied emically to Crimean IDPs is the organization *Krymskaia Diaspora*—literally, "Crimean Diaspora." Founded in Kyiv in the weeks following the annexation by a group of Slavic IDPs from Sevastopol, *Krymskaia Diaspora* began as a small support network of Crimean IDPs and other Crimeans already living in Kyiv. As the conflict in the Donbas started heating up and waves of IDPs began arriving in Kyiv from eastern Ukraine, *Krymskaia Diaspora* rapidly expanding into an NGO offering assistance and services to IDPs from both regions seeking legal support, housing, employment, childcare, educational opportunities, and social interaction. IDPs from the Donbas quickly

surpassed those from Crimea as *Krymskaia Diaspora*'s primary base of visitors and clientele, but the core of its staff and volunteers are Crimean, and the name of the organization has remained the same. As head founder Anatolii Zasoba explained to me, he and his co-founders were aware that the organization's name may be viewed controversially, but they ultimately decided it was the best option according to the goals of the organization, Crimea's unique relationship to Ukraine, and the conditions under which Crimeans have become internally displaced:

We had some qualms about the name, the word "diaspora" is not totally accepted. There were a few considerations here, and they will probably help you understand why we chose "Crimean" and "Diaspora." On the one hand, it is routine to call those who left the territory of a different state a "diaspora"—there's the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, the Ukrainian diaspora in the USA, the Polish diaspora in the USA, etc. So, on the one hand, [our name] is not correct; but on the other hand, even as a part of Ukraine, Crimea was not merely an oblast, but an autonomous republic, and so in some sense this territory was like a state within a state. This is one factor, and another factor is that we really wanted to move away from ethnic attachment. We didn't want to name ourselves a "Crimean Tatar" organization, or "Ukrainians of Crimea," or "Russians of Crimea." We wanted to generalize and unite under a single name all those who left Crimea regardless of ethnicity. And why the word "diaspora?" Because at the moment [when we founded the organization] there already existed three organizations under the name of a *zemliachestvo*<sup>34</sup> of Crimeans—there was a "Sevastopol *Zemliachestvo*," and "Crimean *Zemliachestvo*" was already registered in Kyiv. And if I'm honest, the word "*zemliachestvo*" does not have the best reputation in Ukraine, because oligarchs, officials, and governors established glamorous offices in Kyiv for their own Crimean *zemliachestvos* who defended and lobbied for their own business interests and weren't connected in any way to the people. Moreover, the word "*zemliachestvo*" just doesn't reflect the reasons why we left, in no way does it reflect the facts of aggression, of stolen territory, of the occupation. So maybe there is, for example, a Lviv *zemliachestvo* in Kyiv, made up of people from Lviv who moved to Kyiv and are united in a *zemliachestvo*. But for us we didn't just move, there were certain reasons why we left, and we will be glad if someday the word "diaspora" will no longer be appropriate for us because Crimea will return to Ukraine. (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba)

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<sup>34</sup> The Russian word *zemliachestvo* lacks a direct English translation, but denotes a collective of people hailing from the same location without necessary regard for the territorial scale to which the collective is tied, nor requiring that they have migrated beyond their eponymous territory. The word is often used with regard to networks of loyalty or patronage among politicians and businesspeople from the same city or region.

Thus, the perception that a diaspora consisting of Crimean IDPs now exists in mainland Ukraine has indeed taken root, albeit with contrasting explanations for *why* it has materialized and *whom* it encompasses.

### **Rejecting the Diaspora Label**

Others are far less sympathetic toward the suggestion that they are part of a diaspora, and feel rather strongly that a diaspora of Crimeans or Crimean Tatars simply cannot exist within the borders of Ukraine. As in much of the literature concerning the meaning and substance of diaspora, many Crimean IDPs adhere to the underlying assumption that diasporas are inherently transnational, existing by definition only outside the borders of an original nation-state, thus rendering absurd the very question of their own diasporic condition. “A diaspora can [only] be located in a different state, and Crimeans never left the territory of Ukraine,” objected one 37-year-old Crimean Tatar man in the supplementary explanation to his “no” response in the survey’s diaspora question, while a 38-year-old Ukrainian man similarly insisted that “[i]n order to be a diaspora you need to live outside of your country of origin, and I am still in Ukraine.” Offering an alternative label more consistent with her territorial emplacement, a 27-year-old Crimean Tatar woman suggested that “[w]e are not a diaspora, we live in our own country. I am part of a [Crimean/Crimean Tatar] community [*obshchina*],” while a 45-year-old Ukrainian woman invoked “*zemliachestvo*” as a corrective to the inaccurate title of “diaspora:”

I think that a “diaspora of Crimeans” does not exist, just like “Crimeans” do not exist. All residents of Crimea—including those who left because of the annexation and those who stayed—are very different people, but they are all citizens of Ukraine. But in my view, a “diaspora” means citizens of one state in the territory of a different state. Therefore, I may consider myself a member of a “Crimean *zemliachestvo*,” but not of a “diaspora.”

In other cases, survey respondents also objected to the diaspora label on the grounds that it creates a false dichotomy between Crimeans and other Ukrainians, thereby implying that Crimeans are inherently different from their fellow citizens. “I don’t separate Crimeans from all other citizens of Ukraine,” commented a 22-year-old Ukrainian woman, while a 35-year-old Ukrainian woman argued that “a diaspora is a consolidation of people based on nationality outside of their own country. I am a Ukrainian, and I am in Ukraine. There does not exist a separate nationality of ‘Crimean Ukrainians’ or ‘Crimeans’ with their own attributes that distinguish them from ‘non-Crimean Ukrainians.’” One 29-year-old woman—who, in lieu of an ethnicity, identified herself only as a “citizen of Ukraine” in her survey response—objected strongly to the question of whether or not she is part of a diaspora, and suggested that it is dangerous to divide people according to such categories:

As experience has shown, such an identification leads to a schism between the residents of Crimea and the Crimeans who have left, it creates the conditions for political profiteering, it creates the conditions for segregation, and it leads to the belittling of the dignity of Crimean Ukrainians, who demonstrate resistance to the occupation no less than Crimean Tatars, and who defend their Ukrainian identity.

Several interviewees were also adamant that they are not part of a diaspora, nor that it is even possible for one to appear without migration beyond a group’s country of origin. Indeed, many of the responses I heard with regard to the diaspora question demonstrate just how thoroughly perceptions of diaspora are informed by the presumption of transnational migration.

“If we are talking about a diaspora inside the country, to me this seems a bit stupid,” insisted

Sergei Kostinsky of the Ukrainian Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting,

because this is saying that some kind of regional identity is somehow special, and I think this is incorrect. It’s a good title, maybe it’s good for creating a distinguishing position, for the possibility to create an interesting social brand, but to speak of us as a diaspora, I think this is really incorrect. We live in one country, Crimea is a natural part of Ukraine in every sense, and we are simply displaced

peoples [*pereselentsy*]*—nothing more, nothing less. (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)*

Some, including Kostinsky in the above quote, framed their opposition to the use of the term “diaspora” with specific reference to the organization *Krymskaia Diaspora*, arguing that they have inaccurately appropriated the title while remaining within the borders of Ukraine. “We don’t support the name ‘diaspora,’” echoed Olga Skripnik of the social organization Al’menda, “because a diaspora is when people live beyond the boundaries of their country. We say that we are citizens of Ukraine—from Crimea, but citizens of Ukraine—and *a priori* we cannot be in our own country and be a diaspora, because a diaspora is beyond the border” (Interview 033, Olga Skripnik). In other cases, understandings of diaspora were informed primarily by interviewees’ familiarity with Ukrainian diaspora communities in countries such as Canada and the United States and the perception that Crimeans in mainland Ukraine bear no resemblance to them; one interviewee in Lviv commented that “[f]or me, a diaspora is when you see a film about Canada or the States, when they all go about in their *vyshyvankas* and sing songs—that’s the Ukrainian diaspora, and we don’t have anything like that, we don’t go around in ‘Crimean costumes.’ There’s no understanding of a diaspora” (Interview 074, ethnic Russian woman, 30s).

In my interviews with Crimean Tatars, I intentionally sought not to frame the diaspora question as pertaining only to their internally displaced ethnic community, thereby leaving open the possibility that they might conceive of a multiethnic Crimean diaspora that also includes Slavs and other minority groups. However, in virtually every case, Crimean Tatars framed their response with exclusive reference to other Crimean Tatars, either implicitly or explicitly. Here too, despite having left the Crimean homeland, many Crimean Tatar interviewees rejected the notion that they are part of a diaspora because they never left their country of citizenship. “I don’t know, this is such a controversial question,” one Crimean Tatar interviewee responded

hesitantly when I asked her whether she believed there is a Crimean or Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine. She continued:

Some might say that it is a diaspora. I don't think that it is a diaspora, we are maybe more of a community than a diaspora, because after all we are citizens of Ukraine. As citizens of Ukraine we are able to live wherever we want, be it in Lviv, be it in Vinnytsia, be it in Kyiv. I don't think that this is a diaspora. Yes, we are a small indigenous people, just like other Ukrainian citizens who are not ethnically Ukrainian. For example, it's the same for Hutsuls, Boykos, and Lemkos<sup>35</sup>—they can live where they want [in Ukraine], and you wouldn't call them a diaspora. In my subjective view, I cannot say that we are a diaspora in the mainland. Maybe I could say that we are some kind of a community. But some say the opposite, that we are a diaspora, we have our own homeland in Crimea. But Crimea is a part of Ukraine, so I don't think that we are a diaspora. (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Emine Dzheppar, the First Deputy Minister of Information Policy of Ukraine, also explained to me her views on the matter, again invoking diaspora's presumption of transnational migration:

I think that diaspora is somewhere outside of Ukraine, because we are still citizens of Ukraine, so we cannot consider ourselves a diaspora here. Of course, our homeland is Crimea, but whenever we are within the territory of Ukraine we cannot say that we are a diaspora. So, diaspora is somewhere in Turkey, Romania, let's say in the United States, all those Crimean Tatars living there are a diaspora, but those who are here, they are citizens of Ukraine. (Interview 031, Emine Dzheppar)

I heard a similar rejection of the notion that there is a Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine from well-known actor and director, Akhtem Seitablayev. Seitablayev is best known for directing and starring in the 2013 ATR-funded film *Haytarma*, which depicts events surrounding the 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatars but centered on the figure of Amet-Khan Sultan, a highly-decorated Crimean Tatar fighter pilot in World War II who earned the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. I spoke with Seitablayev over *chebureks* at Kyiv's original *Musafir* location,

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<sup>35</sup> Hutsuls, Boykos, and Lemkos are small Ukrainian sub-ethnicities who speak unique dialects of the Ukrainian language, and who live mostly in the Carpathian Mountains of Western Ukraine and neighboring countries.



where he told me, among other things, his views on the role of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine and why it precludes the label of a diaspora:

I would not call this a diaspora, because it seems to me ... just look around this restaurant. Who do you see? Only Crimean Tatars? No. It really seems to me that Crimean Tatars are already so intertwined with Ukraine, and Ukraine with Crimean Tatars, that we are an integral part of this country. We are not a diaspora, even if we don't live in Crimea specifically, we are such an integral part of this country. At least I would like to think so. (Interview 049, Akhtem Seitablayev)

### **Diaspora's Problematic and Contested Geopolitical Implications**

But as I discovered, the notion that any Crimean IDPs constitute a diaspora is completely anathema to some precisely because of the label's troubling geopolitical implications when a rigid transnational definition is applied. Several interviewees, primarily Crimean Tatars, took offense to the suggestion that they may be part of a diaspora because, according to their views, a diaspora exists only when a group migrates beyond the border of their original nation-state, and thus to call them a diaspora is to imply that they crossed from one state to another when they left Crimea. Thus, adhering to a transnational logic, to call Crimean IDPs a diaspora is to insinuate that Crimea and Crimeans are not part of Ukraine—or worse, that they are truly a part of Russia. According to this understanding, to speak of a Crimean/Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine is to tacitly recognize and validate the Russian occupation of Crimea and undermine the all-important rhetorical stance that Crimea is Ukraine. Worse still, some suggested that Russian authorities would welcome or encourage the labeling of Crimean IDPs a diaspora because of these implicit conclusions. For example, *Mejlis* chairperson Refat Chubarov had a strong negative reaction for precisely these reasons when I raised the question of a Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine. “No, my tongue will not speak of a diaspora of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine,” he stated firmly, explaining that

At the end of the day, this is really our country and our Crimea is located within this country, even though it is occupied. We now speak of Crimean Tatars who are forced to live in mainland Ukraine, and in no way do we distinguish them from those who currently live in our historical homeland. There is no such division even in our formal documents, let alone our feelings. Although, I should say that such an idea is creeping into the official occupation propaganda, they sneak stories about the Crimean Tatars who left Crimea and settled in Ukraine into the official propaganda press. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

A young Crimean Tatar man also echoed these sentiments during a focus group session, insisting that it is dangerous and inappropriate to label Crimean Tatar IDPs a diaspora because of the geopolitical implications, even while conceding that they may indeed resemble a diaspora in some sense:

We cannot consider ourselves a diaspora, we are Ukrainians. What is your nationality, American? Are you a diaspora in America? No. Can you call the Scottish a diaspora in Great Britain? No, because they are an indigenous people. We are also an indigenous people, we cannot be a diaspora. We do possess certain forms of a diaspora; the culture here is not ours, it is not endemic to us, so we probably have some traits of a diaspora, but to call us a diaspora is incorrect at minimum. You can call us a community, a society, a collective, but a diaspora—this is a serious question, a matter of principle. The Russian government probably wants to call us a diaspora, in this way they would emphasize that the true homeland of Crimean Tatars is Crimea, and Crimea is Russia, and those who don't live within it are a diaspora. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

This line of objection to the diaspora label was most clearly articulated to me by Tamila Tasheva, co-founder of the NGO *Krym SOS* and director of its main offices in Kyiv. Along with co-founders Alim Aliyev and Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk—all Crimean Tatars living in mainland Ukraine prior to the annexation—Tasheva founded *Krym SOS* in the first days of the occupation in order to provide emergence assistance and information to the first waves of IDPs fleeing from the peninsula. Since its inception, *Krym SOS* has expanded into one of Ukraine's foremost organizations assisting IDPs from Crimea and the Donbas, providing a range of services including humanitarian aid, community mobilization, housing and employment coordination, education, mentoring, and media outreach from its four regional offices in Kyiv, Lviv, Kherson,

and Poltava. Due in part to the co-founders' backgrounds, *Krym SOS* places a special emphasis on issues specific to the community of internally displaced Crimean Tatars, sponsoring efforts to promote and preserve Crimean Tatar culture and traditions in mainland Ukraine, and to raise awareness about their unique struggles and precarious social standings on both sides of the Perekop. Aside from its focus on Crimean Tatars, *Krym SOS* offers many of the same types of services provided by the organization *Krymskaia Diaspora*, but in our interview Tasheva expressed some disdain for *Krymskaia Diaspora* in part because of some personal and professional disputes, but largely because of her objection to their use of the word "diaspora" along with references to Crimean "refugees." Both of these words, Tasheva insisted, incorrectly and problematically imply that Crimea is not part of Ukraine:

If I'm speaking openly, "Crimean Diaspora" is an incorrect wording for an organization that works in the mainland of Ukraine, because an organization could be called a "diaspora" only if it is in Poland, or in America or anywhere else. After all, our territory that is now occupied is still the territory of Ukraine; according to all international laws, this is the territory of Ukraine. It is an unrecognized occupied territory, and it could hardly be recognized by the international community because this would contribute to the destruction of all international agreements, which are only provisional. So, on the one hand, I don't agree with this name on principle, but there is also a lot that follows from this. On the other hand, I don't like the term "Crimean refugees," because internally displaced peoples are not refugees. I don't like it when an organization calls itself something like this without bothering to look in the dictionary or familiarize themselves with legislation, even Ukrainian legislation. I question the intellectual abilities of people who found such an organization—of course, please excuse my rudeness. But nevertheless, this is very important, it's something real, not just words. This signifies that you've made a distinction, that Crimea is Russia and the remaining part is Ukraine. Accordingly, those people who have come from "Russian" Crimea would now be considered refugees, because they crossed an international border. They did *not* cross an international border. *We do not have* an international border with Crimea. So, this is a very important question. I make comments like this not only to public figures, but to journalists and politicians and all the rest, because there is something behind these words, they are not just words. To use the word "refugee" or "diaspora," this is not the correct position. It then forms an incorrect understanding among the people. People should understand that this is our territory. We are not refugees, because [Crimea] is the territory of the Ukrainian state. You can only be a refugee if you flee to Poland

[for example] and request refugee status and all the rest. In the end, we need to educate people about this, because if we don't do it ourselves then nobody else will. (Interview 008, Tamila Tasheva)

Whether there is something diasporic about Crimean IDPs is therefore not only a matter of intellectual inquiry, but a deeply politicized question that strikes a very sensitive nerve for some who are vigilant in maintaining the rhetorical position that Crimea is part of Ukraine. During one interview, I caught a unique glimpse of just how important this position is and how threatening the diaspora label can seem when it is defined in a strictly transnational sense. In my interview with a young Crimean Tatar man who had relocated to Lviv to attend university, I posed to him the question of whether there is a diaspora of Crimeans or Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine, and whether he felt as if he were a member of a diaspora in Lviv. Pondering the question, he initially answered more or less affirmatively:

In principle, yes, people say that there is a Crimean Tatar diaspora in Lviv. Probably ... probably yes. If you say that we are Crimean Tatars among Ukrainians, you could say that yes, there is some kind of Crimean Tatar diaspora. I think it's possible to call it a diaspora. And do I consider myself a part of this diaspora? I don't even know. I'm just a normal Crimean Tatar who doesn't do anything special, I don't take part in any kind of social events. So I... well, probably yes. I'm probably included in this diaspora. If you say that it's a Crimean Tatar diaspora, with just Crimean Tatars in mind, then yes, I'm part of it. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Once our interview had concluded and I stopped recording, we continued chatting in a friendly and informal manner while enjoying the late spring weather in one of the many outdoor cafes on Lviv's central square. The interviewee again brought up the diaspora question that I had posed to him, commenting that it was a rather interesting question that he had never thought about before. As this interview was conducted toward the very end of my primary fieldwork, I shared with him some of the answers I had received to this question from other interviewees, and mentioned that some objected to the term "diaspora" because it could imply that Crimea belongs to Russia

instead of Ukraine. His relaxed demeanor suddenly stiffened upon hearing what the others had said, and realizing that he may have answered in a way that puts him at odds with the prescribed position of the Crimean Tatar community, he insisted that I resume recording and repeat the question so that he may correct his initial *faux pas*. He offered the following corrective:

In general, I never thought about the question of whether there exists a diaspora of Crimean Tatars in Lviv. In my view, no, it does not exist. There is no kind of diaspora, because everybody here has the same goals, the same views, and we want the same thing, and of course if we are going to say that we have some kind of diaspora, then we factually accept that Crimea is Russia. That's why there is no such diaspora. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Thus, an investigation into whether or how Crimean IDPs emically engage with the notion of their own diasporic condition reveals that there is not only a wide degree of disagreement on the matter, but that it is a hotly contested and politically contentious issue. Answers to the diaspora question vary greatly depending on how the term is interpreted or what aspects of it respondents choose to emphasize. Those who argue that there is a Crimean or Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine generally point to the fact that Crimea is the homeland from which they have been driven, while those who reject the diaspora label mostly do so on the grounds that they remain within their own country if not their native region, and that applying the term carries the implication that they are transnational migrants from a region that belongs not to Ukraine, but to Russia.

When beginning this project, I failed to consider the potential geopolitical baggage of the diaspora concept for Crimean IDPs, nor was I prepared for how influential the presumed transnational component of diaspora would be in shaping how research participants interpret and respond to my questions. I must state that I am highly sympathetic to the concerns of my research participants who strongly object to the suggestion that they are part of a diaspora, and I am sensitive to the potentially counteractive repercussions that recklessly applying the diaspora

label may have for the social and political struggles of Crimean IDPs. However, my interest is in de-essentializing understandings of diaspora as strictly transnational, and empowering the concept as an analytical lens through which migrant identities may be interpreted without privileging the nation-state. I therefore do not seek to awkwardly impose a label upon Crimean IDPs against the well-founded objections of some, but to show how they can help us understand diaspora in a more critical and nuanced way. I do so with full knowledge that many in the Crimean IDP community will be unswayed or even offended by my arguments, but I maintain that there is worthwhile intellectual merit in challenging and refining theories of diaspora, and that this can be done without contradicting or nullifying Crimean IDPs' admirable insistence that both they and Crimea are integral to Ukraine.

Weighing both emic and etic claims of Crimean IDPs' diasporic status does not, therefore, allow us to comfortably accept or reject the label; Crimean IDPs are themselves divided on the question, while the question itself is so fresh and potentially novel that no outsider to the community aside from myself, to my knowledge, has attempted to situate them within theories and discourses of diaspora. While I will reiterate that it is not my objective to simply endorse Crimean IDPs as a diaspora, I maintain that it is helpful as a heuristic exercise to consider how closely they adhere to certain frequently cited criteria for identifying diasporic communities. With this, I turn to the third of Cohen's (2008) prescribed analytical tools—the role of time.

**Chapter Nine:**  
**The “Time Dimension” and Durability of Crimean IDPs’ Diasporic Condition**

Cohen (2008) argues that an important litmus test for determining whether a migrant group embodies diasporic qualities is their maintenance of social identities linked to the place of origin over an extended period of time. As he notes, “one does not announce the formation of the diaspora the moment the representatives of a people first alight from a boat or aircraft” (16), as neither the duration of settlement nor the durability of the migrants’ identities can necessarily be known in advance. Certain patterns of migration, such as those followed by seasonal or temporary labor migrants, include the presumption of return whenever a particular task or objective is complete, and the implied impermanence of their settlement beyond an original location generally girds against the formation of a diasporic consciousness. For others who intend to resettle permanently or for an indefinite period of time, assimilatory forces may work to weaken connections to their place of origin or the cohesion of the migrant community itself, and with time the ethnic and/or cultural bonds that cohere a nominally diasporic community may disintegrate as its members are absorbed into prevailing socio-cultural systems and structures. It is impossible to state exactly how much time should pass before a given migrant community becomes diasporic, but Butler (2001, 192) suggests that it is untenable to identify a diaspora until at least a second generation—born to migrant parents and raised beyond their place of origin—can demonstrably maintain and perpetuate collective identities linked to the place from which the previous generation(s) emigrated. As Butler states, “[d]iasporas are multi-generational; they combine the individual migration experience with the collective history of group dispersal and regensis of communities abroad” (192).

It is on this point where claims to Crimean IDPs' diasporic condition become flimsy and difficult to defend. As I write these lines, it is four years to the day since the Russian Federation officially declared sovereignty over Crimea on May 18, 2014 following the illegal referendum held two days earlier, marking the official start of the occupation and the approximate beginning of the Crimean IDP crisis. Although children have already been born in the Ukrainian mainland to IDP parents from Crimea, much more than four years will certainly be required before it is clear whether this generation will carry the torch of Crimean-ness and/or Crimean Tatar-ness. Given that Crimean IDPs are already full-fledged Ukrainian citizens with a strong sense of belonging to the state and well-developed senses of their own Ukrainian-ness, assimilation is already happening rapidly and effortlessly for some, long before their children might even have a chance to inherit an identity that is distinctly Crimean. Furthermore, it remains unclear exactly how long Crimeans will remain internally displaced, as answers to this question vary widely within the Crimean IDP community and depend largely on geopolitical forces far beyond the control of IDPs themselves. According to Irina Brunova-Kalisetskaya—a former professor of sociology at Tavrichesky National University in Simferopol before her displacement to Kyiv—time and uncertainty about Crimea's future are two factors that may gradually erode the salience of Crimean regional identities among IDPs; “with time,” she explained to me, “people will lose this belonging, these emotional linkages to Crimea. Also, there is an understanding that migration could last for a long time, for many years. It's not just for half a year, as some people thought previously. So, this really influences how preservable this identity will be” (Interview 019, Irina Brunova-Kalisetskaya).



**(When) Do Crimean IDPs Plan to Return to Crimea?**

One of the questions I asked in my online survey is whether respondents plan to return permanently to Crimea [*“planirujete li vy vernut’sia v Krym?”*]. Responses suggest that many do not envision remaining displaced for long, but most are not yet prepared to return (Table 8). Only 2.2% of respondents answered that they are already making plans to return to Crimea [*“da, ia uzhe gotovlius’ k vozvrashcheniiu”*], including only 1.8% of ethnic Ukrainians and 5.6% of Crimean Tatars, but not a single ethnic Russian or representative of another minority group. However, an outright majority (54.1%) of all respondents indicated that they will indeed return to Crimea once it returns to Ukraine [*“da, kogda Krym vernetsia v sostav Ukrainy”*], including 50% of ethnic Russians, 46.8% of ethnic Ukrainians, 44.4% of other minorities, and a remarkable 73.6% of Crimean Tatars. As one Crimean Tatar interviewee told me bluntly, Crimea’s return to Ukrainian control is a “mandatory condition” before he would ever entertain the idea of moving back (Interview 013, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

**Table 8:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, “Do you plan to return permanently to Crimea?”

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes, Already Preparing to Return	2.2	1.8	0	5.6	0
Yes, When Crimea Returns to Ukraine	54.1	46.8	50	73.6	44.4
No, Staying or Going Elsewhere	28.8	38.2	30.2	6.4	44.4
Difficult to Answer	14.9	13.2	19.8	14.4	11.1

Alternatively, far fewer responded that they have no plans to return to Crimea regardless of what its future political status may be; only 28.8% of all respondents answered that they plan to stay put or to move elsewhere other than Crimea [*“net, planiruiiu zdes’ ostat’sia, ili pereekhat’, no ne v Krym”*], including 30.2% of ethnic Russians, 38.2% of ethnic Ukrainians, 44.4% of all other minority groups, and a meager 6.4% of Crimean Tatars. Additionally, 14.9%

of all respondents indicated that it was too difficult to answer whether they plan to return permanently to Crimea, including 19.8% of ethnic Russians, 13.2% of ethnic Ukrainians, 14.4% of Crimean Tatars, and 11.1% of other minorities.

These results suggest that most Crimean IDPs—including pluralities or majorities of all ethnic subgroup—are merely waiting for the Russian occupation to end and for Crimea to return to Ukrainian sovereignty, at which point they will return home. Additionally, results from another survey question indicate a surprising degree of confidence that the occupation of Crimea will end in relatively short order; in another survey section, I asked when respondents believe Crimea will return to Ukraine [*“po vashemu mnenniui, kogda verenetsia Krym v Ukrainu?”*] (Table 9). A mere 3.2% of all respondents believed that Crimean would be returning in less than a year, including 3.4% of ethnic Russians, 1.8% of ethnic Ukrainians, 6.4% of Crimean Tatars, and no representatives of other minority groups. However, respondents were markedly more confident that Crimea would indeed return to Ukraine, only with a bit more time. A full 42.7% of respondents believe that Crimea will return within one to five years (of June 2016), including 34.5% of ethnic Russians, 40% of ethnic Ukrainians, 52.8% of Crimean Tatars, and 50% of representatives of other minority groups. Additionally, 38.2% also answered that Crimea will return to Ukraine at some point more than five years in the future, including 46.6% of ethnic Russians, 41.8% of ethnic Ukrainians, 28.8% of Crimean Tatars, and 27.8% of other minorities. Those who do not believe that Crimea will ever return to Ukraine were thus a very small minority at only 8.2%, including 9.5% of ethnic Russians, 8.6% of ethnic Ukrainians, 4.8% of Crimean Tatars, and 13.9% of other minorities. Only 5.8% of all respondents suggested that they were uncertain about whether Crimea would return to Ukraine or according to what timeline, and an additional 2% said that it would return only after certain political conditions were met. All

told, a staggering 86.1% of respondents were confident that Crimea would return to Ukraine sooner or later, including 86.2% of ethnic Russians, 85.4% of ethnic Ukrainians, 92.8% of Crimean Tatars, and 77.8% of all other minorities.

**Table 9:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, “When do you think Crimea will return to Ukraine?”

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
In Less Than One Year	3.2	1.8	3.4	6.4	0
In the Near Future (1 to 5 Years)	42.7	40	34.5	52.8	50
In the Distant Future (More than 5 Years)	38.2	41.8	46.6	28.8	27.8
Crimea Will Never Return to Ukraine	8.2	8.6	9.5	4.8	13.9
Don't Know / Uncertain	5.8	5.9	4.3	2.4	13.9
When Certain Conditions Are Met	2	1.8	1.7	4.8	0

From a realist’s perspective—or merely that of somebody outside the Crimean IDP community—the idea that the Russian occupation of Crimea will end sometime in the near future would appear rather far-fetched and unlikely. The Kremlin has dug its heels in deeply over its control of Crimea, investing billions of rubles in infrastructure and development projects in the region, and working to integrate it thoroughly into the social, legal, and military structures of the Russian Federation (Retson 2016). The opening of the Kerch Strait Bridge connecting Crimea to the Russian mainland in May 2018 is further indication that the Kremlin has firmly wrapped its tendrils around Crimea and is determined not to let go. The mere suggestion that Russia would relinquish control of Crimea is treated as absurd and incomprehensible in the official rhetoric of the Russian state; for example, during an interview with Russia’s foremost news anchor, Dmitriy Kisilev, in the days leading up to the 2018 Russian presidential elections, President Putin was asked under what circumstances he may consider returning Crimea to Ukraine, to which he responded, “what, have you lost your mind or something? There are no such circumstances and there never will be” (“Net takikh obstoiatel’stv...” 2018). Barring some major breakdown in the Russian state power structure or its internal political cohesion, the prospect of Crimea slipping

from the Kremlin's control and returning to that of Kyiv is rather unlikely in the short- or medium-term despite the demands and efforts of Ukrainians and the international community. Nevertheless, whether through the power of wishful thinking or assurance in the righteousness of their cause, Crimean IDPs remain confident that the occupation is temporary, and accordingly view their displacement, in many cases, as temporary too.

### **Crimean Tatars and the Imperative to Return**

As survey results indicate, Crimean Tatars are more likely than other Crimean IDPs to plan to return once the occupation has ended, and narratives emerging from interviews further corroborate this disparity. Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk, co-founder of *Krym SOS* and editor-in-chief of the influential online news outlet, *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, told me that she observes a similar trend among Crimean Tatars despite the fact that she herself does not plan to return to Crimea:

It seems to me that Crimean Tatars have a more painful desire to return to their homeland, to Crimea, more so than other IDPs from Crimea. (...) In general, I do not plan to return to Crimea, but Crimean Tatars have a different history. They all just want to return to Crimea, to their homeland. I don't mean to generalize in any way, but in most cases Crimean Tatars have a stronger desire to live there, in Crimea. (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk)

Some Slavic Crimeans also recognize that Crimean Tatars have a much stronger desire to return to Crimea due to their unique and immutable attachment to the region:

Practically all the Crimean Tatars say, "we will go back home as soon as we liberate Crimea." They stick together and keep to themselves. Almost none of them want to stay here, and I think it's absolutely true that Crimea is their homeland. They say, "we should live in our homeland, but we can't live there now for various reasons; for some it's political, some would immediately be imprisoned or beaten." We didn't face threats like this, but who knows, we couldn't sit still, we did the same thing. They believe that they will definitely return, because maybe they haven't integrated 100% into the society here, it

seems to me. I don't know, they somehow consider themselves temporary.  
(Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

Tellingly, Mustafa Dzhemilev even insisted to me that neither he nor others in the Crimean Tatar community even think about the fact that they are internally displaced, because they view this as only a temporary measure in the struggle against Russian occupation of their homeland; “[f]rankly speaking, we do not think about the role of IDPs,” he stated in response to my question regarding the role of Crimean Tatar IDPs in modern Ukraine, adding, “[t]hese are temporary settlers, they will return to their homeland after its liberation from occupation. Everything is focused on this” (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev). Later in our interview, when I asked his thoughts on the question of a Crimean or Crimean Tatar diaspora in Ukraine, he responded with the novel suggestion that they are a “temporary diaspora” because of their focused intent on returning. This notion of a “temporary” diaspora directly contradicts the argument that a diaspora can only develop with time, and probably does more to counter the idea of a Crimean or Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine than support it.

Many of the Crimean Tatars I spoke with were indeed adamant about their intent to return to Crimea as soon as liberation made it possible, even those who felt comfortable living in the mainland. “Of course,” responded one interviewee when asked if she plans to return, “I won’t be putting down roots in Kyiv. I really like this city, it is very calm and peaceful, I really do love it, but I still love my Crimea more. I want to live and be creative in my Crimea” (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s). For Gayana Yuksel, the editor-in-chief of the QHA Crimean News Agency who was forced to relocate to Kyiv after Russian authorities banned her husband from Crimea, returning to Crimea is now her singular objective:

My feelings about everything that has happened have been really exacerbated, because I am a person who has lost her home—forcibly lost her home. I did not want to leave this home, they sent me away, and now I am homeless. For me now,

the question of returning to Crimea, this isn't just some statement or declaration, it is not theoretical. It is a vitally important question for me, because I must return home, I want to go back there so much. (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel)

In another case, a Crimean Tatar man living in Lviv argued against the notion that he is part of a diaspora in mainland Ukraine precisely because he believes he is there on a strictly temporary basis and plans to return to Crimea—along with the majority of Crimean Tatar IDPs—as soon as circumstances allow:

The word “diaspora” ... I never thought about this, but I know that I am a guest here, not because Ukrainians are something different, but just because Crimea is so much better for me than everything else. It's just because I know that as soon as the situation changes, I will immediately return to Crimea, and so will 95% of Crimean Tatars. Only a few will remain [in the mainland], and this will also be useful; let there be Crimean Tatars everywhere so that we can find them when we travel, so that they can do things and say things to help people think well of and understand the Crimean Tatars—this is also a good thing. But the majority will return, that's why I accept myself as a guest and not a diaspora, because a diaspora still implies that you are torn away, you have some permanent place of residence and you are a representative of your people somewhere in a different place. I don't consider myself this, I am a guest and I view myself as a guest accordingly, nothing more, and I don't accept that I am somewhere beyond the border. (Interview 061, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

Some Crimean Tatars told me that they would be prepared to return to Crimea even while it remains occupied under certain extenuating circumstances, including as one interviewee who conceded that she would willingly move back if her family required her assistance:

I really want to return when Crimea returns to Ukraine. I have no desire to live there as long as it is not returned, as long as it will be part of Russia. The truth is that anything can happen. Everything also depends on my family, on my parents. If my parents really need me there, then I will have to go back regardless of whether Crimea is part of Russia or not. But if everything is normal, then I will move back only when Crimea returns to Ukraine. (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Several Slavic Crimeans also expressed desires or plans to return to Crimea if and when it returns to Ukraine, but generally with far less enthusiasm and often in more hypothetical or conditional terms. One ethnic Russian interviewee suggested that he might move back to Crimea

only if it were returned to Ukraine, although he was far less optimistic than the average Crimean IDP about the prospects of this happening: “If it returns to Ukraine, yes, but for now, no. I just don’t believe that this will happen any time soon. When I hear optimistic conversations about the fact that [Crimea will return] in one, two, three, four years ... it won’t happen this decade, unfortunately” (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s). Another interviewee told me that his friends back in Crimea will ask him when he plans to return, to which he responds, “only when Crimea will be Ukrainian, then I will come back.” However, as the interviewee went on, he seemed less certain that he would be prepared to go back even under the right circumstances:

Right now, we plan to return, of course. But this probably depends on how much time and effort it will take. If we blend into the crowd here, if we integrate... children, studying, all this business ... it might be that my daughter goes to university somewhere here, and I won’t leave her alone, but she should be here, so I don’t rule out the idea that we could stay here. (Interview 025, ethnic Ukrainian man, 40s)

Oksana Novikova, owner of the bakery *Kryms’ka Perepichka* in Lviv, suggested that she could be persuaded to return to Crimea only when it is liberated, and only if she sees interesting opportunities there. As she told me, “[I could return] if there will be the possibility, if there is something interesting to do, something interesting to build. You know, after a big cleansing, after a period when a lot has been destroyed, it’s easier to build something new, and this would probably be interesting to me” (Interview 059, Oksana Novikova). These comparatively lukewarm attitudes among Slavic IDPs toward returning to Crimea again highlight the stark differences in how Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness each promote a sense of regional belonging.

## Planning for Permanent (Re)Settlement

Conversely, although they are in the minority, there are some Crimean IDPs both Slavic and Tatar who express no strong desire to return to Crimea even if it were to return to Kyiv's control. As discussed in Chapter Six, some Slavic Crimeans never developed the same intense connection to the region that others have, making the decision to remain in the mainland all the easier given the negative changes brought about by the occupation. "The only things that really connect me to Crimea are my parents and the sea," remarked one interviewee, "everything else has become so foreign to me. There are no opportunities there, there are no perspectives. There is a feeling that the people are isolated" (Interview 067, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). For others, the thought of returning to a Crimea populated by people who supported the annexation and who have acted aggressively toward supporters of Ukraine is simply anathema. "The people there will always be the same," another interviewee told me, "it doesn't matter what you call it—Crimea, Ukraine, Russia, a Crimean Tatar autonomy, or anything else. It's still the same people, and for me the majority of these people are traitors, and you need to say this loudly and strongly. I would not want to live among these people" (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s). Also expressing an aversion to the people of Crimea but a longing for the physical environment, one couple were prepared to call their displacement to Lviv permanent, although one seemingly held out more hope for an eventual return than the other:

M: In any event, we have decided that we will never return to Crimea, even if...

W: Never say never.

M: While we are in our current situation, even if tomorrow they announce that Crimea has been returned... who knows. But right now I do not think that I want to return to these people. I want to return to the territory, I want to return to the climate, but I do not want to return to these people.

W: Will we be able to outlast that [Russian] empire? I don't know. (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man and woman, 40s)



For one interviewee, the connection to Crimea and to her hometown of Sevastopol remains strong, but the experience of the annexation and occupation were so devastating that she flatly rejects the possibility of ever moving back:

Crimea is my homeland, and Sevastopol is my homeland. I will always say this, but these recent events have somehow alienated me, and I don't want to be there anymore. I have no desire to return to there, I know that even if everything goes back to the way it was, I won't go back. This is clearly a strange understanding of homeland; it's my homeland, but I already don't want to go back there. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

While a clear majority of Crimean Tatars assert their preparedness to return to Crimea as soon as it is deoccupied, I did encounter some who say that they have no interest in returning. In most of these cases, Crimean Tatar interviewees echoed the concerns of Slavic Crimeans that living among people who supported Russia's actions in Crimea would be far too difficult to bear. "I will never go back to live there, even when Crimea will be Ukrainian again," one Crimean Tatar interviewee stated to my surprise, adding,

I already understand perfectly how unpleasant it would be for me to live alongside those people. I would look at every person I meet and wonder whether or not they accepted the annexation. Did they become traitors or not? I don't want to live where I am secretly wondering whenever I go to the doctor [for example] whether or not he was a traitor or a collaborationist. (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

In another case, I spoke with a man of Crimean Tatar heritage who identifies strictly as a Muslim with little to no regard for ethnicity, and has, as such, a weakly developed attachment to Crimea. He told me that he felt persecuted in Crimea even before the occupation began, but feels much more welcomed in the small Carpathian village where he and his family have resettled, and thus has no desire to return to a place mired in hostilities:

No, I don't plant to [return to Crimea]. It's better to head to Europe, see what's there. If I'm being honest, there's nothing calling me back there. The society seems much more pleasant to me here than there. There I would be hassled from all sides, and with time this affects the mentality of a person who lives like that.

Then when you leave, you find yourself in a new society, and you understand how difficult it had been before. Why go back if it was so difficult? You develop a different mentality, and you don't want to go back. It's hard to understand this until you've tried it, it's like sweetness after a bitter taste. You can't really explain it. (Interview 081, Muslim man, 30s)

### **Slavic Crimeans and the (Mostly) Easy Prospects of Assimilation**

Whether or not IDPs plan to return to Crimea if and when it returns to Ukrainian control, the fact remains that an end to the occupation is highly unlikely in the foreseeable future. Only a very small number of Crimean IDPs appear willing to return to the region before deoccupation can occur, and the remaining majority therefore faces a long-term, indefinite displacement accompanied by the processes—and to some, threats—of assimilation into the socio-cultural milieus in which they have resettled. Whether members of the Crimean IDP community are willing and/or able to withstand gradual assimilation that could weaken their sense of belonging to Crimea may indeed be a determining factor in the salience of their diasporic condition in the long run, but attitudes toward the prospect of assimilation vary widely—particularly between Slavs and Crimean Tatars.

According to Sergei Kostinsky from the Ukrainian Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting, Slavic Crimean IDPs embrace or accept assimilation from the moment they decide not to return to Crimea. “Among my [Slavic Crimean] acquaintances there are people who say that they won't return, that they don't want to,” Kostinsky told me, “even though they were born in Crimea and lived their whole lives there. This is assimilation” (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky). In a similar vein, *Krymskaia Diaspora* founder Anatolii Zasoba stated that Crimeans—namely, Slavs—have begun to assimilate in mainland Ukraine because they have mostly accepted that their displacement is long-term. In contrast, Zasoba argued, IDPs from the Donbas are more resistant to processes of assimilation because they live in anticipation of a

quick return to their homes, thereby supporting the argument that assimilation necessarily follows from an acceptance of long-term displacement. Yet paradoxically, Zasoba also argued that Crimean IDPs feel a stronger sense of unity—indeed, of diaspora—than those from the Donbas despite their propensity for assimilation, suggesting that assimilation and diasporality are not necessarily inversely related:

Crimeans understood almost immediately that they left for the long haul, they understood that this is for many years ahead. We won't be returning after half a year, and Crimeans have started to quickly assimilate in this new place, they have somehow integrated into their surroundings. But IDPs from the east, some of them even now, more than a year since the beginning of the conflict, they are still sitting on their suitcases, they are just waiting. This is a feeling of waiting in a suspended state, it has a devastating effect on a person. A person should decide how they plan to live, in integration or re-integration by going back. So, a sense of unity has not developed for them. Maybe this is because of the human factor, the lack of necessary leadership that could lead to the consolidation and unification of people in the format of a diaspora. Or maybe it is due to different factors, but Crimeans have this. (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba)

Not all Slavic Crimean IDPs agree that merely accepting long-term or permanent displacement means that they have become fully assimilated into their new community. One interviewee now living in Lviv rejected the suggestion that she has become a full-fledged resident of the city—a “Lviver,” for lack of a proper demonym in English—arguing that the process of assimilation will take a much longer period of time. “To be a Lviver [*lvovianin*] you probably need to live here for longer,” she insisted, explaining that “I lived in Crimea for 20 years. I think that if a Lviver went to Crimea and lived there for only two years, he won't become a Crimean. In the same way, I can't claim to be a Lviver” (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). But in other cases, Slavic Crimeans described experiences that point to a rapid process of assimilation; for another interviewee also living in Lviv, the initial feeling of being an outsider quickly subsided as she developed new friendships and relationships, and rather quickly shook the tendrils of her Crimean-ness along with an initial sense of diasporality:

AC: Do you feel at home here [in Lviv]?

W: Lately, yes. It's strange to me, because people have started accepting me as a local, and I was always afraid that I won't be able integrate, to fully become a part of the city, of this society. Along with this, I don't forget where I come from. I keep on living and blending in.

AC: Do you have any friends or acquaintances here who also came from Crimea?

W: No, I had two acquaintances from Lviv [when I arrived], and that was it. Now I have some friends from different cities, there are some who came from Donetsk who live here now, and a lot of local friends. Those who have resettled here often try to create something like a diaspora and stick together. I was like this in the beginning, but then you could probably say that I integrated. My friends now are mostly people who were born and raised in different cities.

AC: Did you feel like you were a member of a diaspora when you arrived?

W: At first, yes.

AC: Did you meet different Crimeans then?

W: Yes, I worked in a café that some Crimean Tatars opened after they came here. It's closed now, it was only there temporarily. After that I just started to interact with more people, I started exploring my interests and got carried away with new things. These boundaries faded away—who you are, where you come from. There's somebody who has stirred in me the emotions that the sea used to bring me, I've been taken more with a local person. But it's true that I get sad around Christmas and Easter, because all the families here get together.

(Interview 067, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Assimilatory forces affect some in more subtle, cognitive ways that may reveal themselves at surprising or unexpected moments. An interviewee in Kyiv described one such moment that caught him off guard during a telephone conversation with his parents back in Crimea:

I recently surprised myself, I had a bit of a shock. I was speaking with my parents on the telephone—my parents stayed in Crimea. When my mother asked if I could help her friends transfer some things to Kyiv, I said, “well, whenever I come visit you, then maybe I can pick it up.” That is, I said “when I *come to visit you* [*kogda ia poedu k vam*],” I didn't say, “when I *go home*.” And my mother corrected me, she said, “you mean, *when you come home*.” So, I see that something has really changed in my mind. (Interview 009, ethnic Russian man, 30s)

Generally speaking, as long as they see themselves remaining in mainland Ukraine, the vast majority of Slavic Crimean IDPs I spoke with either viewed assimilation as something to strive for, or as something that would happen easily and effortlessly because there was little to separate them from the other Ukrainians among whom they have resettled. In truth, I interviewed

only one Slav who believed that her Crimean-ness presented an insurmountable barrier to assimilation, resulting in a deep and cynical sense of alienation. The fact that she is a Sevastopol transplant living in Lviv—that is, a former resident of the most “Russian” of Ukrainian cities living in what is arguably the most “Ukrainian” of cities—only serves to widen the gulf she perceives between herself and her adoptive home. “I don’t know who I am, I’m like some kind of Russian emigrant,” she told me, explaining that

going from Sevastopol to Lviv is just like emigrating. Yes, it is internal migration, but it is generally a very difficult migration. I feel like a Russian emigrant here, probably the same way emigrants to France or America feel, even though I am in the same country. I never changed countries, but I feel like an emigrant.  
(Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

“I don’t see how we [Crimeans] will every become one of them [in Lviv],” she told me frankly, “because we have a different mentality, a different culture. Even though it seems that we should all be the same Ukrainians, we are all from the same country, but it is completely different” (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s). Her understanding of how Crimeans are different from other Slavs in Ukraine goes much deeper than the explanations I heard from others; she argued that Crimeans have a physical and genetic predisposition to Crimea’s climate that makes it very difficult to acclimate to Western Ukraine, specifically:

We all hurt in the same way; it’s the air, the sea, we remember how it smelled there in the springtime. But what can we do? The trout lives in one kind of water, and the carp in a different kind. We can change the water, but it won’t work out; The carp can only live in muddy water, and the trout needs fresh water. We have beautiful women there in Crimea, because here they don’t get enough iodine and all the rest. Even [renowned Ukrainian actor] Bogdan Stupka said that Ukraine has the most beautiful women in the world, but the most beautiful of the beautiful are in Crimea. The sea, the sun... We are different people. It’s very difficult for southerners to live here. We’ve come to Lviv, to this beautiful place, but for southerners it’s really tough to live in a different region. It’s genetic, there’s no way to fool it. (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

Moreover, this interviewee also told me that the trauma of displacement and her sense of longing for a Crimea she cannot return to will further inhibit her ability to assimilate and find a sense of normalcy in Lviv:

No, we don't want to return to Crimea. We all ache, we all worry, at night we dream of Crimea, but God forbid we go back to that Crimea crammed with soldiers and guns. It's not our Crimea anymore, they've already taken it away. But I don't know how I'm going to live out the rest of my life here with this sadness, with this nostalgia, confusion, with this internal conflict. (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

While it appears that this interviewee is an outlier among Slavic Crimean IDPs in terms of receptiveness to assimilation either in the short- or long-term, her views nevertheless underscore the point that the barriers of difference IDPs construct between Crimean-ness and Ukrainian-ness—along with the durability of these barriers—can vary wildly.

### **Crimean Tatars and the Threats of Assimilation**

The differences between Ukrainian-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness, on the other hand, are much starker and more recognizable, but the resilience of these barriers and their ability to gird against the forces of assimilation are grave concerns for many internally displaced Crimean Tatars who view assimilation as a destructive threat. “The danger [of assimilation] remains, and moreover, it has grown,” Refat Chubarov warned me, explaining that

It isn't just that we find ourselves in a different linguistic and cultural environment—even in Crimea we were small, 300,000 altogether, about 15% of the population of Crimea. And we had only just begun to get past the very threatening situation of losing our language and our culture, we had only just started to reestablish ourselves and reach a period of rebirth, and it was at this moment that the occupation happened. So those who wound up in the mainland really find themselves outside of their linguistic, national, and cultural surroundings, outside of their community, and of course this increases the risk of assimilation. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

As Chubarov notes, the risk of assimilation is certainly higher for Crimean Tatars while living outside of their homeland, but they have lived with this risk for several generations; indeed, from the time Slavs first became a majority in Crimea sometime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Crimean Tatars have been a minority group susceptible to assimilation wherever they have come to reside, be it in various diaspora communities or in Crimea itself. The Crimean Tatars, I've come to learn, pride themselves on their self-sufficiency and a powerful sense of unity and solidarity, and these characteristics have helped them preserve their identity for centuries in the face of crushing adversity. But assimilation and disintegration have been constant, looming threats. "Do you know what our primary skill is as Crimean Tatars?" one focus group participant asked me;

It's called *berlek*, it means "unity." It has always saved us, it always helped us, but we often forget about it. In difficult moments it really saves us, the idea of our unity. It means that we support each other. Of course, it's bad that it appears mainly in difficult times, and in normal times we lose it a bit. With time especially, people start to assimilate, and we see this even in Crimea, I've really noticed it. Maybe somewhere in Bakhchisarai or Sudak it's not so noticeable, but in Simferopol we really notice that we start to disintegrate, the youth forget their culture, they don't teach our language in schools. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Crimean Tatars have been repeatedly driven from their homeland and widely disperse since the first annexation of Crimea in 1783, with large diaspora communities now located in Turkey, Romania, and Uzbekistan, and with smaller pockets in Russia, Poland, Lithuania, the United States, Canada, and other countries. The various experiences of Crimean Tatars abroad provide those now displaced in mainland Ukraine with both positive and negative examples for how to resist assimilation and maintain a collective attachment to Crimea. Generally speaking, the longer they have been removed from Crimea, the less remains of their Crimean Tatar-ness, for, as one veteran of the Crimean Tatar national movement told me, "there is a very powerful weapon in the assimilation process—time" (Interview 032, Crimean Tatar man, 60s). The oldest

and by far largest Crimean Tatar diaspora is found in Turkey, but little remains of their Crimean Tatar-ness according to several people I spoke with. “Look at what’s happened in Turkey,” one Crimean Tatar interviewee remarked concerning the diaspora there:

In my view—and maybe this sounds a bit harsh—they remember that they are Crimean Tatars maybe once a year, when it’s the anniversary of the deportation on May 18. They’ll pull out their Crimean Tatar flag from some forgotten corner, shake the dust out of it, and go to a demonstration recalling that they are Crimean Tatars, and talking about the fact that they have such a history, that they are there [in Turkey] in great numbers and that they support us. But in fact, we don’t feel any such support from them. They have assimilated, they’re Turks. Sometimes we will hear how they state proudly that “my grandfather was a Crimean Tatar, I saved some photos of him,” or, “my grandmother brought some kind of clothes from Crimea, so I am a Crimean Tatar,” but their mentality is all Turkish. This is a big problem. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

During an informal focus group session I held with a group of Crimean Tatar youths at *Musafir*, I learned that one participant was currently studying in Turkey and was only in Kyiv visiting friends. I asked her whether she felt like a part of the Crimean Tatar diaspora community there, and her response—along with the conversation it sparked—further emphasized just how far removed from the “pure” Crimean Tatar community the Turkish branch has become:

W: I don’t consider myself a diaspora. In Turkey I am just a student who is there temporarily. I participate in the events organized by members of the Crimean Tatar diaspora there, I always stay in contact with them, but I don’t consider myself part of the diaspora. Those who have lived there for many years, they are the diaspora.

AC: What is the difference between the [temporary] settlers there and the old diaspora?

M1: That diaspora has already assimilated.

M2: By the way, there are a lot of Crimean Tatars in Turkey, around 3.5 million I think. A large part has already assimilated, they are considered Turks. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar woman and men, 20s)

According to the same interviewee quoted above with regard to the diaspora in Turkey, there are a number of Crimean Tatars with a more recent history of migration who have also lost their ethnic identities and connections to Crimea through processes of assimilation. Namely,



these are Crimean Tatars who left Crimea for other parts of Ukraine or to points abroad in search of economic opportunities, and they too have lost much of their Crimean Tatar-ness, he argued.

The interviewee contrasted their experiences with those of Crimean Tatar IDPs, arguing that the key differences lie in the intention to return and the commitment to persevering social and cultural ties to the homeland in the meantime:

We have a closer connection with the people who are living in the homeland now, who still have the courage, who are fighting despite the isolation, who feel the moral and physical pressure every day. They have remained regardless of this. We at least maintain a stronger connection with them, because for the past 24 years I lived in Crimea, I had a very big social circle, lots of relatives, friends, and neighbors. I feel a much stronger connection with them than with the new contacts and acquaintances I have made here [in Lviv], or with those I made in [mainland] Ukraine before. There were a lot of Crimean Tatars who left before all of this for economic reasons, whose plans were connected with self-fulfillment and so forth. This includes those who live outside the borders [of Ukraine]. They all associate less and less with Crimea, with the homeland. That's why I feel this connection, I will personally never lose it, and this means that we have a different path, one that leads back [to Crimea]. We will return regardless, and those who left a long time ago will not return. They will come as guests, they will come for weddings, maybe they will buy a home ostensibly for when they retire, but physically and psychologically, with all of their being, they will be in a different place, in a different country, by a different sea, by different mountains. They will lose this connection. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Another group of assimilated Crimean Tatars providing a cautionary tale to IDPs are those living in southern Ukraine, just to the north of Crimea in the Kherson Oblast. This community first appeared during the 1970s and 1980s when many Crimean Tatars moved from Central Asia to regions adjacent to Crimea—including also to the Krasnodar Krai in Russia—in anticipation of an immediate return to Crimea the moment they would be allowed in. Once settled, some eventually opted to stay put while others flooded back to Crimea once they had been given the green light. During a short visit to Kherson, I spoke with a recently displaced Crimean Tatar man who brought up this older community of Crimean Tatars, noting that “there are about 600 families here who were not allowed into Crimea during the time of the Soviet

Union. They just stayed to live here. They are already assimilated, they are Ukrainian and Russian speakers. They don't have any special traditions" (Interview 036, Crimean Tatar man, 40s). As we stood outside the interviewee's small food stand in a Kherson marketplace, we were joined briefly by two Crimean Tatar men who had settled in the region during the Soviet period. Although I did not have the opportunity to interview these men, I immediately noticed their accents, specifically the way their "g's" were softened into "h's" in a way that is common of Russian speakers across much of southern Ukraine, and which gave them away as long-time residents and not recently displaced peoples from Crimea where "g's" are far less frequently softened. This is only one small and ultimately insignificant indicator of assimilation, but the fact remains that this particular subset of the global Crimean Tatar community has lost much of their cultural and social connections to Crimea despite their immediate proximity to it.

But while Crimean Tatars can point to a number of diaspora and settler communities where Crimean Tatar-ness has eroded under the pressures of assimilation, they need only look to their experiences of exile in Central Asia for a successful model of how to resist assimilation and remain fixated on the dream of returning to the homeland. Crucially, it was during these roughly 50 years of exile that Crimean Tatars demonstrably proved they could preserve and defend their Crimean Tatar-ness from assimilatory pressures across multiple generations. Those born beyond Crimea were inculcated with a love for their estranged and mythologized homeland and inherited what few elements of their national culture and identity the older generations had managed to preserve in spite of Soviet efforts to eradicate Crimean Tatar-ness. While those under 25 or so who were born in Crimea or shortly before arriving must turn to the stories of their parents and grandparents for guidance in remaining fortitudinous in times of exile, members of the older generations have first-hand experience, and they have renewed commitments to weathering

displacement from their homeland with their national identity intact. Indeed, Crimean Tatar interviewees frequently drew comparisons between their current state of displacement and the experience of exile following the 1944 deportation, pointing to their endurance in Central Asia as proof that they can endure once again in mainland Ukraine. “The threat of assimilation has dogged us since Uzbekistan,” one interviewee noted, who would have been just a young boy by the time his family returned to Crimea. “Even when I went to school there,” he continued,

[T]hey told us that there is no religion, they taught us about communism and the Russian language, but at home our families always told us that this is incorrect, that we do have a religion, we are Muslims. In school, ok, you say what they expect of you, but you know that you are Crimean Tatar, you are a Muslim, with a native language, and you are here unjustly. Our grandfathers and grandmothers told us this especially, and that we will definitely return. And now, remembering this, when we end up again in some form of deportation, our objective is to preserve [our identity], because we are not that many—only 300 to 400 thousand Crimean Tatars [including those in Crimea], and it is very easy for us to assimilate. Therefore, we need to preserve our language, our traditions, our culture, everything that is ours, to not assimilate under any circumstances, and to once again return to Crimea. (Interview 054, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

“In principle, Crimean Tatars have only one position: Crimea. That’s it!” exclaimed another interviewee, herself barely old enough to remember much of her early years in Uzbekistan before returning to Crimea. With a sense of hope, she explained to me that

God willing, all of this will end someday in Crimea, and half of those Crimeans who are located here now will return home. Even living in Uzbekistan, where everything was great, when the possibility to return to Crimea finally came, so many Crimean Tatars went and just left their nice apartments and their homes behind. As soon as they started returning to the homeland *en masse*, they just built their own homes, they raised them with their own hands. So many difficulties have really hardened my nation. There is a certain Crimean Tatar saying, that “gold awaits those who are patient” [*na dne terpeniia zoloto*]. My nation is very persistent and courageous. That’s what I can tell you about my nation. (Interview 078, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Another interviewee—a veteran of the Soviet-era Crimean Tatar national movement now highly regarded as an elder statesman of the Crimean Tatar community—argued that Crimean Tatar

IDPs have viewed their displacement from the beginning through the lens of their previous experiences in Central Asia, and therefore expect to outlast the occupation and return to Crimea in due course:

The vast majority of Crimean Tatars whom I know, who were forced to resettle in connection with the events in Crimea and because their lives were directly threatened, they do not see their future in mainland Ukraine in the long-term. They still see themselves as a part of Crimea, because from the very first moment it becomes possible, when Crimea is liberated, they will return to Crimea. With a feeling such as this, it is difficult to say that they are strongly connected to [mainland Ukraine]. Yes, they will establish lives here, because they must live, they must feed their children, they must teach them and so forth. This will happen, and we already lived through this in Central Asia, where our parents were sent, deported, exiled. Naturally, they also had to establish lives there, build homes, create the conditions to receive an education, etc. But we were constantly raised with this link to Crimea, we were told that we need to return to Crimea. So, this process will continue somehow here. (Interview 032, Crimean Tatar man, 60s)

### **Assessing the Long-Term Prospects for Crimean IDPs' Diasporic Condition**

To summarize, the role of time in determining the salience of diaspora for a migrant community comes down to two factors; whether the community remains or intends to remain beyond their place of origin for an extended or indefinite period of time, and whether they are able to perpetually preserve distinctive elements of their culture and identity—including linkages to their place of origin—in the face of cultural and social assimilation. The verdict is still out on these two points for Crimean IDPs, as four years is certainly not an adequate amount of time to assess the longevity or durability of Crimean-ness or Crimean Tatar-ness in mainland Ukraine. Much depends on the course of geopolitics, as a majority of Crimean IDPs are prepared to return to Crimea just as soon as the occupation ends and the peninsula returns to Ukraine, at which point the question of their diasporic condition is rendered moot. But given the unlikelihood of this scenario in the foreseeable future, it is safe to assume that Crimeans will indeed remain

displaced in mainland Ukraine for some time, likely long enough to see successive generations reach adulthood.

The question is then whether Crimean IDPs and their progeny will remain distinctly Crimean as time progresses, or whether the things that distinguish them from other Ukrainians and the socio-cultural connective tissue linking them to Crimea will wither under the pressures of assimilation. Given that Crimean IDPs are already Ukrainian citizens, assimilation is likely to come quickly and easily for some—indeed, the processes are already taking place. With little of cultural substance to delineate Crimean-ness from Ukrainian-ness, Slavic Crimeans are most susceptible to assimilation, but in most cases they view this as a positive development that will aid their struggle for peace, comfort, and normalcy in mainland Ukraine. In general, then, it appears that Slavic Crimeans exhibit weak prospects for remaining diasporic in the long-term, as their Crimean-ness is likely to lose its salience with time. To refer again to a quote I used in Chapter Six, *Krym.Realii* editor-in-chief and ethnic Ukrainian Volodymyr Pritula touched precisely on this point:

If [my Crimean-ness] is relevant for me today, in ten years it may not be so relevant for my children, or for their children. We understand that our regional identity can be lost. (...) I think that the [regional] identities of Crimeans from different [non-indigenous] ethnic groups will erode away with time, they will become Kyivans, Ukrainians, cosmopolitans, someone might go to Israel, some might go somewhere else. Assimilation will happen much more quickly.  
(Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

Moreover, many Slavic Crimean IDPs have already decided that they will not return to Crimea even if it were to return to Ukraine, and have therefore already taken an enormous step in shedding their Crimean-ness. Although most Slavic Crimeans still say that they do intend to return to Crimea after deoccupation, I suspect their numbers will decrease with time, and it is uncertain whether Crimean-ness will remain salient enough among successive generations born

to Slavic Crimean IDPs to draw them back to Crimea if and when the opportunity arises. To this point, Pritula added,

If it will be possible, of course we will return. If we don't have this opportunity, maybe our children will have the opportunity. I don't know if they will be able to preserve this Crimean identity of theirs, because it's understood that it is a regional identity. It's the place where we live to which we are attached. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

Crimean Tatar-ness, on the other hand, is far more likely to endure in mainland Ukraine. Not only do Crimean Tatars claim a unique and distinctive cultural identity separate from their Ukrainian-ness, but they remain deeply invested in and collectively attached to their Crimean homeland in a way that Slavic Crimeans simply cannot match. Furthermore, unlike most Slavic Crimeans, Crimean Tatars view assimilation as a threat to their existence as an ethno-national community, and act with vigilance to safeguard Crimean Tatar-ness from this threat. Fearing that they may repeat the fate of other Crimean Tatar diaspora and emigrant communities who have lost much of their Crimean Tatar-ness to assimilation, Crimean Tatar IDPs look to the recent historical experience of exile in Central Asia as a blueprint for preserving their culture, identity, and fixation on Crimea. Thus, even though they are far more likely than Slavic Crimeans to view themselves as only temporary settlers in mainland Ukraine, Crimean Tatars will almost certainly endure as a cohesive community with a distinctive identity for as long as they remain displaced, and so too will their diasporic condition endure.

Before moving forward, I want to quickly address the relationship between assimilation and diaspora. I have argued here that a migrant community may remain diasporic so long as its distinctive characteristics, identities, and linkages to the place of origin are not lost to assimilation, yet there are plenty of examples of communities understood to be diasporas despite having lost many of these attributes. Even with regard to Crimean Tatars, the diasporas located

in Turkey, Uzbekistan, Romania, and other countries are largely assimilated and integrated into these various national populations—yet they are still referred to as diasporas nonetheless. To clarify my point, assimilation is a broad spectrum and is bound to occur in some measures even among those who actively resist it. One aspect of the retexturing I seek to introduce to the concept of diaspora is that like assimilation, it too exists on a spectrum, experienced with greater or lesser intensity by different peoples at different times. For some diasporic communities that have been in place for several generations and who have thoroughly assimilated and integrated into their adoptive societies—for example, the Crimean Tatar diaspora in Turkey—awareness of their diasporic condition may only be passive or latent, emerging only in certain moments when events inspire or remind them of their vestigial connections to another culture and another place. It is in these moments, such as the commemoration of the Crimean Tatar deportation to which one interviewee referred, when the dissonance between being simultaneous *in place* and *out of place* may surface and be experienced, even if just for a fleeting moment in time. This is when diaspora becomes salient, and these moments come fewer and farther between the more deeply a migrant community has been assimilated.

Thus, assimilation does not preclude the existence of diaspora, it merely obfuscates and weakens the experience of diaspora with time. The question, then, is not whether a diaspora exists after any given period of time; we must consider when, where, how, and by whom diaspora is produced through the friction between divided senses of spatial belonging—and for how long these processes are still salient as assimilatory forces gradually neutralize senses of belonging to the place of origin. While their as-yet still short period of displacement may mean that Crimean IDPs fail the temporal requirement necessary for “declaring” them a diaspora, we

can nevertheless identify key differences in their testimonies and historical memoirs that portend varyingly salient and lasting experiences of diaspora as time progresses.



**Chapter Ten:**  
**“Common Features” of Diaspora:**  
**Spatial Patterns of Crimean IDPs’ Dispersal in Mainland Ukraine**

The final and perhaps most useful tool that Cohen advances for assessing a migrant group’s diasporic condition is far more multifaced than the previous three. Borrowing from Wittgenstein’s analogy that knowledge and understanding, much like a rope, are made up of numerous “fibers of meaning” that together lend strength and form, Cohen argues that diasporas are an entwinement of several different characteristics and trends that cumulatively lend strength to diasporic claims (2008, 161–162). Culling partially from previously proposed sets of criteria, namely that of Safran (1991), Cohen establishes a list of “common features” that diasporas generally embody, and which may be used as a rough measuring stick for comparative investigations of any group’s contested diasporality. Cohen is cautious to note that his list is not exhaustive, nor is it necessary for all proposed “strands” in a diasporic rope to be present in order to legitimize diasporic appeals. “Not every diaspora will exhibit every feature listed,” Cohen argues, “nor will they be present to the same degree over time and in all settings,” but “[t]he number of strands present and the more tightly coiled they are will provide the descriptive tool needed to delineate any one diaspora” (2008, 16). The list of “common features,” as Cohen proposes them, is as follows:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
4. an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;

5. the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;
6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (2008, 17)

To further situate Crimean IDPs within a diaspora framework, I will address how they may or may not adhere to these common features despite their status as internal migrants without an inherent transnational character. Rather than devote a chapter to each of these nine points, I have selectively combined points into a series of fewer thematic chapters that each address a relevant aspect of Crimean IDPs' diasporic experiences. However, I will again qualify my discussion by rejecting the view that diasporas as stable things that either do or do not exist in any given place and time. If I may extend further Cohen's Wittgensteinian metaphor, the diasporic rope does not rest passively yet still intact while not deployed as a tether between migrant community members or to a vacated home(land); its "fibers of meaning" are not entwined until the rope is pulled taut between *here* and *there*, when there is tension between simultaneous senses of being *in place* and *out of place*. The strands may fray and unravel while *there* exerts no pull, in moments when the place of origin weighs lightly or imperceptibly on migrants' identities and experiences, and with time the strands may dissolve away completely. In more grounded terms, diaspora is produced through the thoughts, emotions, actions, and interactions of individuals within a migrant community whenever there is a disjunction in their senses of socio-spatial belonging. As I will demonstrate, each of Cohen's "common features" are indeed applicable in some measure to the community of Crimean IDPs, either in whole or in part,

but this does not mean that these features are at all times salient to their identities or productive of a diasporic experience. Some of these features and their components have already been addressed in this or previous chapters, in which case an abbreviated discussion or brief summation will suffice, but others will require a more detailed examination. First, in this chapter I will address points one and two in Cohen's list of diasporic common features, which concern patterns of dispersion among diasporic migrants.

### **Scaling Migration and Spatial Dispersion**

Perhaps the most fundamental prerequisite for the emergence of any diasporic community is that they have been "dispersed" from an original location—generally construed as a homeland—to points beyond. Indeed, the very word "diaspora" derives from the Greek word *diaspeirein*, which means to "scatter about," or, literally, "disperse." According to this definition, a unidirectional pattern of migration from the place of origin to another singular location is not enough to constitute a diaspora; a multidirectional "dispersal" to at least two different destinations is required, forming a constellation of diasporic outposts. While specific branches of more sprawling diasporic conglomerates may also be referred to individually as diasporas—e.g., the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, the Turkish diaspora in Germany, the Polish diaspora in the UK, etc.—the crux of their diasporic conditions lies in the fact that they are one of multiple migrant clusters found in disparate locations but all tied to an original homeland.

Exactly how the criterion of dispersion should be scaled territorially is generally left vague within the literature concerning diasporic migration. In his schema, Cohen simply refers to "two or more foreign regions" as the necessary points of destination for a diasporic configuration to emerge. Here he echoes Safran (1991, 83), who argues that migrants or their forbearers must "have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign,

regions” before they may be recognized as a diaspora. Implicit in these criteria—as in the vast majority of works theorizing diaspora—is that these “foreign regions” must lie beyond the border of the nation-state in which a diaspora originated, and it is this very state-centric constraint on understandings of diaspora that I aim to loosen. But how should “foreign regions” as points of dispersal be construed territorially if a minimum of two are required? Should this refer to large-scale meta-regions, nation-states, sub-state regions and administrative territories, municipal areas, neighborhoods, etc.? Using again the example of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, does the state of Canada itself constitute just one site in the global Ukrainian diasporic population, or should we consider major centers of the Canadian Ukrainian population by province (e.g., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario) or by city (e.g., Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Saskatoon) as individual points in the larger Ukrainian diasporic constellation?

The imprecision with which this criterion is defined allows for some flexibility in interpretation, and in keeping with my advocacy for a translocal framework for understanding diaspora, I argue that migrant communities coherent at any given territorial scale should qualify as nodes within larger diasporic formations. The diasporic experience—that is, the specific dynamic produced through the disjunction between an original home and a place of relocation—can vary tremendously depending on the city, neighborhood, province, or region to which groups migrate, even within the same nation-state. The same may certainly be said of locales found within the place of origin of a nominally homogenous diasporic conglomerate, and I have pointed to some key differences in the translocal experience of Crimean IDPs hailing from different parts of Crimea—particularly the unique perspectives of those from Sevastopol. But Crimean IDPs have resettled in cities, towns, and villages across mainland Ukraine, and if we are

to accept a translocal theory of diaspora, this certainly qualifies as a “dispersion” to more than two locations, while the “foreignness” of these locations can be fluid and contested from a Crimean perspective. To further draw out this point and to demonstrate why Crimean IDPs may indeed be considered “dispersed” across mainland Ukraine, I will address their geographic distribution and discuss the varied factors driving their migration to different points of destination within the country.

### **Determining Crimean IDPs’ Geographic Distribution**

Although the exact number of Crimean IDPs and an accurate portrait of their distribution across Ukraine are unavailable, it is clear that the cities of Kyiv and Lviv have emerged as the two largest centers of a nascent Crimean diaspora in mainland Ukraine. This trend had already appeared before my fieldwork began, and I chose these two cities as my primary field sites based on reporting and social media discourses in the months following the annexation of Crimea. But before discussing differences between the Crimean IDP communities in these two cities, I want to address their wider distribution across Ukraine. While the Ukrainian government tracks the overall number of registered IDPs and the oblasts in which they are located, these records do not distinguish between IDPs from Crimea and from the Donbas; furthermore, many Crimean IDPs—including 35.4% of my survey sample—are not officially registered as internally displaced peoples, and thus their population and distribution are impossible to gauge with any accuracy. Official figures indicate that IDPs live in each of Ukraine’s 24 oblasts, with the heaviest concentrations found in portions of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts still under the control of the Ukrainian government (Slovo i Delo 2018) (Figure 33). But Crimean IDPs are dwarfed in these figures by IDPs from the Donbas, many of whom have resettled only a short distance from

the homes they left and therefore remain in their own oblasts or neighboring oblasts of eastern Ukraine where comparatively few Crimeans are likely to resettle.



**Figure 33:** Distribution of Internally Displaced Peoples in Ukraine as of August 2, 2018. The total population is listed as 1,516,237. (Map Source: <https://ru.slovoidilo.ua/2018/09/05/infografika/obshhestvo/dinamika-izmenenij-migracii-okkupirovannyx-territorij-ukrainy>)

**Table 10:** Survey response rates (percent) for current place of residence in mainland Ukraine.

City	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Kyiv	53.3	48.2	54.3	65.6	36.1
Lviv	15.3	14.5	20.7	9.6	22.2
Odesa	8.5	10.5	8.6	7.2	0
Kharkiv	3.2	2.7	1.7	4	8.3
Dnipro	1.8	2.7	1.7	0	2.8
Mykolaiv	1.4	2.7	0.9	0	0
Kherson	1	0.9	0	1.6	2.8
Chernivtsi	1	0.9	0.9	0	5.6
Other	14.5	16.8	11.2	12	22.2

Given the limitations of these official figures for locating Crimean IDPs, my online survey offers the most useful insight available into their geographic distribution despite the survey's own limitations and the absence of a representative sample. Altogether, I received survey responses from Crimean IDPs residing in 57 different cities, towns, or villages in 20 of Ukraine's 24 oblasts (Table 10).<sup>36</sup> In most cases only one to four responses were received from any given city, town, or village, with five or more responses—i.e., at least 1% of the survey sample of 497—received from only eight cities, which together account for 428 responses, or 86.1% of the survey sample. As expected, the highest number of responses came from Kyiv and Lviv; 265 respondents, or 53.3% of the entire survey sample, reside in Kyiv, while Lviv came in a distant second with 76 respondents, or 15.3% of the survey sample. After Kyiv and Lviv, the largest concentrations of survey respondents include 42 from Odesa (8.5% of the survey sample), 16 from Kharkiv (3.2%), nine from Dnipro (1.8%), seven from Mykolaiv (1.4%), and five each from Kherson and Chernivtsi (1% each). Thus, while Crimean IDPs are dispersed widely throughout mainland Ukraine, survey results suggest that they are heavily concentrated in only a

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<sup>36</sup> Responses were received from Crimean IDPs residing in the following oblasts: Kyivs'ka, Lviv'ska, Odes'ka, Kharkivs'ka, Khersons'ka, Vinnyts'ka, Poltavs'ka, Dniprovs'ka, Zaporiz'ka, Kirovohrads'ka, Ivano-Frankivs'ka, Donetsk, Khmel'nits'ka, Volyns'ka, Mykolaiv'ska, Rivens'ka, Chernihivs'ka, Chernivets'ka, Ternopil'ska, and Zakarpats'ka. The only oblasts from which responses were not received were Zhytomyrs'ka, Sums'ka, Luhans'ka, and Cherkas'ka.

few select cities, with Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv, and Dnipro—each ranking among the country’s most populous—emerging as the largest centers of their resettlement.

### **Factors Motivating Choices of Destination in Mainland Ukraine**

In addition to their current place of residence, I also gave survey respondents the option to explain why they chose this place as their destination after leaving Crimea. Not all respondents chose to include such an explanation, but those who did provided a wide and diverse range of responses. A number of revealing trends emerge from these data regarding the pull factors that draw Crimean IDPs to different places of resettlement (Table 11). Some pull factors are unique to specific locations; for example, sizeable proportions of respondents located in Odesa and Mykolaiv—28.6% and 42.9% of explanation providers, respectively—indicated that they are there in fulfillment of their service in the Ukrainian military, as these port cities are both home to naval facilities. Additionally, at 22.9%, several respondents in Odesa also cited its location along the Black Sea as the reason they chose it as their destination, paralleling the tendency of many Crimeans to view their connection to the sea as one of the touchstones of their Crimean-ness. In another unique case, 11.4% of explanation providers residing in Odesa indicated the city’s location near Crimea influenced their decision to resettle there.

Out of the entire sample of survey respondents who provided explanations for their current location (N=400), the most commonly cited reasons were related to work, employment, or other economic prospects (27.5%), the location of family, friends, or partners (18.3%), something personally appealing about the location or its people (11.5%), and the presence of “opportunities” not related to employment (9%). However, the salience of these pull factors varies widely depending on the destination. When residents of the top three destinations are



**Table 11:** Rates (percent) of survey respondents' explanations for choosing to relocate to given destinations in mainland Ukraine.

	Kyiv (N=212)	Lviv (N=61)	Odesa (N=35)	Other (N=92)	All (N=400)
Work, employment, or economic prospects	38.7	9.8	17.1	17.4	27.5
Friends, family, or partner live there	19.3	6.6	0	30.4	18.3
Personal appeal of city and/or its people	8.5	31.1	11.4	5.4	11.5
'Opportunities' not related to employment	14.2	4.9	2.9	2.2	9
Higher education	9.9	4.9	0	4.3	7
'The capital'	11.8	0	0	0	6.3
Familiarity, or lived there previously	3.8	6.6	5.7	8.7	5.5
By chance, or choice made by somebody else	2.8	4.9	0	8.7	4.3
Military service	0	0	28.6	5.4	3.8
Available housing	2.4	0	0	9.8	3.5
Beauty	0.9	16.4	5.7	0	3.5
Close to Europe or far from Russia/Crimea/conflict	0	21.3	0	1.1	3.5
The size (either big or small)	2.4	6.6	2.9	1.1	2.8
Recreation, access to the sea or the outdoors	0.5	1.6	22.9	1.1	2.8
Culture	0.5	9.8	0	0	1.8
Well-developed, or good infrastructure	0.9	3.3	0	2.2	1.5
Guided by Ukrainian identity	1.4	3.3	0	1.1	1.5
Comfortable or peaceful	1.4	4.9	0	0	1.5
Close to Crimea	0	0	11.4	2.2	1.5
Affordability	0	4.9	0	2.2	1.3
For children's future	2	0	0	0	1
Accessibility	0.5	1.6	2.9	1.1	1
European-ness	0	4.9	0	0	0.8
Safety	0	3.3	0	0	0.5
Few Russians	0	3.3	0	0	0.5
Similar to Crimea	0	0	2.9	1.1	0.05
Other	3.3	6.6	2.9	7.6	4.8

excluded—i.e., Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa—nearly one-third (30.4%) of those who provided explanations indicated they chose their destination because their family, friends, or partners either live there or come from there originally. By comparison, this rate was far lower for respondents residing in Kyiv (19.3%), Lviv (6.6%), and Odesa, where no residents said their decision was influenced by these types of personal relationships. Moreover, at 9.8% of explanation providers, the availability of housing appears to be a more common draw for survey respondents residing outside of the top three destinations, compared to 2.4% of Kyiv residents, and zero residents of either Lviv or Odesa. While lower than the overall rate for all explanation providers, 17.4% of residents outside the top three destinations also indicated that they were drawn to their current location because of their job or other employment prospects, thereby rounding out the top three explanations from respondents residing outside of the top three destinations. Together, these three explanations—familial ties, housing, and employment—account for why 57.6% of all survey respondents living outside of the top three destinations chose their current location, suggesting that specific pragmatic considerations were frequently the strongest motivators drawing Crimean IDPs to particular destinations outside of Ukraine’s larger and generally more desirable destinations.

### **Kyiv: The Practical Choice**

Pragmatism appears to be a major factor drawing Crimean IDPs to Kyiv as well. With 53.3% of all survey responses, Kyiv appears far and away to be the single most popular destination for Crimean IDPs. A capital city of roughly three million people—about twice as large as Ukraine’s second largest city, Kharkiv—at the center of Ukraine’s social, political, economic, and culture life, Kyiv was the obvious destination for many Crimeans bound for the

mainland. “Where else would I go?” [*“a kuda eshche?”*], a 51-year-old Crimean Tatar man provided as his explanation for choosing Kyiv, while a 27-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman simply wrote, “megapolis.” Additionally, 11.8% of explanation providers residing in Kyiv referred simply to the fact that it is “the capital,” in most cases without further explanation. Along with Kyiv being “the capital,” the most common explanations survey respondents provided for why they chose the city all point to pragmatic considerations; 38.7% stated that they came to Kyiv for their job or other economic opportunities, 19.3% stated that their family, friends, or partner live in or come from the city, 14.2% cited various “opportunities” [*vozmozhnosti or perspektivy*] not related to employment, and 9.9% indicated that they came to Kyiv for their higher education. In several cases, explanations cited a combination of these and other factors; for example, a 32-year-old Crimean Tatar man explained that he chose Kyiv because, “[o]ur close relatives moved to Kyiv before we arrived. This, and also because Kyiv is the capital of the country, where the infrastructure is developed. This means that there is good daycare, good access to products and services, and it’s easier to conduct professional activities.”

That Kyiv affords more “opportunities” than other destinations was a recurring theme in survey responses from individuals who have settled in the capital, and the opportunities they see are varied but generally relate to personal or familial prosperity; respondents cited opportunities for their children and their education, for “personal growth and business development,” for the “realization of my goals,” for “professional growth,” for “self-realization,” simply for “development,” or, in one case, “the opportunity for everybody to realize their own possibilities.” Moreover, Kyiv provides greater opportunities for political engagement for Crimean IDPs who are inclined towards activism and volunteerism, as the city is, in the words of one 61-year-old Crimean Tatar man, the “center of political initiatives.” This is true especially

for those focused on activism related to improving the lives and wellbeing of Crimeans both in the mainland and remaining in Crimea; “I think there are more opportunities here [in Kyiv] for doing things and for achieving certain objectives,” Sergei Kostinsky argued in our interview, adding, “I see that those guys who went to Lviv have fewer opportunities to do something useful for Crimea than those located in Kyiv” (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky). Thus, in a variety of circumstances, Crimean IDPs’ decisions to resettle in Kyiv appear to be driven primarily by pragmatism and practicality, and survey results suggest that they have indeed flocked to the capital in numbers far greater than any other single destination in mainland Ukraine.

### **Lviv: The Romantic Choice**

Lviv, on the other hand, exerts a very different and altogether unique pull on the Crimean IDPs who relocated there. According to survey results, the pragmatic concerns that have driven many to Kyiv and dozens of other locations around Ukraine appear to be far less salient for those who have resettled in Lviv; only 9.8% of explanation providers residing in Lviv cited work or employment as a factor, 6.6% indicated that their family, friends, or partner are located there, 4.9% cited higher education, 4.9% cited assorted “opportunities,” and zero cited the availability of housing. Lviv’s mayor, Andriy Sadovyi, famously released a video inviting displaced peoples from Crimea to the city immediately after the occupation began,<sup>37</sup> but no survey respondents referred to this official gesture as a reason for choosing the city. Rather, at 31.1%, the single most frequently cited explanation for choosing Lviv are the personally appealing characteristics of the city or its people, compared to only 8.5% of Kyiv residents, 11.4% of Odesa residents, and 5.4% of those residing elsewhere who similarly cited their chosen destination’s personal appeal.

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<sup>37</sup> The video may be viewed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cMWPAPSx8I>

Moreover, 16.4% of explanation providers in Lviv referred to the city's beauty as a factor in their decision to settle there, and 9.8% cited the city's culture. By comparison, only 0.9% of Kyiv residents cited the city's beauty and 0.5% its culture, 5.7% of Odesa residents cited its beauty and none its culture, and nobody residing in any other location indicated that beauty or culture had anything to do with their choice of destination.

In other words, in contrast to nearly every other location in Ukraine, Crimean IDPs have been drawn to Lviv primarily because they like it there, or because the city's reputation led them to believe that they would like it. Famous in Ukraine and across Europe for the rustic charm of its Hapsburg-era architecture, its café culture, its laid-back atmosphere, its artistic free spirit, and its unique and decidedly less Soviet character compared to other major Ukrainian cities, Lviv has emerged as a major center of tourism in Ukraine within the past decade, and it appears that Crimean IDPs are attracted to the city for many of the same reasons as the tourists. "A city with a rich history, beautiful architecture, and wonderful people," raved one 31-year-old ethnic Russian woman in her explanation, while a 23-year-old Crimean Tatar woman stated that "I like the atmosphere," and a 33-year-old Ukrainian man explained that "It's ideally suited to [my] rhythm of life." "It's the best city in Ukraine," asserted a 32-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, while a 22-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman confessed that Lviv "was always the city of my dreams," and "it's obvious..." was the only explanation a 30-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man felt he needed to provide.

Despite the testimony of one survey respondent about the "obvious" appeal of Lviv, it often felt as though there is an unspoken understanding among Crimean IDPs that Kyiv is the obvious choice of destination, almost as if resettling in Kyiv is the default move requiring no additional justification, while choosing to resettle anywhere else—even in Lviv—demands some

further explanation. My interviews were therefore replete with descriptions and discussions of Lviv and its characteristics, with comparatively few discussions pertaining to Kyiv in similar veins. Often, interviewees in Lviv explained why they chose the city by drawing comparisons with Kyiv, revealing preferences for a slower pace of life and the comfort of a smaller, more intimate urban environment. “I thought about Kyiv,” recalled one Crimean Tatar interviewee living in Lviv, “but I don't know, I think Lviv is something like ... Kyiv is an industrial city, and Lviv is always cultural for me, so I decided this is something I admire, and I decided to come here” (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). Another Crimean Tatar interviewee in Lviv provided a lengthy and at times hyperbolic explanation for why he prefers life in Lviv to life in Kyiv:

Our business-oriented elite are now in Kyiv, some of them transferred over their activities. Those people who view themselves more in politics, who try to be closer to the developmental processes, where they make all the decisions, they went to Kyiv. There are a lot more Crimean Tatars there, and there is a larger religious community, they have all the necessary conditions there. I know that a lot of Crimean Tatars who first came to live in Lviv have since gone to Kyiv, I always see them there now. But I want to say that the [social] climate, the environment that we have in Lviv is really different from that in Kyiv, and it really has an influence on people and their relationships. [In Lviv] we have more contact between each other, we are more creative, more artistic. We are always “accused” of creating something here in Lviv. We really have a creative approach to questions of integration and culture; for us this is a very important priority, and it leads to some very interesting things. There is less activity like this in Kyiv. These are probably fundamental differences. Lviv is a big village, where nobody is ever in a hurry, and the people who stayed here are probably those who want to live in such a village. (...) Here it's like an offense to wake up at 8:00 AM, you can sleep until 10:00, drink some coffee ... that's Lviv. In Kyiv it's a totally different dynamic, there are a lot of demands on a person who lives in Kyiv. There you need to already be on the metro by 7:00 AM to get somewhere. Everything is different here, everything is somehow friendlier, softer, and with positive emotions. I get tired of Kyiv. I was just there for a few days, and sure, I saw a lot of Crimean Tatars and a lot of my friends and acquaintances, but you just get really tired of it, it wears you out. I probably couldn't live in Kyiv, it's much more comfortable here. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

“It's just a lot of commotion,” another interviewee in Lviv said of Kyiv, elaborating that;

It's just such a big space. There's no atmosphere of authenticity like there is here [in Lviv]. No matter what people say about the thousands of tourists, there really is a unique aura here, but in Kyiv people are rushing around, it's hectic. I don't know how to describe it. It's a city where everything comes together, but which has lost its own personality, probably something like this. (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 50s)

If Kyiv is the default choice for most Crimean IDPs, then for some the appeal of Lviv clearly has as much to do with what the city *is not* as it does with what it *is*.

### **Lviv: Also the Safe and “European” Choice**

But there are other important factors that have steered some Crimeans to Lviv instead of Kyiv or other destinations across Ukraine, factors that reflect both the country's post-Maidan political mood and the uncertainty of how far Russian aggression against Ukraine might extend. Nearly a quarter (21.3%) of survey respondents from Lviv cited the city's physical location in Western Ukraine as a motivating factor in their decision to resettle there, either because it is located far from Crimea, Russia, or the conflict in eastern Ukraine, or because it is situated close to the country's border with the European Union. Moreover, for a few survey respondents in Lviv (4.9%), the European-ness of the city itself was the primary draw. “Farther from Crimea, the European center of Ukraine,” states an explanation provided by a 38-year-old Ukrainian woman, while a 30-year-old ethnic Russian woman noted that Lviv is, “beautiful, promising, close to Europe,” and a 35-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman wrote that “Lviv is spiritually European.” For one interviewee who relocated from Sevastopol, it is the people of Lviv who embody its European-ness, especially when contrasted with the lingering Soviet-ness of the residents of her hometown; “of course, if we are comparing people, here they are European,” she explained, “but in Sevastopol... it just got worse after the annexation, we all have this Soviet mentality [*tam my vse-taki “sovkovye”*]. It really is the post-Soviet space there, it's become clear

how tightly we clung to this.” I asked her what, exactly, it means to be more European and how it is manifested in the people of Lviv, to which she explained that

They are more liberated [*raskreposhchennye*], they are more cheerful, they are able to relax and have fun. They are freer, they travel, they see how the world lives. Accordingly, they also change with the times—new trends are passed on here, be it in fashion, in culture, in art, whatever it may be. In Sevastopol everything is always stuck at a very local level. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

With such social and cultural contrasts, the differences between Lviv and Sevastopol—or any place in Crimea for that matter—may indeed feel as stark as those between two different countries from the perspective of newly arrived IDPs.

But Lviv’s location—either within or immediately adjacent to Europe depending on the framing—is appealing to Crimean IDPs for practical reasons as well, pointing to a certain precautionary pragmatism of its own kind. On the one hand, relocating to Lviv places Crimeans much farther away from the very things they sought to escape; “farther from Russia” noted a 44-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, while another ethnic Ukrainian woman of the same age stated that Lviv is “farther from the ‘Russian World.’” Others noted that Lviv is farther from both “the war” and “the events,” presumably related to the annexation of Crimea and/or the conflict in the Donbas. “We chose Lviv to be as far away from Russia as possible, this is simply the safest point in Ukraine,” one interviewee argued, “because nobody knew how much further this whole situation will go” (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s).

Between the annexation, the Russian-sponsored separatist conflicts in the Donbas, and the sudden revival in Russia of the old imperialist toponym *Novorossiia*—“New Russia”—for much of eastern and southern Ukraine, exactly how far the Kremlin’s aggressive neo-imperialism would push into Ukrainian territory was unknown in the months following the Euromaidan’s conclusion. Fearing that all of Ukraine may be susceptible to invasion or



annexation, many Crimean IDPs looked to Lviv as a strategic location from which they could quickly flee to Poland or farther into the European Union should Russia once again catch up with them. “To be honest, we feared that there would be a further annexation of Ukraine, and so we chose the place closest to Europe,” explained one interviewee now living in Lviv (Interview 059, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). For the same interviewee quoted above regarding the European-ness of the city’s residents, the initial choice of Lviv was based primarily on these same strategic considerations:

There were two factors: it’s as far away from Crimea as is territorially possible [within Ukraine], and it’s closer to the European border, because at that moment it was completely unknown what was going to happen. We thought that if we had to, we could grab our suitcases and seek political asylum, whatever it would take. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

Fortunately, the threat of a Russian push further into Ukrainian territory has not yet materialized, but many of the Crimean IDPs who have chosen to settle in Lviv or elsewhere in Western Ukraine remain poised to once again take flight and seek safety across the border should threats reemerge. For the time being, Lviv remains a safe, peaceful, culturally fulfilling city where many Crimean IDPs are glad to have made their new homes. As one young Crimean Tatar couple explained to me, Lviv has mostly lived up to its reputation and their own expectations, and the distance from occupied Crimea has helped create an emotional buffer zone from the trauma associated with the annexation:

W: From Crimea, Lviv seemed like a city of dreams. There are no zombified people. It seemed like everything was beautiful there, the people are so darling, all in their *vyshyvankas*. It really turned out to be something close to this. Here it’s very quiet, peaceful, it seems like the events in Crimea and even in the Donbas aren’t even felt here, because people are living here according to the same regimes they always did. But they all know what’s going on, and they do what they can to give their support.

M: They commiserate, but beyond this they have their own business. Nobody gets worked up about it here, they live in their own atmosphere. We also feel this, because we only remember that there are problems or that there was an

annexation when we speak with our parents [back in Crimea]. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar man and woman, 20s)

Returning to Cohen's list of diasporas' "common features," we can clearly see reflected in the patterns of Crimean IDP resettlement the criterion of "dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions." I have already addressed the "homeland" and "trauma" components of this criterion in previously chapters, and here I have demonstrated that Crimean IDPs are indeed "dispersed" across the territory of Ukraine, drawn to disparate cities and regions for reasons both pragmatic and principled. Moreover, this discussion speaks in part to the second point in Cohen's schema of diasporic common features, which argues that "alternatively or additionally" to dispersal through a traumatic experience, diasporas also appear through "the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions" (2008, 17). The pursuit of trade and colonial ambitions pertain specifically to different types of diasporas in Cohen's "ideal types" rubric, and are therefore not applicable in the case at hand; but the first point regarding the search for work certainly applies to many Crimean IDPs and the rationales motivating their "expansion" from occupied Crimea, particularly those bound for Kyiv and dozens of less common destinations throughout mainland Ukraine. The fact that their displacement is limited to the territory of Ukraine should not diminish or disqualify the realities of their "dispersal" or "expansion" from a place of origin, especially when it is a place so often upheld as a "homeland." Whether and how migrant communities maintain and develop relationships with their homeland is the focus of points three through five in Cohen's schema of diasporic "common features," and it is to these questions that I turn in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Eleven: Crimean IDPs' Ongoing Social and Emotional Engagement with Home(land)**

The concept of homeland—that is, a collective sense of belonging, rooted-ness, and/or origin inscribed within an estranged territory either real or imagined—is central to both experiences and theories of diaspora. Indeed, three of Cohen's nine "common features" of diasporas relate directly to how migrant communities maintain social and political relationships with the homelands they have left behind. In points three through five in his list of diasporas' "common features," Cohen argues that diasporas may typically exhibit "a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;" that they generally idealize "the real or imagined ancestral home" and sustain "a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;" and that they frequently develop "a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland" (2008, 17).

I have already touched upon several aspects of homeland from the perspective of Crimean IDPs in previous chapters, particularly its contested meanings and the divergent regional and national frameworks shaping Crimean IDPs' territorial perceptions of homeland. Additionally, I have addressed various "collective memories and myths" of Crimea, and the development of a so-called "return movement" with respect to Crimean IDPs' intentions to either return to Crimea or remain in mainland Ukraine. The view that Crimea itself constitutes a homeland rather than the whole of Ukraine is by no means universal among Crimean IDPs, but understanding how they may or may not remain socially and politically engaged with Crimea is crucial if we are to further unpack the meaning of homeland and the role it may play in the

emergence of a diasporic consciousness among internally displaced Crimeans. As it turns out, displacement to the Ukrainian mainland has been taxing—to varying degrees and for a variety of reasons—on the relationships that Crimean IDPs maintain with family and friends remaining in Crimea. Moreover, divergent opinions regarding Crimea’s rightful political status following its hypothetical return to Ukraine means that “collective commitments” to the “maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity” of a Crimean homeland remains fraught and contentious. A closer examination of these social relationships and political discourses help to better illustrate IDPs’ ongoing connectivity to Crimea and its contested role as an estranged homeland to the internally displaced.

### **Who Left Crimea with Whom, and Who Gave Their Blessings**

Survey results indicate that families and/or friends frequently relocated together from Crimea to mainland Ukraine, including 45.7% of respondents who arrived with their spouses, 40.6% who arrived with children, and smaller numbers who were joined by their parents (6.4%), other family members (9.5%), and/or friends (6.6%) (Table 12). However, nearly one third of all survey respondents (30.4%) indicated that they made the journey alone, although this rate was highest among Crimean Tatars (37.6%), who also tend to be younger and less likely to be married or have children. But whether they came alone or with close family and/or friends, virtually all Crimean IDPs have left loved ones behind, and in many cases their departure from Crimea has resulted in strained, fractured, or severed relationships that may ultimately work to erode the social connective tissue linking them to the region.

I asked survey respondents whether their loved ones [*blizkie*] were supportive of their decision to leave Crimea following the annexation, and the results were mixed (Table 13).

Among the entire survey sample, roughly two thirds (63%) indicated that their loved ones did support them, while the remainder (37%) did not receive the support of their loved ones.

However, results varied considerably according to ethnicity; the frequency of supportive family and friends among ethnic Ukrainians aligned closely with the overall average (62.7%), while only a minority of ethnic Russians (41.4%) received the same support, compared to a large majority (86.4%) of Crimean Tatars.

**Table 12:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, "With whom did you relocate?"

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Alone	30.4	27.3	31.9	37.6	0
With Spouse	45.7	45	45.7	39.2	61.1
With Children	40.6	44.5	41.4	29.6	44.4
With Parents	6.4	10	5.2	2.4	2.8
With Other Family Members	9.5	9.1	8.6	12	0
With Friends	6.6	4.1	6.9	10.4	8.3

**Table 13:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, "Did your loved ones in Crimea support your decision to leave?"

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	63	62.7	41.4	86.4	52.8
No	37	37.3	58.6	13.6	47.2

Rifts among family and friends were bound to arise given the heated and contentious socio-political discourses surrounding the annexation of Crimea—particularly among ethnic Russians, for whose sake the annexation was ostensibly executed—and it is fortunate that so many managed to relocate with the approval of their loved ones with whom they may otherwise disagree over the justness of the annexation itself. Given the option to expand upon her answer, one 35-year-old Ukrainian woman whose family did support her relocation explained that “this is my choice, this is my life. They accept it, just like I accept their decision” to remain in Crimea. “They just want the best life for me,” explained a 19-year-old woman who declined to provide

her ethnicity, adding that “they see objectively that there is no room for growth in Crimea.” Others earned the support of their loved ones belatedly or begrudgingly; “at first my family was opposed,” commented a 22-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, “but now they’ve resigned themselves to it.” Support varied in other cases; for example, one 50-year-old Russian man wrote that “my wife’s parents completely support us, mine are categorically opposed.” In other cases, survey respondents were fortunate to have family members who similarly oppose the annexation despite remaining in occupied Crimea; “my whole family—my dad, mom, sister—have a proudly pro-Ukrainian position,” explained a 22-year-old Ukrainian woman who had nevertheless relocated to the mainland on her own, adding, “all of us in our family are patriots and conscious citizens of Ukraine.”

### **Leaving Home and Losing Friends**

However, in many cases Crimean IDPs reported that their opposition to the annexation and decision to leave Crimea resulted in the breakdown of important relationships, particularly friendships. “None of our friends supported our decision,” wrote a 38-year-old Ukrainian woman in her survey response, “our connections to our friends are completely terminated. There’s life ‘before’ and ‘after.’” Indeed, it seemed as though nearly every IDP I spoke with had stories about falling out with friends over their diverging attitudes toward Ukraine, Russia, and the events of 2014. In some cases, the mutual recognition that a friendship straddled this sharp ideological divide simply heralded its quiet death; “I’ve lost a couple of friends,” one interviewee noted, adding that

[W]e didn't have any arguments, but it was understandable, because if a person is carrying the Russian flag and he goes to the referendum and he votes for ... you don't even have to discuss it. Most of them knew my opinion because it was always open; before the annexation, before all these things, they knew that I was

always supporting Ukraine. That's why we didn't have arguments, because we were friends, but we don't communicate now. It's like you lose a part of your life, and that's a horrible thing. I mean, of course you can survive without these people, but there are so many memories that are connected with them. (Interview 007, Crimean Greek woman, 20s)

In other cases, sharp disagreements and heated arguments meant that friendships ended in a bang rather than a whimper, resulting in hurt feelings and a deepening cynicism towards lives left behind in Crimea. "I had to cut those ties [with certain friends]," recounted one interviewee mournfully,

and I guess that's why I became very reserved, because it was hurtful, it hurt so much. You know, you love people and you shared something in the past, and all of a sudden they try to write you nasty comments or something like that, and you just think, what the heck happened? Like, we went to school together, I shared my sandwich with you, and all of a sudden this happens, and you feel like... it hurts so much. And so, one by one, you lose those people from your life, you cut them off, and you don't want to experience that anymore, so you'd rather not let anybody in, you know? You just keep those that you have, because if you let somebody in again, chances are you'll go through the same painful process of crossing those people off your list. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

But far from being passive targets of derision or ridicule by their pro-Russian ex-friends, Crimean IDPs are also frequently critical or derisive of those who supported Russia and the annexation, and at times had rather harsh words for the people they once called friends. For example, the same interviewee quoted above had this to say about the mental faculties of her pro-Russian friends in Crimea:

When things started happening with Crimea, I had to delete half of my friends from my friends list. I deleted my *Vkontakte*<sup>38</sup> page completely, because I was so pissed. So for me, from that point on, whatever a person says ... let me phrase it this way, I would judge the intellectual ability of a person depending on what side they choose. That's how clear it is to me, personally. If a person says, "oh, Putin is almighty, he's going to come and help us all, the Russian population is persecuted in Crimea," I automatically put them into the category of... mentally disabled people. Because to me, an intellectual human being who can use reasoning, see deeper, compare the facts, independently think about what is fact and what is fake, and investigate it, they would never come the conclusion that what is

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<sup>38</sup> *Vkontakte.ru* is a popular social media site that is often referred to as Russia's answer to Facebook.

happening with Crimea is right. That's how I see it. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Some survey respondents were similarly acerbic in their assessment of why their friendships and other relationships with Crimeans did not survive the annexation: “they are zombified by the propaganda of the Russian Federation,” wrote a 48-year-old ethnic Russian man, while a 45-year-old ethnic Russian woman stated cryptically that “they like to rot in their shell [*gnit' v rashke*].” According to a 63-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, a “slave mentality” has gripped those in Crimea who were once close to her, which is “hammered into their consciousness at a genetic level.” “The slave loves his master and hates the free man,” she added pointedly. It was an interviewee, however, that best captured the bitterness many Crimeans IDPs feel towards the severed friendships left in the wake of their relocation: “most of my friends in Crimea are pro-Russian, and that’s why they are now longer among my friends” (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). Still, others refuse to completely write-off their pro-Russian friends, and admirably attempt to preserve these fragile friendships while also asserting their pro-Ukrainian perspective. “There are some pro-Russian friends,” one interviewee noted,

it’s really tough to be around them sometimes. When I’m occasionally in Crimea and the conversation turns to politics, we get into arguments, but it hasn’t come down to fighting yet... [O]f course we communicate, and when I go back I still try to meet with them. Maybe I’m wasting my time, but it seems to me that I should at least try to introduce them to some kind of alternative perspective, to show them that there is one. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

### **Broken Families**

While most Crimean IDPs have accepted the loss of friendships as an unfortunate byproduct of their political convictions and relocation to mainland Ukraine, damaged relationships with family members have proven much more painful and difficult to contend with.



Interviewees and survey respondents reported that rifts between family members are commonly inter-generational, as pro-Ukrainian children frequently clash with pro-Russian members of their parents' and grandparents' generations, whose worldviews are largely shaped by their Soviet upbringing and reliance on Russian sources of news and information. To those who believe sincerely in the benevolence, virtue, and fairness of Russian rule in Crimea, or that Ukraine is overrun with anti-Russian "fascists" by contrast, choosing deliberately to live in Ukraine is perceived as incomprehensible and unconscionable. "In general my relatives are very much against Ukraine, for them Putin is everything!" one 43-year-old ethnic Russian woman wrote in her survey response, adding that "[w]e have a lot of disagreements and a very strained relationship." "What are you thinking?", one interviewee said paraphrasing the reaction of her aunt and uncle to the news that she was moving to Lviv with her husband and children, "now Crimea will be heaven on earth, Russia has arrived and they will handle everything, it will be a fairytale, and you're leaving for Ukraine where there is a war, where people get shot, where *Banderites* roam the streets!' This was the kind of image they had in their heads, it was a lack of understanding" (Interview 074, ethnic Russian woman, 30s).

Among pro-Russian parents whose children first supported the Euromaidan and then chose to relocate to mainland Ukraine rather than live under Russian rule, responses ranged from fear and concern to betrayal and condemnation. The resulting discord has left many Crimean IDPs struggling emotionally with fraught parental relationships, breakdowns in communication, and frayed ties to their Crimean homes. "I have a very complex relationship with my family anyway," explained one interviewee who was studying in the United States when the Euromaidan and the annexation occurred,

[a]nd so with everything that was happening in the country, and with me participating in it, even from far away, this was just like the final stone in the wall

[between us] that I kept trying to destroy, but now this wall is so thick and so big, and I'm not even there. If I could be there physically then at least I could charm them somehow, I could clean the house or do something that they understand, I could speak their language in some way. But I can't. So, I am very, very angry almost all the time, and I don't know what to do with this! (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Further aggravating these wounds is the sense of disappointment and frustration among many Crimean IDPs that their parents' views of Ukraine, the Euromaidan, and the annexation have been so utterly warped through the inundation of Russian misinformation. One interviewee, for example, described her interactions with her parents prior to her departure for the mainland:

My parents were happy [with the annexation]. They are from the Soviet Union, to them it was good. (...) There were conflicts, really heated conflicts. These were probably connected more with the Euromaidan, because I tried to explain; "look at what's happening, everything [the Russian media] is telling you is untrue, *this* is the truth, I was there, *this* is the way it is, not [what you think]." Sometimes they believed me, sometimes they didn't, and sometimes they looked at me like I was crazy. We didn't exactly fight about this, but there was certainly some isolation. Maybe I even isolated myself in order to preserve the relationships, so as not to butt heads. It was probably useful to be isolated. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s)

For Crimean IDPs struggling to preserve or improve strained relationships with their parents or other family members, conversations are often relegated to benign topics that will not enflame the tensions lying just beneath the surface. "All we can talk about is, like, the weather," one interviewee noted of the conversations she now has via Skype with her family in Crimea, "or I will ask some dumb things like, 'how do you bake this pie?' You know, things like that" (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). "We have this unspoken rule that we won't touch upon politics," explained another interviewee, "but in practice this is really difficult—*really* difficult. Especially with my mother, she is very emotional, she watches Russian television, and it's all propaganda, really intense propaganda. It's just impossible to listen to it" (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s).

The most heartbreaking stories I heard were from IDPs whose parents had disowned them or otherwise cut them out of their lives for the perceived transgression of choosing Ukraine over Russia. “My parents are more or less supporters of Russia, my mother most of all,” one interviewee told me, “and so we haven’t been able to converse with one another. She still hasn’t been able to forgive me for going to Lviv and taking my child. She doesn’t understand how this can possibly happen without no longer considering me a member of the family” (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). But perhaps the most harrowing story of a fractured family came from a young ethnically Russian woman who, at the age of 17, abruptly left Crimea for Lviv—a den of fascists, according to her parents—with only about \$30 in her pocket. Her relationship with her parents was severely damaged as a result, and it had yet to improve by the time we spoke nearly two years after her departure from Crimea:

My family is pro-Russian, absolutely all of them supported [the annexation], and they really looked at me like I was abnormal. To this day I am still in such conflict with my parents, our communication is very complicated. They are really offended by the fact that I left and came here [to Lviv]. (...) My parents will call me and say, “everybody goes around with swastikas in your Lviv,” and I’ll tell them, “That’s not true, there’s nothing like that here.” Or they’ll say, “the Russian language is forbidden there” (...) I think that my parents have succumbed to propaganda. They’ve never even been to Kyiv, they were never on the Maidan, they never saw it with their own eyes, but nevertheless they claim to know what’s what. They’ve never been to Lviv, but they’ll talk about it. They think that *I’ve* succumbed to propaganda, or that somebody has messed with my head. They think that because I’m young, it means I’m the one who is mistaken, that I should have just listened to my parents and everything would have been fine, and now I’m alone in an unfamiliar city. I hear from them so often that “you betrayed our family, you are a traitor,” or they frequently tell me, “you chose between us and a country,” and I tell them, “I didn’t choose anything! I just moved to a different city. It wasn’t me who chose, it was you who chose Russia. Everything was normal for me.” That’s how it goes. My parents still really resent me, and my departure really didn’t go well either. I was telling them for a month that I was planning to leave, but they didn’t listen to me. One day I just gathered my things and left, and I called them from the road. To this day I really wish it had gone differently. I would like to fix things as much as possible, but it just hasn’t worked out. Every time we try to reach a compromise it’s really emotionally

traumatizing, because they are my parents. (Interview 067, ethnic Russian woman, late teens)

In cases like these, or even those where resentment is milder, the relationships and lines of communication that would otherwise form meaningful social linkages between displaced Crimeans and the home(land) they left behind have been stressed, weakened, or severed entirely along volatile ideological fault lines. For those who view Crimea as their homeland, their ties to the region and its salience to their socio-spatial identities may atrophy and become merely vestigial with time if these relationships and frameworks for social interaction go unrepaired.

### **Crimean Tatars' Familial Support Despite the Expectation of Their Return**

But relationships suffering from such divergent ideological perspectives appear to be a phenomenon only among Slavic Crimeans, especially those who identify as ethnically Russian. An overwhelming majority of Crimean Tatars of all generations oppose the annexation and harbor generally negative attitudes toward Russia, and so there are likely few instances—and certainly none that I encountered—of Crimean Tatar IDPs whose families have been divided over opposing viewpoints vis-à-vis Ukraine, Russia, the Euromaidan, or the annexation. Indeed, a full 86.4% of Crimean Tatar survey respondents stated that their loved ones support their decision to relocate to the Ukrainian mainland. “Freedom is more important,” wrote a 47-year-old Crimean Tatar man in his survey response by way of explaining why his family was supportive of his move to the mainland.

Nevertheless, while they may have their support and understanding, some Crimean Tatars spoke of their families' disappointment over their perceived abandonment of the homeland at a time when Crimean Tatars should be standing their ground. The fact that Crimean Tatar IDPs tend to be younger than Slavs or other regional minorities likely reflects the reality that many

older Crimean Tatars who were born and raised in exile now refuse to leave the homeland that they struggled for so long to reclaim. “I can tell you that you will never pull my parents away from there,” stated one young Crimean Tatar man in our interview, “because for their entire conscious lives they lived with the idea that Crimea is their homeland and they must return” (Interview 039, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). Despite the hardships of life under Russian occupation and the understanding that mainland Ukraine affords better social and economic opportunities for youths in particular, some Crimean Tatars told me that their families disapprove, to some degree, of their decision to desert the homeland in its time of need, as in the following example:

My parents and grandparents, and my brother and his children have all stayed in Crimea. We all lived together. They can't leave, they just can't leave their home behind. My grandma and grandpa are already elderly. They will not want to leave, mostly because they survived the deportation, and then they returned. They say, “we're not going anywhere now,” and they tell us [who left], “you should also be patriots of Crimea, you shouldn't leave.” They are always calling me back, they say, “come, you should be living here. If everybody leaves, then we'll never get Crimea back.” (Interview 006, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Even for Crimean Tatar IDPs whose families at least understand why their move to the mainland was necessary, a sense of expectation or obligation to return to their homeland and families sooner rather than later came up much more frequently compared to Slavic Crimean IDPs, who are already more likely to claim they will never return to Crimea. “I think in our culture it's not very popular to move to another place, we are still very conservative,” one Crimean Tatar interviewee explained, “but even when I told my parents that I want to [move away], they wanted me to do it, because they knew that I couldn't do anything there. I was trying, but I couldn't. But they still had this feeling that I'm probably going to come back in a week or two” (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). Crimean Tatars frequently spoke of the obligation they feel toward their parents in particular, especially if they are older and in need of assistance. “My parents are elderly and need care,” wrote one 47-year old Crimean Tatar man as

to why his family did not support his move to the mainland. Others stated that they would not hesitate to return to Crimea—even while it remains under occupation—if the health and well-being of their parents demanded it. As one Crimean Tatar man explained to me, it is the imperatives of his Muslim faith to honor and care for one’s parents that would immediately bring him back to Crimea should his parents require his aid and attention:

I have relatives there, my parents are there. We Muslims really revere our parents; we have a certain expression taken from the prophet Muhammad, that “paradise lies under the feet of your mother.” This is metaphorical, it means that you should treat your mother well, because you do not deserve paradise if you treat your parents poorly. This is a concept in our religion, that all people should treat their parents well—you, me, whoever it may be. So, my parents are still there, and if something were to happen to them—if they grow ill, for example—I am their only son, and I will have to go to take care of them. Even if it is an occupied territory where Muslims are oppressed, I will be obligated to pack my suitcase and go there to be close to my parents, regardless of the dangers. (Interview 076, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Thus, there are substantive differences in the way Crimean Tatar and Slavic Crimean IDPs remain socially connected to Crimea from the Ukrainian mainland. Crimean Tatars generally have the support and understanding of their loved ones remaining in Crimea, and while some sense of guilt or the disappointment of family members over abandoning the homeland may tinge these relationships, strong familial bonds and political solidarities mean that most Crimean Tatar IDPs remain deeply enmeshed within the social fabric of their Crimean homeland, even from a distance. In contrast, many Slavic Crimean IDPs have experienced painful and traumatic schisms with family and friends who remain in Crimea, primarily due to irreconcilable disagreements over the fundamental realities of life and politics in Ukraine, Russia, and occupied Crimea. Although many Slavic Crimean IDPs claim to have the support of their loved ones, nearly all have experienced at a minimum the loss of friendships, and some have suffered from a partial or complete breakdown in their relationships with parents or other family members.

Along with the heavy emotional pall that they cast, these experiences have reduced the degree to which Slavic Crimean IDPs remain connected and socially engaged with Crimea, increasing their distance and sense of alienation from the relationships and social circles that once grounded their lives in the peninsula. Without an improvement in these relationships, it is likely that Slavic Crimean IDPs' social and emotional distance from Crimea will continue to increase with time, accompanied by a decline in the region's salience as a homeland or place of rooted-ness.

### **Continuing to Travel to and from Occupied Crimea**

But while the ongoing strength of social bonds with Crimea vary among ethnic groups and on an individual basis, there also appears to be a strong effort among many IDPs to stay physically connected to Crimea through frequent return visits despite the disagreeable social and political atmosphere there. According to *Krymskaia Diaspora* founder Anatolii Zasoba, returning to Crimea periodically has helped ease some of the tension and discord between IDPs and their disapproving family and friends who stayed behind:

A lot of [IDPs] travel there and try to preserve their relationships with people, and the mood has already changed. If everybody was ready to kill each other a year and a half ago—if you will excuse the expression—then now the mood has changed, and we have somewhat tampered down emotionally our resentments, and we have already started to relate more calmly to those so-called *vatniks*, those pro-Russian Crimeans. (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba)

While the Ukrainian government has implemented strict restrictions on trade with occupied Crimea, and the movement of people between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland is carefully monitored and controlled from both sides, this *de facto* border remains rather porous to Ukrainian citizens wishing to travel across it. Although many who remain in Crimea are now loathe to cross the Perekop—and many never even bothered before the annexation complicated the process—Crimean IDPs continue to traverse these newly-imposed border with surprising

regularity. According to survey results, two thirds of respondents (66.7%) say that they have made return visits to Crimea since they first relocated, while the remaining third have yet to set foot again in the peninsula (see Table 14). While these figures closely parallel the rate of survey responses with supportive families, this factor does not appear to have a strong impact on the propensity of IDPs to make return visits to Crimea; 69.6% of respondents whose loved ones supported their move have since returned for visits, compared to 61.4% of those without their loved ones' support, suggesting that even those whose relationships have been strained are still likely to visit their families in Crimea.

**Table 14:** Survey response rates (percent) for whether and how many times respondents have returned to Crimea since leaving.

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	66.7	62.3	70.7	72	61.1
One time	19.6	27	14.6	10	31.8
Two times	16.3	16.1	18.3	14.4	13.2
Three times	14.2	16.8	13.4	12.2	9.1
Four times	7.6	4.4	9.8	8.9	13.6
Five times	7.3	5.1	7.3	12.2	0
More than five times	31.7	26.3	36.6	38.9	18.2
No	33.4	37.7	29.3	28	38.9

Comparing responses among ethnic groups, 62.3% of ethnic Ukrainians have made return visits—a rate slightly lower than ethnic Russians (70.7%) and Crimean Tatars (72%). Moreover, ethnic Ukrainian IDPs appear to visit Crimea less frequently than ethnic Russians or Crimean Tatars; 26.3% of ethnic Ukrainian respondents stated that they have visited Crimea five times or more since relocating, compared to 36.6% of ethnic Russians, 38.9% of Crimean Tatars, and 31.7% of the entire survey sample. Conversely, 27% of ethnic Ukrainian respondents stated that they have made only one return visit to Crimea since their departure, while only 14.6% of ethnic Russians, 10% of Crimean Tatars, and 19.6% of all survey respondents have made only a single



return journey. Although I am unable to offer a definitive explanation for why those who identify as ethnically Ukrainian show a lower propensity for visiting Crimea after relocating, this may reflect a stronger fear of persecution within Crimea, or a relative absence of extended family living in Crimea compared to ethnic Russians and Crimean Tatars.

Aside from seeing family or friends, IDPs cite a variety of reasons for making short or intermittent return visits to Crimea. Some have financial or bureaucratic matters to tend to; one interviewee told me that he had to travel back to Crimea a few times after relocating to Lviv to tend to paperwork concerning the sale of his old apartment and that of his mother (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 40s). Another interviewee had recently returned from a trip to Crimea to officially de-registered as a resident at her parents' address because, as a journalist critical of the annexation, she was concerned that Russian security forces may target her parents or search their home if records show she is registered there (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar Woman, 20s).

Some IDPs regularly travel back and forth between Crimea and mainland Ukraine, sometimes making the journey once every month or so in order to spend time with family there or tend to other obligations. By the same token, some IDPs have family members ostensibly remaining in Crimea, but who regularly come to stay with them in the mainland, blurring the distinction between internal displacement and cyclical migration. This can be a strategy for retaining a family's presence in Crimea while still aligning with Ukraine, although it may also reflect a family's refusal or inability to suspend their lives and responsibilities in Crimea entirely. "I came [to Kyiv] on my own, and my mother now comes and goes," one Crimean Tatar woman told me, "because we can't leave our house there. We thought about selling our house there and getting something here, but it isn't possible, the real estate market there is so bad" (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s). During another interview, I was fortunate to meet an elderly

Crimean Tatar woman who was temporarily visiting her son's family now living in the small Western Ukrainian city of Drohobych. She explained that many Crimean families have been similarly divided, but that they remain physically and emotionally connected across these new territorial and ideological divides in part through frequent visits back and forth:

Everything is so political [in Crimea], but us simple folks find a common language regardless, and we all communicate with each other. Ukrainians are split between here and there, some have their parents there, some have children there. We come to visit, some to see their children, some to see their parents. This is life, it's how it goes. Politics have divided people there, but normal folks still go and visit each other. I went to see my sister in Novoaleksiivka, I've gone to Henichesk. We get together all the same, we can't just break these ties. No matter how it is, we are all still friendly with each other, so we can't just leave everything behind. (Interview 068, Crimean Tatar woman, 60s)

One interviewee—the owner of a Crimean Tatar restaurant in Lviv—even signaled that he would ideally split his time between Lviv and Crimea even if the occupation were to end: “If the situation changes for the better, then we would gladly return, but this wouldn't prevent us from continuing our business here [in Lviv], from coming here as guests, or even as if we are coming home. Let us have two homes, one home in Lviv, and one in Crimea” (Interview 076, Crimean Tatar man, 40s).

### **Hassles and Risks at the de facto Border with Crimea**

In other cases, interviewees expressed the desire to make frequent return visits to Crimea or to split their time between the peninsula and the mainland, but are deterred by the unacceptable social and political conditions now found in Crimea, and by the hassles and risks associated with simply getting there. “I wish I could go there once a week, or to be there for a week at a time and be with my grandma, my parents, my brothers and sisters, I wish I could go there often, as much as it would be possible,” one interviewee mused, “but I'm afraid this would

be very complicated” (Interview 058, Krymchak man, 40s). Direct trains between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland continued to run during the first nine months or so after the annexation, but the closure of these routes in December 2014 has meant that any journey to Crimea now involves an exhausting and expensive series of trains, taxis, buses, and usually a trek through the 4-kilometer buffer zone between the Ukrainian and Russian checkpoints. One interviewee had had the misfortune of riding the train from Kyiv to Simferopol on the very day that the route was unexpectedly closed, and she described the ensuing chaos at the border:

They suspended the railway traffic in December [2014], and it was a few days before New Year’s, so there were hundreds, thousands of people traveling there. I think this blockade started on the 26th, and that’s the day I had my ticket for! So, basically, I got there the first day of this blockade, so I had to get off the train in Novoaleksiivka and wait for hours for my parents to come and pick me up by car, because they had to wait for 10 hours on the border to get there. And then it took us 20 hours to get through both checkpoints going back, because they were not prepared for this large number of people and cars. (Interview 001, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

A young couple from Alushta—a city on the southern Crimean coast that takes an additional hour or so to reach from Simferopol—explained to me that the cost, time, and inconvenience of traveling there from their new home in Lviv has deterred them from making more regular visits:

M: I would like to just go [to Crimea] and visit my familiar, nostalgic spots. I feel so euphoric there for about the first three days.

W: But then you understand that you have to spend a lot more to get there because it takes a day and a half to get there, a day and a half to get back, and the best way to get there isn’t always clear.

M: Before, we could just hop on a train without any extra things and head straight to Simferopol. Now you can only take the train to the point of transfer, then take a minibus to the border...

W: There are taxi drivers who will take you from there, but a train from Lviv to Simferopol used to cost 250 hryvnia, plus 25 for the minibus from Simferopol to Alushta. Now it costs 500 hryvnia for a taxi ride from the last train stop in Novoaleksiivka to Simferopol, plus the train from Lviv, and the cost of a ride from Simferopol to Alushta has risen too. It’s generally two or three times more expensive for the journey now, plus all these psychological borders are a real strain too, of course. They look you over and examine your passport. (Interview 074, ethnic Russian man and woman, 30s)

Indeed, the process of crossing the *de facto* border between mainland Ukraine and occupied Crimea is the primary source of anxiety for many IDPs making the journey home, with procedures at the Russian checkpoint being the most unpredictable and potentially risky. Those who have been more proactive or visible in their opposition to Russia and the annexation often worry that they may be questioned, arrested, or banned from Crimea upon arrival at the border, or that other aspects of their lives may at least arouse the suspicions of Russian border guards. One interviewee living in Lviv told me that he had not yet registered in the city as an IDP, because he was concerned how it would appear to Russian border guards whenever he might return to Crimea, given the hostilities with which many Crimeans view this supposed epicenter of Ukrainian “fascism” (Interview 011, Crimean Tatar man, 20s).

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to personally visit the border with occupied Crimea during my fieldwork, and attempting to cross this border simply would not have been feasible; entering Crimea from mainland Ukraine as a foreign citizen requires special permission from the Ukrainian government in addition to the requisite Russian visa, not to mention the terms of my federal funding that would not permit travel to such sanctioned, extra-legal territories. Unable to observe the border-crossing processes first-hand, I asked many interviewees to recount their experiences and any troubles they may have encountered at the border. Their accounts varied widely, with some interviewees reporting few if any issues while crossing through Russian checkpoints, while the experience is much more difficult and even traumatizing for others. “I haven’t had any problems at the border,” one ethnic Russian woman asserted;

We went back by train before they stopped operating. I crossed the border a couple times by taxi, and we went once in our own car. We never had any problems. My mother also came here a couple times after my daughter was born, and it was normal for her too. Some people have probably had problems, but I’ve

never encountered any, maybe I'm lucky. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s)

Crossing through the Russian checkpoint or interacting with Russian border guards has never presented any problems for one Crimean Tatar man whom I interviewed, although he did gripe about the lines that form there and the arduous wait to get through:

R; I've gone home five times in the two years since I left. Fortunately, I haven't had any problems at the border, nothing out of the ordinary has happened.

AC: Is it easy [to cross]?

R: Well, how can I call it easy? If you don't count the lines you could call it easy. You stand there for two or three hours. There's this large mass of people standing in line, and they make you wait. Children are standing around crying, there are elderly people. For the elderly and the children it's definitely difficult, and in principle it's difficult for all of us. But once you reach the passport control point they will let you through without any problems. Waiting in line is the only thing. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

Variations also arose in perceptions of whom generally faces greater difficulties at the border according to differences in ethnicity, gender, and religion. Based on her own experiences, one ethnic Russian interviewee claimed that women tend to face fewer questions and less hostility from Russian border guards:

Women generally have few problems on the border. I remember one particular moment, there were two different windows [at passport control], and I could go up to one border guard or the other. I saw that the guard to the left was really tough, there was a man standing at his window, and the border guard was really interrogating him; "show me your bag. What is this in your passport? What do you have there? What is that thing?" He was asking so many questions, I thought, "god forbid you should get stuck with him, he won't overlook anything, he'll be all over you." The guy finished up and went through, and I was next in line for this tough border guard, so I thought, "well, ok." I walked up to the window, and he was like, "oh, are you a tourist?" He just stamped my passport and that was it, he let me right though. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

In response to her story, I asked whether she thought that ethnic Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, or others without Russian surnames might encounter greater difficulties at the border, and she suspected that this might be true; "I haven't seen this personally, but I have some friends who

have had some problems specifically because they were Crimean Tatars, you could say. I know of a lot of such cases, I can't speak to them personally, but I see that among my acquaintances this is really the case" (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). I also received mixed responses to these questions during a focus group with Crimean Tatar youths; while one young woman claimed to have never encountered any issues at the border, she agreed with her male friends that interrogations occur frequently for other Crimean Tatars:

W: I haven't had any problems [at the border], they don't stop me. They check my documents like they do for everybody. They've never questioned me or anything. There are some guys who constantly get questioned. I have a few friends who always get stopped, they tell them to step off to the side, and they hold them for a half hour or an hour.

M1: They question everybody about crossing the border; "why are you coming here, where did you come from?"

M2: There are even additional interrogations, it can take an hour or two. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar men and woman, 20s)

Surprisingly, the same young woman then asserted that such interrogations happen to Crimean Tatars regardless of gender, suggesting that the intersectionality of ethnicity, gender, and religion—as her disconcerting story then revealed—may impact the interrogation procedures and general experiences of IDPs crossing the border to occupied Crimea:

When they do these interrogations for an hour or two, they don't really single anybody out; it's all the same to them whether it's a girl or a guy. I have one friend who wears a head scarf, and they stopped her and questioned her; "where are you going, and why?" They made her call her parents to confirm her story. She said, "mama, please tell them where I am going, what my business is." Her mother told them, then they made her call her father. They asked all kinds of questions related to religion that the girl didn't even know. It's surprising how knowledgeable they are about these things. For example, they asked her, "what do you think when a man has a beard longer than 4 cm?" According to *sunnah*, a man should have a beard no longer than 4 cm, or the width of 4 fingers. She said, "I didn't know that it was supposed to be like that. If a person wants it that way, let them have it." Their questions are varied and strange, they know a lot of different things. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Some of the most harrowing and horrific tales of the border came from individuals who were targeted for their active and influential roles in opposing the annexation and exposing conditions in occupied Crimea. Eskender Bariev—a member of the *Mejlis*, founder of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, and a vocal opponent of the occupation, for which he was eventually banned from Crimea—described to me how Russian border guards treated him during his first post-annexation crossing to the Ukrainian mainland, and how he stood up to them:

They searched me the very first time I crossed the border, I was surrounded by eight armed border guards, and they were so rude, all of them were poking and prodding me. But I was rude right back to them. I said to them, “Am I a criminal? Prove that I am a criminal. What kind of laws are you able to talk to me about? Are they written in your criminal code? Where is your supervisor? Just because you have a gun, does it make you a hero? I don’t have a weapon, and I’m not afraid of you. What else do you need?” Then they really started to carry themselves differently. You are stronger when you don’t have a weapon, you are much stronger, because if you know the law and you talk like this to a person with a gun, he becomes more afraid of you, I have convinced myself of this. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

*Krym.Realii* editor-in-chief Volodymyr Pritula, who had split his time between Simferopol and Kherson during much of the first year after the annexation, just barely eluded detainment at the border when a tip about his impending arrest prompted him to flee occupied Crimea for good. Seemingly torn from a movie script, his hair-raising account also speaks to the confusion and disorganization that can reign in this hastily-established borderland:

I had to leave in December [2014], when I received information that the FSB was going to arrest me. I essentially had to escape, because they tried to detain me in my car at the border, but as it happened there was a bit of a mix-up, and I just got away. I was told at the border to wait for FSB agents to arrive, the [Russian] border guards had called them because they had received information that I was to be detained, but that the FSB needed to do it. They just told me to wait in my car for them to show up, but I had already passed through all the control points, and they had written on my all my forms that I had passed through, so I was just sitting and waiting. But then the border guard who had told me to wait went off somewhere, so I went up to a different border guard and said, “I didn’t understand what I’m supposed to do, should I wait or go on ahead?” He said, “show me your papers,” he looked them over and said, “everything is in order, you can go.” So, I

quietly slipped away. Then, when I entered the neutral zone beyond the checkpoint, I looked back and saw the Russian border guard running towards me with his gun, shouting at me to come back. I just hit the gas and got out of there. I drove straight up to the Ukrainian checkpoint without getting in line, went up to the border guard and told him that I am a journalist and that I have to get out of there immediately, hoping he would let me straight through. They let me pass quickly. I haven't been back to Crimea since then. (Interview 050, Volodymyr Pritula)

But for others, the most regrettable aspect of the new border crossing procedures is how they have disrupted the familiar and comforting rituals once associated with reaching Crimea after time spent away. One group of interviews explained that they always felt a sense of ease and mild relief whenever they crossed back into Crimea by train after traveling within Ukraine:

M: I've traveled [in Ukraine] a good amount, and whenever I used to leave Crimea for the mainland, it's not like I felt as though I was in some kind of hostile environment, no, everything was good. But there was this feeling whenever I would arrive in Crimea again, as if I had entered my own courtyard, closed the gate behind me, and that was it.

W: Yes, that's true. There's just the small, narrow isthmus, and as soon as you cross it, everything else closes off...

M: You're home.

W: ...as if it were a borderland, yes. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian man and woman, 20s)

Anticipating the sight of the sea, signaling the one has crossed into the peninsula, is an important ritualistic moment associated with traveling to Crimea from the mainland. If traveling by train, it is not the sight of the open sea that marks the beginning of Crimea, but rather that of the Sivash—the series of interconnected lagoons that forms most of the boundary between Crimea and the mainland, over which all Simferopol-bound trains traversed before this route was closed. I recall myself feeling invigorated upon crossing the Sivash during the long train ride from Kyiv to Simferopol, knowing that we had finally passed into Crimea. Now, this route terminates in the village of Novoaleksiivka just north of the Sivash, from where passengers must embark by foot or car through a series of checkpoints before entering the occupied peninsula (Figure 34). As one



interviewee explained, that satisfying ritual of waiting to see the water and breathing a sigh of relief when passing over it is all but lost:

I still don't understand this, even now. When I travel to Crimea now from Kyiv by land—by car or by train—I wait for the moment when the sea appears, where the end [of the mainland] is, but instead I hit this state border [*ia upiraius' v gosudarstvennuu granitsu*]. And I don't understand how this can be, there should be a sea, it's the natural boundary. But now there is just this outpost standing there, it makes no sense to me. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)



**Figure 34:** Sign posted in the window of a train car indicating the train's route from Lviv to Novoaleksiivka—the small town in the Kherson Oblast that now serves as the southern terminus for all Ukrainian train routes once bound for Crimea. (Photo by author)

Thus, while internally displaced Crimeans assert that Crimea remains a part of Ukraine, they must nevertheless contend with the reality that an international border has been erected between them and their regional homeland, and the process of traveling is now experientially indistinct from traveling to a foreign country. Indeed, those without Russian citizenship or who have de-registered from their Crimean addresses must now enter Crimea as a foreign citizen. “I have to go through migration when I go home,” noted one interviewee who is now registered in Lviv, “it was funny to me the first time, when I went home and had to fill out a migration form” (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). Although experiences crossing this border can vary tremendously from person to person or from one trip to another, any journey home for Crimean IDPs is now disrupted by a cumbersome and potentially unnerving passage through an imposed and illegitimate international border zone. It is at the border where rhetorical assertions of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and the internality of displacement from Crimea collide with the harsh realities of *de facto* Russian sovereignty over the region, and where the emerging diasporic condition of Crimean IDPs may be most palpable.

### **Not the Same Crimea they Left Behind**

Once they pass through the border, many IDPs now find that Crimea no longer feels like the same home that they left behind. Being confronted with ubiquitous Russian flags, images of Putin, and other symbols of the Russian state is certainly alienating and demoralizing, and some—particularly returning Crimean Tatars—still face harassment from the authorities or other belligerent individuals. During a focus group, one Crimean Tatar woman told me about her husband’s experiences during his frequent return visits to Crimea from Kyiv:

Lately, it’s only my husband who goes back. He’ll go [to Crimea], have run-ins with the police, and then come back here. He’ll taunt them all the time, he’ll

arrive with a Ukrainian flag, we always have a Ukrainian flag in the car. And one time—my mother told me about this, I wasn't there—he was driving somewhere with children and my mother, and a police car cut him off, overtook him, and stopped him, just to play with his nerves. The FSB will call him and ask, for example, “how's your health? Where are you planning to go today? What are your plans? You're not afraid to go there? Better not to go and just stay at home today.” He's under constant stress. He will come back here, rest up, regain his moral strength, catch up on sleep. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

Such run-ins are far less frequent for Slavic IDPs during return visits to Crimea, but their experiences can nonetheless be fraught with stress, anxiety, and a melancholic nostalgia for the Crimea they once knew. For example, a few interviewees mentioned the sorry state of the Simferopol train station, which once bustled with tourists coming and going at all hours of the day and night during the summertime, but which is now a ghost town serving only a few destinations within Crimea via commuter trains known as *elektrichkas*. The familiar ritual of arriving at the train station—where trains are greeted by kitschy Soviet-era songs that celebrate Crimea blaring from the platforms' loudspeakers—is just one of the small comforts of home lost to Crimean IDPs in the wake of the annexation. “I think the thing I miss most is the feeling when I arrive home and it's exciting, it's fun, I love it, and I'm excited about seeing my friends,” explained one ethnic Russian woman who had moved to Kyiv a few years before the annexation. “I don't feel that anymore,” she bemoaned, “because going there is actually a lot of stress, beginning here when you have to run around to the exchange bureaus to find and buy rubles, because it's very hard to exchange hryvnias in Crimea (Interview 001, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). “I think my disconnection from Crimea is only getting bigger,” she continued,

because I don't really enjoy going there anymore, even though I will always go there as long as my parents are there, obviously. But Crimea doesn't really feel like home, and I always feel this tension there, and it's annoying because you go there to have fun in the Black Sea sanatoria, especially in the summer. My mom and I went to this nice hotel in Yalta in late August. It was really nice, it was a very relaxing experience, we loved being there, but whenever I heard the Moscow

accents around, it just got me so mad. (Interview 001, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Other interviewees described the tense and awkward interactions they have had with old friends and acquaintances during return visits to Crimea, some of whom are nervous or reluctant to converse with people who chose Ukraine over Russian rule in Crimea. In one instance, an interviewee described a chance meeting with an old friend and the friend's wife that was cut short once his own allegiances were made clear:

I started talking with him, and his wife just kind of stood there. He asked me about what I was up to, and I answered that I had moved to Lviv, and we continued talking. But with the word "Lviv," I got the impression as if a switch had gone off in his wife's head. Her demeanor changed completely. It wasn't as if she was dumbfounded, but something had changed within her, I noticed it out of the corner of my eye. I kept talking with the guy, but I felt as if I could hear something click in her head. Then she started to jostle him, "come on, let's go." Her gaze didn't fall on me again after that, she wouldn't even look at me anymore, and she practically dragged him away as we said goodbye. We parted ways like children in kindergarten, her leading him by the hand. (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

### **Those Who Do Not—Or Cannot—Go Back**

While some nevertheless brave the border crossing and the disheartening realities of occupation to venture back to Crimea on occasion, others have decided that the journey is too risky or simply not worth the hardships. One young Crimean Tatar man, who had faced harassment before relocating to Kyiv for his active involvement in the Crimean Euromaidan, explained to me why he had not yet returned to Crimea, nor plans to do so in the foreseeable future:

I don't think it's worth it go there. Given the trends we see there now, it seems like after a bit of time and after some of these events that things would somehow mellow out, but it's just the opposite, and with every month these occupation politics become more and more active in Crimea. I don't even know if they would let me into Crimea, but if I did show up there I could be abducted. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

There are also several individuals whom Russian authorities have officially banned from the territory of Crimea for their open efforts to resist or oppose the annexation, including Mustafa Dzhemilev, Refat Chubarov, and other members of the *Mejlis*, as well as a handful of activists and journalists. Moreover, there are other prominent figures within the IDP community who are not officially forbidden from entering Crimea, but have nevertheless decided against returning while it remains occupied because their position or activities are likely to attract unwanted attention from Russian authorities. Such is the case for Anatolii Zasoba, outspoken opponent of the annexation and founder of *Krymskaia Diaspora*, who told me that “even though the majority of Crimeans have the opportunity to return to Crimea, to periodically go to Crimea to visit relatives or to relax during the summer time, this isn’t possible for us, so we stay here” (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba). Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk, the young Crimean Tatar woman who co-founded *Krym SOS* and became editor-in-chief of the prominent Ukrainian news outlet *Ukrains’ka Pravda* in October 2014, has not returned to her home in Kerch since assuming this role because of the added liability that comes with the title. “For me, Crimea was always my home, and I always considered it my homeland exclusively,” she told me,

I used to go back all the time, I felt a physical need to be there—for Crimean Tatars this really isn’t just talk, we are attached to this territory. Now it’s already been a year and a half since I’ve been unable to enter the territory of the peninsula, due to the fact that I have a very active civic position, and I’m also the editor-in-chief of one of the leading Ukrainian media outlets, so the path [to Crimea] is closed to me. Naturally, this brings some moral discomfort, without a doubt, it really is difficult. [...] When I took the lead role at *Ukrains’ka Pravda*, I understood that I immediately moved into a different weight class, and my appearance in the territory of the occupied peninsula would be viewed differently. (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk)

Experiences of remaining socially and physically engaged with Crimea therefore vary widely from person to person and between ethnic groups generally. While a two-thirds majority

of all survey respondents claim that their loved ones in Crimea support their move to the Ukrainian mainland, Slavic Crimean IDPs—especially ethnic Russians—are more likely than Crimean Tatars to report strained or damaged relationships with Crimean family and friends resulting from heated disagreements over the annexation and their subsequent decisions to leave Crimea. These stresses on personal relationships may potentially weaken their ongoing connectivity to the region as the occupation and their own displacement drag on. Despite these taxed relationships and disdain for what Crimea has become, a majority of IDPs have returned to Crimea since relocating to mainland Ukraine for limited visits with friends and family, or to tend to other affairs. Furthermore, visiting Crimea frequently—often five times or more—is rather commonplace among IDPs of all ethnic background, although slightly less common among ethnic Ukrainians. While the *de facto* border between Crimea and mainland Ukraine is closed to trade and most forms of transportation, the frequency with which individuals cross this border speaks to a continuing social bond between Crimeans living on both sides of the Perekop, and to the efforts of IDPs to remain personally engaged in the social life of their estranged homeland. IDPs continue to journey back to Crimea in spite of the grueling and potentially traumatizing border crossing procedure or the unpleasant experience of confronting the degradation of their beloved homeland, while others remain deterred from visiting altogether by the potential risks to their safety.

Returning to Cohen’s “common features” of diaspora, his fifth point argues that diasporas generally exhibit “the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland” (2008, 17). As I discussed in Chapter Nine, a “return movement” largely contingent on the return of Crimea to Ukrainian control is certainly present

within the Crimean IDP community and especially among Crimean Tatars; but as I have described here, the relationships that IDPs maintain with Crimea in lieu of their permanent return are “vicariously” mediated through personal relationships with family and friends who stayed behind. The variable strength and viability of these vicarious relationships suggests that the social connective tissue linking place of origin and place of relocation is more expansive and tensile for some Crimean IDPs than for others, and it is along the contours of this connective topology that a diasporic condition is taking root. For many IDPs, these bonds are further reinforced through “intermittent visits” to the Crimean homeland, although whether these visits can be said to “satisfy” desires for remaining engaged with Crimea is debatable given the strains associated with travel and the extent to which the region has, from an IDP perspective, deteriorated in their absence.

Synthesizing IDPs’ narratives and experiences of remaining connected to their regional home(land), we see a dialectical spectrum of (dis)junction; some remain more actively and fruitfully engaged with the region through sustained relationships and frequent return visits, while others have grown increasingly tethered to Crimea socially and emotionally through soured relationships and less frequent or enjoyable visits home. The diasporic condition of Crimean IDPs emerges in response to these variations, becoming more experientially salient where the bonds between home(land) and host-land are strongest and continue to inform a divided sense of territorial belonging, and evaporating where these bonds lose their salience.

## **Chapter Twelve: Ongoing Political Engagement: Planning for Crimea's Return to Ukraine**

While Crimean IDPs remain personally entangled with Crimea to varying degrees and in a variety of social, emotional, and experiential ways, they also continue to engage with the home(land) left behind in political and aspirational ways that reflect “a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity,” in line with Cohen’s fourth “common feature” of diaspora (2008, 17). Here too, we see important differences between ethnic subsets of the IDP population. Perhaps the single most divisive debate within the community of Crimean IDPs centers on the speculative question of how, and in what political-administrative form, Crimea should be reintegrated into Ukraine upon its liberation from Russian occupation. Crimea’s political status within Ukraine prior to the annexation was that of an autonomous republic, governed by a regional parliament and possessing a considerable degree of power to shape economic and cultural policy within the region (see Sasse 2007). Unlike virtually every other autonomous region in the post-Soviet space, Crimea’s autonomy did not hinge on its status as a homeland to an indigenous minority; although the Bolsheviks did create the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921 for the sake of the indigenous Crimean Tatars, Crimea was demoted to a standard *oblast* in 1945 following their deportation, and territorial autonomy was restored only in 1991 by referendum and without specific reference to the Crimean Tatars, who had only just begun returning from Central Asia. Crimea’s autonomous status within Ukraine was therefore predicated on a nebulous sense of the region’s distinctiveness and the resistance of the region’s pro-Russian political elite to Ukrainian subjugation (Charron 2012, 68–73).



Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea became Russia's Republic of Crimea following the annexation—officially retaining its autonomous status despite dropping it from the name—and while Russian authorities have codified some token and symbolic rights for the Crimean Tatars within the republic's constitution, the Republic of Crimea remains unique among the 21 other autonomous republics of the Russian Federation because it is still not explicitly founded on the presence of a national indigenous minority. Along with the meteoric rise of the Crimean Tatars' public profile within Ukraine in the wake of the annexation, their long-standing desire for the restoration of national autonomy within their Crimean homeland has reached a crescendo in the realm of Ukrainian political discourses, although it remains a highly contentious topic.

### **Crimean Tatars' Controversial Push for Autonomy**

Despite their support for Ukraine, the Crimean Tatars had struggled for years to receive even modest concessions from Kyiv regarding their rights and status as the primary indigenous people of Crimea (Belitser 2017). They achieved an important but bittersweet victory when the Ukrainian government officially recognized the Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people on March 18, 2014—the same day Russia formally annexed Crimea—at which point Kyiv was powerless to enforce the status or implement consequential policies within the territory it no longer controlled. Although Crimean Tatar IDPs are grateful for this gesture, many feel that it is too little, too late, and some argue that Kyiv would have been in a stronger position to resist or counteract Russia's actions in 2014 had the pro-Ukrainian Crimean Tatars already enjoyed the status of an indigenous people. “I would say that the Crimean Tatars are a trump card for Ukraine, but unfortunately, it has been very difficult for the Ukrainian political establishment to

understand this,” explained *Mejlis* member and founder of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, Eskender Bariev. He continued,

Today, we see that the Russian Federation is out of line [*eto bespredel'shchik*], it is an occupier who showed up and just took everything, and yet it tries to show to the whole world that the referendum represented the “will of the Crimean people.” This is why we say that Ukraine should have recognized Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people much earlier, because there is international law and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which clearly states that military forces may be present in any given territory only with the permission of its indigenous people. And who is this “Crimean people?” It doesn’t exist. There is the population of Crimea, but there is no “Crimean people.” When we talk about a given “people” [*narod*], we are talking about a single language, about a single belief system, about a certain culture, a mentality, etc. There is no “Crimean people” like this. There are Crimeans [*krymchane*], who make up the population of Crimea, which took form only after the deportation in 1944, and it was artificial, it was all imported, made up of people who have absolutely no roots in Crimea. So, this is why today Ukraine should state very clearly that Crimean Tatars are an indigenous people, that they are on the side of the Crimean Tatars. And we also insisted in 2014 that Ukraine should take up an initiative declaring that a referendum of indigenous peoples should be held in Crimea in the presence of UN Peacekeepers, so that the indigenous peoples can decide where Crimea should be. Then the indigenous people, the Crimean Tatars, would make it clear where Crimea should be, in which country. Again, Ukraine did not utilize this. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

Following this missed opportunity, Crimean Tatar IDPs and many who support them now imagine and are preparing for a future where their newfound indigenous status can facilitate the creation of a Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomous region within Crimea in the event of its deoccupation and reunification with Ukraine. As one Crimean Tatar interviewee put it, “I think that Crimean Tatar autonomy is probably everybody’s dream” (Interview 041, Crimean Tatar man, 40s).

The proposal is indeed controversial among Crimean IDPs of different ethnic backgrounds, even while general support for the Crimean Tatars is rather high; according to survey results, 76.3% of all respondents support the Ukrainian government’s recognition of Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people, including 63.8% of ethnic Russians, 71.8% of ethnic

Ukrainians, and 96% of Crimean Tatars themselves. Support for the government’s recognition of the Crimean Tatar deportation as a genocide—declared on the same day as their indigenous status—is even higher among Crimean IDPs at 82.3%, including 74.1% of ethnic Russians, 80.5% of ethnic Ukrainians, and 92.8% of Crimean Tatars. But at just 51.1%, support for the constitutional establishment of a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region is much lower; this includes only 38.8% of ethnic Russians and 38.6% of ethnic Ukrainians, while 84% of Crimean Tatars stand in favor (Table 15). “Not all IDPs from Crimea love [the Crimean Tatars], not all of them,” noted ATR director Ayder Muzhdabaev, who went on to explain that lingering Soviet myths about the Crimean Tatars and their true political and cultural loyalties continue to shape the misperceptions of some Crimean Slavs in mainland Ukraine:

There are some IDPs from Crimea who love the Crimean Tatars, who are for Crimean Tatar autonomy, who understand that this needs to be done, because our people were destroyed during all these years and they need to give us the guarantee that we will survive in our own land with rights and representation. Part of the Ukrainian people from Crimea understand this, the other part is categorically against it. They always come up with this idea that Crimean Tatars want to join Turkey, even though we never wanted this. Crimean Tatars generally do not want to live in Turkey and never wanted to unite with it, never in their lives, these are the lies of Soviet propaganda. That’s why they ejected the Crimean Tatars, because Stalin feared there was going to be a war with Turkey. These are such old, stupid myths, but they are still repeated today. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

**Table 15:** Rates of survey respondents’ support (percent) for given actions or proposals.

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Government’s Recognition of Crimean Tatars as an Indigenous People	76.3	71.8	63.8	96	75
Government’s Recognition of the Crimean Tatar Deportation as a Genocide	82.3	80.5	74.1	92.8	83.3
The Creation of a Crimean Tatar National Territorial Autonomy in Crimea	51.1	38.6	38.8	84	58.2

In spite of the controversy and the unlikelihood that the prerequisite deoccupation of Crimea is anywhere on the horizon, the question of Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy

has nevertheless appeared on the Ukrainian political agenda. During a commemorative event marking the Crimean Tatar deportation on May 18, 2016, President Poroshenko declared that the Ukrainian government was taking up the initiative to formally and symbolically declare Crimea a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region of Ukraine—a call that he has frequently repeated with no additional action. Meanwhile, Crimean Tatars have advanced the discussion under their own initiative, most symbolically—and controversially—by erecting signs along the *de facto* border zone with occupied Crimea that declare, “Welcome to the Ukrainian Crimean Tatar Autonomous Republic” in both Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages (Figure 35).



**Figure 35:** Sign erected near the checkpoint with Crimea that reads, in Ukrainian, “Ukraine, Crimean Tatar Autonomous Republic, We Welcome You!” (Photo source: <http://naspravdi.info/analitika/ukraina-krymsko-tatarskaya-avtonomnaya-respublika-privetstvuem-vas>)

With some political momentum finally behind the idea, many Crimean Tatar IDPs are cautiously hopeful for the symbolic victory of a constitutional amendment declaring Crimea a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region of Ukraine—even if it will exist only on paper for the time being, and even though it will ultimately be difficult to implement if and when the time comes. “I hope that this isn’t just a bunch of talk, that it doesn’t just evaporate into thin air,” one Crimean Tatar interviewee said;

Of course, there are a lot of nuances, but as a Crimean Tatar I hope that our president keeps his word and works toward a solution to this problem now. This should be decided now, while Russia remains in Crimea, so when deoccupation happens this would automatically start functioning in the territory of Crimea. I don’t think we should put this off, so that the promises can already start to come true. But there are a lot of nuances because, unfortunately, in Ukraine there are a lot of people who are not ready for a Crimean Tatar national autonomy, although they keep quiet about it. They are silent now, but tomorrow when deoccupation comes, these people will unfortunately come out against this. The whole population of Ukraine is not ready for this radical step, but we need to be conscious about it. On the one hand, these are extreme measures, but on the other hand, it would be more just for the Crimean Tatars. But if we look at Ukrainians, this is kind of a sharp transition for them. It’s hard to say, because of course I am a Crimean Tatar. This is more my subjective view than an objective one. But I really do hope that this happens sooner rather than later, so that historical justice can triumph. (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Ironically, one Crimean Tatar interviewee even told me that he is more optimistic now than ever before about the prospects of Crimean Tatars achieving self-determination through national-territorial autonomy within Ukraine, regardless of the realities of the Russian occupation:

Now as never before, Crimean Tatars are close to having the status of an indigenous people within Crimea and the opportunity to build a Crimean Tatar autonomy within the borders of Ukraine. You see, this government and the Crimean Tatars will actively participate in developing this land [i.e., Crimea]. We are closer to this now because just three years ago it was just a dream, just theoretical. Now that possibility has become a fact. (Interview 061, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

## **Opposition and Support for Crimean Tatar National Autonomy from Slavic Crimean IDPs**

But while most Slavic Crimean IDPs generally support and empathize with the Crimean Tatars, many are wary of granting them autonomy in a region where they constitute a relatively small minority, and are concerned about what it would mean for Crimea's Slavs and other non-indigenous minorities. Referring specifically to the aforementioned signs proclaiming Crimea's national autonomous status, one ethnic Russian interviewee explained her discomfort with the proposal to declare Crimea a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region:

I know that many Ukrainians, many Russians from Crimea, who still have patriotic feelings towards Ukraine, they kind of feel a bit uneasy about it. And honestly, I felt it too. I never admitted it to my Crimean Tatar friends, that's for sure! But I don't see how a strictly Crimean Tatar republic in Crimea is better than a strictly Russian republic, as it is now. So, for example, I identify myself as a Ukrainian Crimea, and so I'm not part of the Russian Crimea, and I'm not part of Crimean Tatar Crimea, so where do I stand in this? And I know that there are other people who feel that way too. (Interview 016, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Apprehensive of a system of political representation that would privilege one particular group over others, Slavic Crimean IDPs frequently spoke in favor of a civic or “conservative multicultural” model of national governance that guarantees the individual rights of all citizens regardless of ethnic identity, while rejecting “liberal” or “plural” models of multicultural nationalism that ascribe special status to vulnerable minorities and ensure their collective rights through mechanisms such as national and/or territorial autonomy (Fleras 2009). “I am very much in favor of Crimean Tatars having adequate rights and every possibility to preserve their language and culture,” affirmed one young ethnic Russian woman during our interview, “I really like the Crimean Tatars, and I believe that this is the right of every nation and every person.” She then added

But I am against the idea that their rights should extend beyond the point where other people's rights begin. I think this should be addressed not with slogans, but through systematic work on documents, on statistics, on all these kinds of

indicators, because if you go about it any other way it becomes discrimination from the other side. Then it would essentially be like what the Crimean Tatars went through in a certain historical period; everything is decided from another side, by a different group of people, and that isn't right. This wouldn't be physical or violent discrimination, but it would be a problem nevertheless, it would still be uncomfortable. So we need to do something about this, we need to find a different way of approaching it. There's no single answer to this question. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Echoing these sentiments, another ethnic Russian interviewee equated autonomy and collective rights based on ethnicity with “radicalism,” regardless of whom the policy would privilege; “I'm against radicalism,” he told me frankly, “to me it's all the same—Crimean Tatars, Russian radical nationalism, Ukrainian radical nationalism. If I hear some declaration that there should be some kind of national territorial autonomy, I'm against it. It doesn't matter what the person's ethnicity is” (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s). From a practical perspective, others argued that there is simply no point in debating Crimea's political status while it remains occupied. “It's kind of ridiculous to argue about it,” added the interviewee quoted above who spoke about the signs along the border, “because the reality is that it's not Ukrainian at all, it's just all Russian. God knows when it will go back to Ukraine” (Interview 016, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). Cutting straight to the point, another interviewee stated that “discussing such a status while the territory is occupied is just stupid” (Interview 059, ethnic Russian woman, 40s).

In only a few instances of speaking with Slavic Crimean IDPs did I encounter the very fears and misperceptions of Crimean Tatars and their political ambitions that ATR director Ayder Muzhdabaev had described to me. The most notable example came during my interview with *Krymskaia Diaspora* founder Anatolii Zasoba, who opposed granting autonomous rights to the Crimean Tatars on the grounds that, in his view, this is a Trojan horse concealing their true aims of separatism or Turkish irredentism—the very same anxieties that some believe were behind the Crimean Tatar deportation in 1944:

Crimea will not return to Ukraine in the same form that it was before. In the event that Russia retreats from Crimea, it is now assumed that it will be handed over to the Crimean Tatars and made into a Crimean Tatar National Autonomy within Ukraine. That means it will look something like a state within a state, with the Crimean Tatars recognized as indigenous people and possessing the right to self-determination, and knowing their temperament [*nastroenie*], this will likely mean the desire to either separate and become a Crimean state — a Crimean Tatar state — or to possibly unite with Turkey, we can't rule that out either. (Interview 004, ethnic Russian man, 20s)

While many Slavic Crimean IDPs oppose or are at least skeptical of the proposal to declare Crimea a Crimean Tatar autonomous region, others are far more amenable to the idea, including some staunch advocates. Sympathetic to the Crimean Tatars' long plight for prosperity in their homeland, and disillusioned with how both Russia and Ukraine have handled the administration of Crimea, some Slavic Crimeans confided in me that they view the Crimean Tatars as the most competent and responsible contingency within the region, and that they believe Crimea would flourish only under their stewardship. "I think that this is very fair," one ethnic Russian interviewee stated with regard to the question of Crimean Tatar autonomy, adding that

In any case, whenever I speak with my [Crimean Tatar] friends and the conversation turns to the question of Crimean Tatar autonomy, I tell them that this is probably the only scenario under which I would return to Crimea, if there was a Crimean Tatar autonomy and a corresponding Crimean Tatar government. I tell them that if this happened, I would go to Crimea and say, "guys, this is great! Can I come live with you?" In my view, if we are going to divide people according to national identity, then Crimean Tatars are the most capable. (Interview 062, ethnic Ukrainian man, 30s)

Surprisingly, some Slavic interviewees were even supportive of creating an independent Crimean Tatar state separate from Ukraine, a proposition that goes well beyond the aspirations of most Crimean Tatars themselves. "Why not?" responded one ethnic Russian interviewee to the question of whether she supported Crimean Tatar national autonomy in Crimea. Upon



elaborating, she revealed her own misconceptions about how Crimean Tatars view Ukraine and their relationship to it:

If they are ready to claim such responsibility for themselves, then why not? I think that this would probably be fair at the very least. It would be fair and correct because they really don't need Ukraine all that much; they just don't like Russia, and they have chosen the lesser of two evils. This is just my personal opinion. I think that they would be much more comfortable with independence, because as a nation [*narod*] they should preserve what is theirs. They would be able to preserve themselves if they broke off from the larger [Ukrainian] society and just had their own, so they could preserve their language, culture, and traditions. They don't need Ukraine, and they don't want it. This is what I saw there [in Crimea], and it's normal, they shouldn't want Ukraine, they want their own [country]. I would want the same thing. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s)

Another interviewee, an ethnic Ukrainian woman who supported Crimean Tatar self-determination up to and including independence, evoked a rather fantastical vision of a Crimea helmed by its own indigenous people:

I insist that Crimea be a Crimean Tatar autonomy, so that it receives a Crimean Tatar identity. I'm convinced that this status is the only way—either it should be an autonomous republic in Ukraine, or a completely Crimean Tatar state separate from Ukraine—but under no circumstances a part of Russia, of course—that is closely linked to Ukraine, like Monaco for example, or like Hong Kong. There would be something binding it [to Ukraine], an economic binding, but the region would develop independently. I know personally that Crimea will have an absolutely different and favorable future when it becomes Crimean Tatar, not a future that is plundered. As a region, Crimea has always been plundered. The thing is, all the other people who came wanted their piece of land by the sea, and to hell with everybody else. So, when it is completely and properly developed, it will be like Las Vegas there, with space stations, maybe all the things Aksyonov wrote about,<sup>39</sup> but with a completely different approach that comes about when a people love their native land, and don't simply use it. To love and to use, these are different things. (Interview 053, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s)

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<sup>39</sup> Here, the interviewee is referring not to the Prime Minister of Occupied Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, but rather to the Soviet novelist Vasily Aksyonov, whose 1981 novel, *The Island of Crimea*, imagined an alternate history in which Crimea was an island rather than a peninsula, enabling the embattled White Army to defend it against the Red Army in the Russian civil war. As a result, Crimea flourished as a beacon of capitalist prosperity and excess just off the Soviet shore, filled with bustling metropolises, luxury hotels, and casinos.

Although the advocacy for Crimean Tatar independence in both these cases comes off as somewhat misguided and divorced from the stated goals of Crimean Tatars themselves, these interviewees are nevertheless representative of a relatively small but vocal contingency among Slavic Crimean IDPs who align themselves with the Crimean Tatars and their mission of achieving self-rule within their own homeland.

### **What Would Crimean Tatar National Autonomy Look Like?**

But while the very prospect of a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region has its advocates and opponents, the debate within the Crimean IDP community appears to be centered primarily on the question of what, exactly, such a prospect would entail were it to be implemented against all odds. Several Slavic IDPs whom I spoke with were open to the idea of Crimean Tatar autonomy in principle, but were somewhat apprehensive of lending their support without knowing the practical details of how it would function or what rights would be guaranteed to whom. “I think there should be a wider societal conversation about Crimean Tatar national autonomy,” one ethnic Russian woman told me,

because there are a lot of questions about what this would look like, whose rights will be protected, how this will be enshrined, and what kinds of positions would be given to whom. If there are 200,000 to 300,000 Crimean Tatars on the peninsula while nearly 2 million people live there in total, then the rights of all other people should also be guaranteed. So, these are all legal points that just need to be discussed within our society, so that we may better understand what we are talking about, how it would work, and who will have rights. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Journalist Pavel Kazarin, a strong proponent for the rights of Crimean Tatars, expressed to me a similar sentiment tinged with frustration over what he perceived to be an aversion among the Crimean Tatar leadership to clearly delineate and articulate their precise demands for autonomy:

When the Crimean Tatars talk about creating a Crimean Tatar national territorial autonomy, it raises questions for Crimean Ukrainians and Crimean Russians; in what form do you want national territorial autonomy, what exactly do you mean? Do you want quotas, or something else? And today the Crimean Tatar activists who are raising this issue do not have answers, so in my view, they are going about it the wrong way. They will first need to imagine this national territorial autonomy, then explain to us how they think it should be. But so far, they say, “let’s have a national territorial autonomy,” and everybody asks the question, “what will it be like?”, and they say, “well, we don’t know.” And they get offended when everybody starts asking them what this should be like. “You don’t trust us,” they say, “why are you asking us these questions?” It’s like if you and I had been friends since we were kids, and you opened a bank and said, “Pavel, I opened a bank, give me all of your money.” I would say, “great, and what is the interest rate? What services do you offer?” And you would respond, “don’t you believe me? Aren’t you my friend?” The details are important. So, with regard to this question, Crimean Tatar activists and ideologists who want to turn Crimea into a national territorial autonomy need to draft a bill or a declaration about their intentions, they are specifically the ones who need to do it because they are the initiators, it is something they need. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

To the credit of such circumspect Slavs, the Crimean Tatars have indeed done a poor job of attending to the details and nuances of how their proposed autonomy would be structured, and in what ways it would guarantee both their rights and the rights of others. But the Crimean Tatars themselves are not a homogenous group with a singular vision for how best to structure their autonomy, and they too understand that work must be done before they can reach a consensus and put forth a proposal that will both satisfy their demands and assuage the apprehensions of their Slavic compatriots. “It is important for Crimean Tatars to reflect on the question of national-territorial autonomy right now,” acknowledged *Krym SOS* co-founder Alim Aliyev, who explained that

If you were to take ten Crimean Tatars and asked them about national-territorial autonomy, you would get ten different nuanced connotations. This is an important question, I recently spoke with Mustafa Dzhemilev about it, about how he views it. He’s very liberal, after all. He really sees it as a way to preserve the Crimean Tatar language and culture, as that of an indigenous people. Others take a wider view on this. As Crimean Tatars, it is our homework now to be discussing these questions. Those who do not want a national-territorial autonomy are mostly people from Crimea, the Russians and Ukrainians of Crimea who see this as a

threat, and they are not able to articulate what the threat is, but that's why it is important to build a dialog with them and explain what it means. You fear what you don't know. (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev)

Like Aliyev, I too had the opportunity to discuss the question of autonomy with Mustafa Dzhemilev. His objectives were indeed focused on the preservation of Crimean Tatar culture and language, but without a definitive sense for the proper mechanics that would be most effective in advancing these goals:

Today there is a lot of discussion about the fact that after de-occupation, after the return of Crimea to Ukraine, a reconfigured autonomous republic will be created that is national-territorial in character. But this does not mean that Crimean Tatars should have more rights only because they are Crimean Tatars. Simply put, in the constitution of the autonomous republic it should be stated that this republic represents the realization of the right to self-determination of the indigenous people of Crimea. Some mechanism should be put into place to protect their rights, not to dictate to anybody else their own rights, but in fact to protect theirs too. First of all, this should mean that Crimean Tatar is one of the official languages, a functional language, otherwise it is doomed to disappear. Secondly, a mechanism should be provided for the representation of Crimean Tatars in all structures of power, so as to protect their rights. This could be achieved either through the power of veto, or through some kind of proportional representation that will allow them to defend their rights. This is what we need to work on. (Interview 045, Mustafa Dzhemilev)

Speaking to questions of proportional representation, responsible stewardship of the land and its resources, and the preservation of language, culture and identity, ATR director Ayder Muzhdabaev was similarly vague and lacking in any specific prescription for how best to organize Crimean Tatar autonomy within a deoccupied Crimea:

Some kind of representation should be guaranteed to the Crimean Tatars, so that they could vote within the places where they live compactly, because if you divide Crimea [into representative districts] just according to population, then a Crimean Tatar would never win anywhere. They live in divided [districts], these need to be drawn in such a way that Crimean Tatars have their own representatives within the organs of power. Or, if not this, then they need to make a Crimean Tatar parliament. Take the *Mejlis* and write it into the constitution, just like the Saami parliament is written into the constitution of Finland, and it handles issues related to land use and mineral resources, it handles issues in their own territory. In other words, roughly speaking, nothing can be decided without them,

their homeland cannot be given over to somebody else. Then, there are the issues of language, education, and culture. Crimean Tatars need a guarantee that nobody in the future will ever decide for them what to do with their land, that in the future nobody will ever destroy their language that was destroyed over these last two centuries, that nobody will ever destroy the nature of Crimea without their permission—digging a quarry or burying a waterfall or something like that. Crimean Tatars need to feel like a nation [*narodom*] that will not die, that will do just the opposite and be restored. We need these guarantees, and there will be equal rights for all the rest, this is the constitution of a European Ukraine. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

Thus, while there are clear imperatives regarding which rights and resources Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy should safeguard, its proponents have not yet proposed definitively a practical solution for how to enshrine these policies through a hypothetical system of autonomy.

### **Girding Against Accusations of Separatism and National Chauvinism**

But for Crimean Tatar IDPs, much of the battle in advocating for autonomy has been focused on preemptively countering suspicions and accusations—chiefly from Slavic Crimeans—that calls for autonomy are tantamount to separatism or the subjugation of other peoples in Crimea. “Crimean Tatars whom I have talked to feel very bad because they feel like they must again explain that they are not bad, that they are not trying to discriminate against others, that they have the rights of an indigenous people, and that they are not going to separate from Ukraine,” noted sociologist Iryna Brunova-Kalishetskaya, who considers herself a staunch ally of the Crimean Tatars, adding that “[t]hey say, ‘we are so tired, for 25 years we explained this, we lived together for these 25 years, so why should we explain again that we are not separatists’” (Interview 019, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)?

Although they have finally achieved widespread respect and recognition for their commitment to the Ukrainian state and its territorial integrity, some Crimean Tatars are

concerned that misunderstandings regarding their appeals for autonomy may slow or undo this progress, and they are therefore vigilant in their efforts to dismantle any such misconceptions. “There needs to be work done to clarify” what Crimean Tatar national autonomy would mean, explained Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk, “because there are a lot of misconceptions about this. Maybe people are afraid that this would be akin to separatism, but in no way is this separatism. It means the possibility for the realization of a people’s right to self-determination. It is really important to make this distinction, and to understand it” (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk). In a similar but more frustrated appeal, Ayder Muzhdabaev expounded that

Crimean Tatars understand that we cannot found our own state, and we don’t need this. If you poll Crimean Tatars, 90% will say they want to live in Ukraine, in the European Union, so we just don’t need [independence]. We all understand this perfectly well. All these fairytales about how the Crimean Tatars will oppress people... show me an example from the last 200 years where the Crimean Tatars oppressed anybody. Whom do the Crimean Tatars oppress? (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

With respect to the fears that granting special rights to Crimean Tatars would limit the rights of others in Crimea, one long-time Crimean Tatar activist asserted that

The conversation is about our collective rights. Some will say, “ok, you want to rehabilitate [your national culture], but doesn’t this infringe upon the rights of others?” I don’t understand this, you could literally destroy many states around the world on this premise. In Russia, don’t they infringe upon the rights of non-Russians? Now, this is a matter of content, not of form. So, a Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy that resembles the form of a state, it also includes its laws, its own constitution, etc. I don’t think that it would be written into the constitution of a Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy that only Crimean Tatars have the right to live in the Crimean Tatar Autonomous Republic. I’m certain nobody would write this because there was never anything like this in our history. It’s a different matter, it would mean governmental support for the development of our language, our culture, etc. These are collective rights. (Interview 032, Crimean Tatar man, 60s)

To bolster their claims that national-territorial autonomy would be respectful and accommodating to the rights of non-indigenous Crimeans—who, after all, make up a large

majority of the regional population—some Crimean Tatars point to the historical example set by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Crimean Tatar political and religious leader, Noman Çelebicihan. A towering figure in the development of modern Crimean Tatar culture and identity, the trained lawyer Çelebicihan served as Mufti to all Muslims living in Crimea and much of the western Russian Empire. In 1917, Çelebicihan organized the first Crimean Tatar national assembly known as the *Qurultai*, where he was chosen as president of the short-lived Crimean People’s Republic formed in the chaos of the Russian Civil War. Murdered by the Bolsheviks in January 1918 after their invasion of Crimea, Çelebicihan has become a martyr and emblem of Crimean Tatar identity, solidarity, and resistance, with his poem, “*Ant etkenmen*” (“I swore”), even being adapted as the lyrics to the Crimean Tatar national anthem in 1991 (Figure 36). But Çelebicihan was no Crimean Tatar chauvinist; he respected and celebrated the cultural diversity found in Crimea, and believed that as its leader, it was his duty to preserve and defend this diversity. In explaining why all Crimeans would have their rightful and respected place within a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region, one interviewee invoked the memory of Çelebicihan and his well-known analogy of Crimea as a garden—sometimes attributed as a bouquet—composed of many beautiful flowers:

I think that if we are going to declare a national-territorial autonomy in Crimea, then we should prepare for it—prepare our minds, our knowledge, our abilities, and our respect for different ethnic groups who live in Crimea, because there are more than 100. It’s like what Noman Çelebicihan said, our first mufti, who founded the first *Qurultai*. He said that he saw Crimea as a flower garden, where there are many different types of flowers, each with their own aromas. Each one has its own color, its own unique patterns that nature has created. He had in mind the different peoples who lived there. When he talked about a Crimean Tatar national autonomy then, 100 years ago, he said that the Crimean Tatars should not be hegemon, not the most important group, but that they are ready to take on the responsibility of preserving this harmony. This was really the right way, and it is only in this same spirit that we should talk about [Crimean Tatar national autonomy] now. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Although the question remains as to what privileges and obligations the Crimean Tatars would assume as the “preservers” of this “harmony,” the precedent set by Çelebicihan for viewing the Crimean Tatars as indigenous leaders among equal peoples of Crimea is nevertheless a compelling entry point for an inclusive national conversation about Crimean Tatar national autonomy.



**Figure 36:** Public advertisement in Kyiv commemorating the 100th anniversary of the first Qurultai of the Crimean Tatar People, convened by Noman Çelebicihan in 1917. (Photo source: <https://twitter.com/Narauncommon/status/939562290306863105>)



## National Autonomy as a Tool for Deoccupation?

Another rhetorical strategy some have employed to promote the declaration of a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region is to argue that it could actually help expedite the deoccupation of Crimea. On the one hand, some speculate that the occupation might never have happened in the first place had Crimean Tatar autonomy already been established, including *Mejlis* member Eskender Bariev:

Imagine if there had been a Crimean Tatar Autonomous Republic, if it had been the case that Crimean Tatars were guaranteed one-third of the seats in this parliament, then would it have accepted the decision to join Russia, even at gunpoint? Would this have happened if there had been Crimean Tatars [in positions of authority]? Of course, some could argue and say that maybe it would still happen, that they would be scared into it or something, but today we see the clear position of the *Mejlis* and the position of the whole [Crimean Tatar] nation independent of its influence. So, this likely would have been their position within the parliament. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

On the other hand, given that Crimea is still recognized as a part of Ukraine by most of the international community, others argue that declaring it a Crimean Tatar autonomous region with the backing of the Crimean Tatars themselves will, according to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, force the Kremlin to contend with the collective demands of this indigenous people over whom it claims sovereignty. As Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk explained to me, declaring the region a Crimean Tatar autonomy within Ukraine

is also a means for the return of Crimea, because if this declaration recognizes the rights of the Crimean Tatar people to self-determination, then the Russian Federation—the occupier—will have to reckon with it. Unfortunately, this needs to be explained to Ukrainian society, that not only would Crimean Tatars benefit from this, but that this is also a way to solve the problem [of returning Crimea]. (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk)



*Figure 37: Demonstrators on Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti for the commemoration of the Crimean Tatar deportation, holding a banner that reads, "Crimean Tatar autonomy is the quickest path to the return of Crimea to Ukraine!" (Photo by author)*

While I am skeptical that such a declaration would sway or force the hand of the Kremlin to comply with UN pronouncements and heed the wishes of the Crimean Tatars to relinquish its claims to Crimea, the argument does appear somewhat effective in rallying some skeptics' support for the idea of Crimean Tatar autonomy (Figure 37). "If this can help return Crimea, if they were to create this and somehow international organizations recognized that Crimean Tatars are an indigenous people, that they have no other homeland, then sure," remarked an ethnic Russian interviewee who first expressed apprehension about the question of Crimean Tatar national autonomy, "but they need to somehow work more actively with regard to how this will

help return Crimea to Ukraine, in which case I'm not against it" (Interview 074, ethnic Russian woman, 30s). A convincing explanation for how national autonomy will lead to deoccupation may prove elusive, but couching the subject of autonomy within the larger and more universally engrossing discussion of how to return Crimea to Ukraine may indeed be a fruitful strategy for engaging a wider audience in the debate over the region's political status if and when deoccupation comes.

## **Conclusions**

Crimean IDPs remain within the country of their citizenship, but the place they left—whether or not they consider it their homeland—has become something altogether different. Discussions regarding the “maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity” (Cohen 2008, 17) of the home(land) left behind is a key concern and preoccupation shaping the experience of internal displacement from Crimea. There is an important difference, however, in the fact that the state and status of Crimea are of concern to Ukrainian society as a whole, which shares with Crimean IDPs the general goal of reclaiming Crimea from its Russian occupiers. Enjoying broad solidarity and mutual concern with the larger host society over the fate of the estranged homeland is atypical of diasporic experiences, and may speak to the awkward fit of Crimean IDPs within the framework of diaspora. However, so long as Crimea remains occupied, the details surrounding its political status and the minutia of how rights will be guaranteed to whom is a far less pressing concern to Ukrainians who do not hail from Crimea, and in these debates a diasporic condition emerges that distinguishes Crimean IDPs from their co-nationals. Journalist Pavel Kazarin articulated to me this precise point, right down to the diasporic status of Crimean IDPs:

Residents of the mainland *oblasts* of Ukraine who don't know Crimea well are ready now to create a Crimean Tatar national territorial autonomy in absentia. They don't care about the details, it's among Crimeans themselves that there is a discussion about what the terms of a national territorial autonomy would be. It's understandable that if I lived in Zhytomyr, it makes no difference to me what happens in Crimea, if I'm not planning to live there. But Crimeans, the diaspora, if they are planning to return, they need to understand how such a national territorial autonomy will affect their future. For residents of the mainland *oblasts*, it's just about revenge. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

Crimean IDPs thus remain actively engaged in imagining and debating the conditions according to which their home(land) should be ordered upon its hypothetical deoccupation, with the question of Crimean Tatar national autonomy serving as the central pivot around which these discourses turn.

To add one final wrinkle to the discussion of how Crimean IDPs remain politically engaged with the home(land) left behind, I also encountered some inklings of a trend towards political *disengagement* with Crimea and with the question of its future status, hinting at a slow deterioration in the sense of belonging to Crimea and concomitant diasporality among some IDPs. Ironically, the clearest sign of this deterioration came during my interview the founder of *Krymskaia Diaspora*, Anatolii Zasoba, who argued that lingering on the question of Crimea's return to Ukraine in any form is a fool's errand, and that many IDPs are wisely focused instead on improving Ukraine itself as it moves forward. His statement suggests that the Crimean component of identity has already begun to diminish for some:

We've held three different strategy sessions, and at the first one I was very surprised when we gathered Crimean IDPs and discussed the strategic development of *Krymskaia Diaspora*, and not once in four hours did we mention the word "Crimea." (...) There are some other organizations that are well-known in the media because they give a lot of interviews, they present themselves as experts on matters of Crimea, and you will often hear that they are very concerned with the matter of returning Crimea to Ukraine. But if you talk with ordinary Crimeans, with IDPs, they are worried not so much about the return of Crimea to Ukraine—although this is also important—but with the prosperity of Ukraine as it is. These are people who left everything—their businesses, their jobs, their

property, their relatives—and they came here in order to help the country reach a new level, to become a more European country. They all value freedom, they want Ukraine to be a prosperous and successful country, and they understand that the question of Crimea’s return is beyond the capabilities of Crimean IDPs or of individual Ukrainian citizens. It’s geopolitics, it’s not even in the hands of Poroshenko. It’s grand geopolitics, it’s a weighty question more for the USA and Russia, not for some local interests here. I think that you will speak with people, and you will feel that these people with patriotic sentiments who left Crimea followed their hearts here. They want to live in a prosperous Ukraine, they want Crimeans to understand that they chose the old path to development, and Ukraine chose the new path, the European path to development. The people will move in this direction somehow. (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba)

Thus, we see again the contrast between one contingency of the Crimean IDP population—composed largely of Crimean Tatars—that remains deeply engaged with matters pertaining to Crimea and entrenched in their own Crimean (Tatar)-ness, and one that demonstrates a gradual disengagement and drift away from their Crimean identities towards an ascendant Ukrainian-ness. It is among the former group that a diasporic condition remains salient to the experience of displacement, while the schismatic sense of territorial belonging characteristic of diaspora shows signs of mending among the latter group, as Crimean-ness becomes an increasingly vestigial component of their identities.

The break between these two contingencies is, in some ways, reflective of ethnic differences within the community of Crimean IDPs, with Crimean Tatars generally demonstrating a stronger propensity for diasporic identities than Slavic Crimeans. However, these two divides—diasporic and ethnic—cannot be easily mapped onto one another, as cleavages cutting across these divides suggest that ethnicity alone is not a reliable indicator for the salience of diasporic identities among Crimean IDPs. Ethnicity is often upheld as playing an essential role in the construction and perpetuation of diasporic identities, although some are critical of this assessment. In the following chapter, I demonstrate how the case of Crimean IDPs may serve to further problematize the relationship between ethnicity and diaspora.

### **Chapter Thirteen: The Role of Ethnicity**

The sixth “common feature” of a diaspora, according to Cohen, is that its members will share “a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate” (2008, 17). The argument or assumption that members of a diasporic community share a common ethnic identity and remain a coherent social entity through the bonds of ethnicity is further upheld by prominent diaspora scholars, including Vertovec (1997) and Van Hear (1998). Indeed, many of the world’s most well-established and widely recognized diasporic communities—including, for example, the Armenian, Greek, Chinese, Lebanese, and Ukrainian diasporas—are grounded in a common, sustained ethnic identity rooted in the homeland from which they have been dispersed.

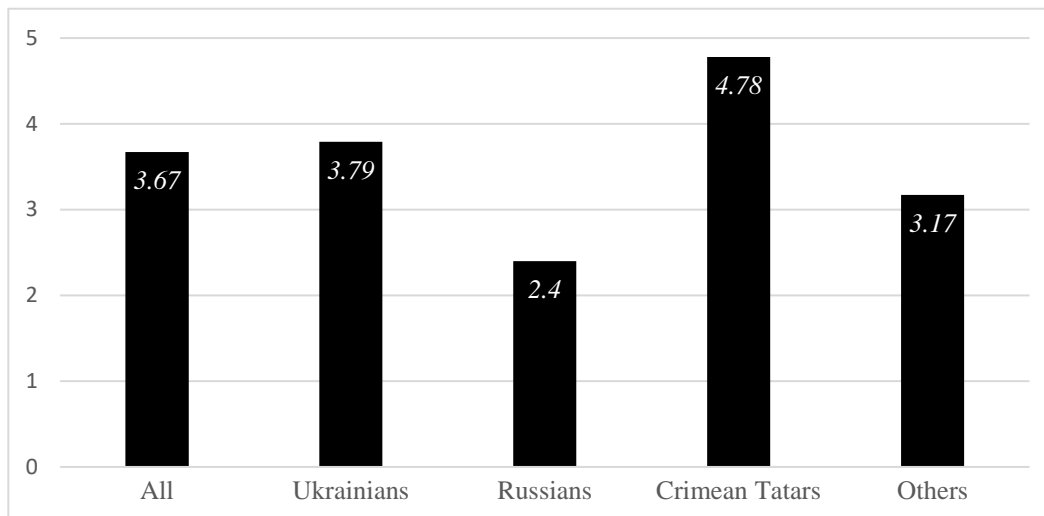
However, other authors have been critical of the deference to ethnicity as the fundamental bonding agent that unites groups of migrants into diasporic units. Safran (1991, 94), for one, argues that solidarities rooted in mutual displacement may hinge on ideological, spiritual, or patriotic senses of belonging rather than ethnic, citing as potential examples Catholics in Protestant-majority states who may view Rome as a “spiritual homeland,” Germanophone Swiss who locate their cultural and linguistic homeland in Germany, and 20<sup>th</sup> century European communists who view themselves as an “ideological diaspora” removed from an ideological homeland centered in Moscow. Brah (1996) and Anthias (1998), on the other hand, argue that diaspora studies too often reify ethnicity as an essential feature of collective identity and social solidarity, and do not adequately attend to the intersections of gender, class, sexuality, generation, race, ethnicity, and cultures that cut across migrant communities and engender

polymorphic identities within a broader diasporic framework. According to Anthias, diaspora is useful as a “heuristic advance” only if it is “able to treat collective solidaristic bonds as emergent and multiple, and to acknowledge the political dynamics of these processes” (1998, 577–578). Paralleling my own arguments, Soysal (2000) also contends that diaspora’s transnational framing and ethnic referent only reify the nation-state system and its presumption of internal ethno-national homogeneity, ignoring the diversity of identities located both within a given nation-state and among the scattered diasporic populations ostensibly linked to it.

### **Blurry Boundaries between Ukrainian and Russian Ethnic Identities**

As I discussed at length, Crimean IDPs are highly ethnically diverse, consisting primarily of three ethnic groups—Ukrainians, Russians, and Crimean Tatars—along with handfuls of smaller ethnic minorities including but not limited to Belarusians, Poles, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Azeris, and indigenous Karaites and Krymchaks. As with the overall Crimean IDP population, accurate figures regarding the proportions of these groups within it are unavailable, although survey results may hint at a rough estimate; the ethnic composition of the survey sample was 44.3% Ukrainian, 25.2% Crimean Tatar, 22.3% Russian, and 7.2% other minorities or mixed ethnicity. As I noted in Chapter Four, ethnic Ukrainians are notably overrepresented and Russians underrepresented in this sample compared to their relative populations within Crimea itself, and this may reflect a growing propensity among pro-Ukrainians of Russian lineage to adopt and proclaim a Ukrainian ethnic identity as an extension of their civic identity—a trend in post-Maidan Ukraine also observed by Kulyk (2018). As a further indication that Crimean IDPs may be shedding Russian ethnic identity, survey respondents who did identify themselves as ethnic Russians returned a mean score of only 2.4 when asked to rate on a scale of

1 to 5 the importance of their ethnic heritage to their self-identity, compared to mean scores of 3.79 for self-identified ethnic Ukrainians, and 4.78 among Crimean Tatars (Figure 38).



**Figure 38:** Average survey response rates (scale of 1 to 5) to the question, “How important is your ethnic belonging to your self-identity?”

This ethnic fluidity, in which the primacy of civic affiliations and ideological convictions has blurred the ostensibly stable boundaries between Russian-ness and Ukrainian-ness, is the first indication that solidaristic bonds within the population of Crimean IDPs do indeed transcend ethnicity. In fact, I spoke with several individuals who explained that they identify as Ukrainians—either ethnically or civically—despite being wholly or predominantly Russian according to ancestry. “My father is a citizen of the Russian Federation, not a Crimean citizen of the Russian Federation, but a real Russian [*imemmo rossiiainin*],” noted one interviewee who explained that she had even lived in Russia for a brief period in her childhood, and that “I have a very mixed background—Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians—but if we are talking about blood, I am mostly Russian. If we are talking about self-identity, then I am absolutely a Ukrainian” (Interview 030, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s). Another interviewee explained that she also



identifies as a Ukrainian, even though only one of her grandparents was ethnically Ukrainian while the other three came from Russia:

Basically, all of my roots came to Crimea from elsewhere [*“ponaekhali” v Krym*]. All the relatives on my father’s side are from Russia, from the Urals—his mom, his dad, all of them. On my mother’s side, her mother is also Russian and all of them are from Russia, while my mother’s father is a Ukrainian. So, he was the only one in the family with a Ukrainian identity, and I am the next one. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s)

Anatolii Zasoba, founder of *Krymskaia Diaspora*, further noted that the boundaries between Ukrainian and Russian have always been blurry in Crimea, as many Crimeans—including himself—have mixed heritage. While his upbringing in Sevastopol was decidedly “Russian,” he has consciously chosen to adopt a Ukrainian identity beyond basic ethnic affiliation:

It would be hard to call me either Russian or Ukrainian, because my father is a Ukrainian and my mother is Russian. There are a lot of examples of this in Crimea, it’s every other person. We are all pretty well-connected, the Russians and Ukrainians. I know for certain that my ethnic background is secondary for me. Socially, I am probably Russian, and Russian by my upbringing, but spiritually and mentally I am more of a Ukrainian. I grew up in a Russian environment, in the Russian city of Sevastopol, but I am a Ukrainian in my soul and according to my values, and Ukraine is closer to me than Russia. (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba)

Because the boundaries between Ukrainian and Russian ethnicity are so porous and frequently traversed, and because prevailing discourses of Ukrainian nationalism have been reoriented toward a civic rather than ethnic model following the events of 2013-2014, ethnicity appears to play a rather insignificant role in the forging of solidaristic bonds among Slavic Crimean IDPs. Having in common a rejection of Russia and its occupation of Crimea, along with support for a unified, pro-European Ukraine, solidarity among Slavic Crimean IDPs is predicated instead on a mutual Crimean-ness nested within a prescribed sense of civic Ukrainian-ness. “Ukrainian Crimeans” and “Russian Crimeans” have seemingly lost their salience as discrete ethnic categories within the Crimean IDP population at large. Indeed, I encountered virtually no

discourses concerning experiential or perspectival differences between Crimean IDPs of Ukrainian and Russian ethnic heritage, as both groups are regarded as equally Crimean and Ukrainian under the contemporary rubric of Ukrainian national identity. Rather, a conglomerative notion of “Slavic Crimeans” has emerged as a broad category of distinction within the Crimean IDP population.

### **Collectivity and Solidarity between Slavic and Crimean Tatar IDPs**

However, even as two ethnic categories have generally been collapsed into a single, pan-Slavic Crimean-ness, ethnicity is by no means irrelevant to discourses and processes of identity (re)construction within the population of Crimean IDPs, as Slavs are nevertheless contrasted with an ethnic other in the community of internally displaced Crimean Tatars. There certainly exist civic and ideological solidarities between Slavic and Crimean Tatar IDPs, and moments when discourses of Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness converge—especially at their intersections with Ukrainian-ness and anti-occupation politics. To redeploy a quote I used partially in Chapter Six, *Krym SOS* co-founder Tamila Tasheva asserted that a common sense of Ukrainian patriotism unites Crimean IDPs of both Crimean Tatar and Slavic persuasions:

If we are talking about how the community of Crimean Tatars feel, or the Slavic population that left Crimea, mostly everyone just says that we are Crimean IDPs and we are not strongly divided, it doesn't matter whether or not you are a Crimean Tatar. This is because the people who left Crimea are those who have patriotic feelings towards the Ukrainian state, so this was the main factor, not whether you are Crimean Tatar or Slavic, but whether or not you have some kind of pro-Ukrainian position. This is the main factor uniting these two subgroups of Crimean IDPs. (Interview 008, Tamila Tasheva)

In a similar argument, another Crimean Tatar interviewee pointed out that solidarities have been forged among all Crimean IDPs through the shared experience of displacement and a common response to the occupation of Crimea, creating an IDP community distinctive from those

displaced from the Donbas where the conditions are rather different. “The IDPs from Crimea are like a separate conglomerate of IDPs,” she explained, “because in a way we were all forced to relocate, but not because our homes were being destroyed. Yes, they were not leveling our houses, they were causing psychological destruction, but we left because we rejected this” (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). In this sense, discourses of diasporic identity do transcend ethnic boundaries to forge political, ideological, and experiential solidarities across a multiethnic population of migrants sharing common territorial origins.

### **Slavic Crimeans’ Perceptions of Crimean Tatars**

As I detailed in my discussion of Crimean Tatar-ness and general Crimean-ness, ethnicity continues to play an extremely important role in how Crimean Tatars frame and perform social identities, and exclusive ethnic solidarities among Crimean Tatars do exist alongside their extended, trans-ethnic political solidarities. This point is further underscored in the survey figures cited above, in which Crimean Tatar respondents rated ethnicity as a significantly more important aspect of their self-identities than both ethnic Ukrainian and Russian respondents (Figure 38). The Crimean Tatars’ tendencies to form separate ethnic bonds and assert their distinctiveness has not been lost on their Slavic counterparts, many of whom recognize that the Crimean Tatars have a unique connection to Crimea and have suffered a great deal more because of their ethnic identity. “Maybe I haven’t been in close contact with the Crimean community in Kyiv, but here in Lviv I see that they do cooperate and stay close to one another, especially the Crimean Tatars,” noted one ethnic Russian interviewee, adding that

They really stick together, but the ethnic Russians and Ukrainians are just more integrated into the environment here, although we still communicate with each other. I understand them in general, that they consider Crimea to be theirs, that this is their land. It’s more difficult for them when they must abandon their

peninsula, it seems to me that this is easier for Russians and Ukrainians to accept. (Interview 056, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

Sergei Kostinsky, an ethnic Russian IDP from Crimea and member of Ukraine's National Council on Issues of Television and Radio Broadcasting, echoed the view that Crimean Tatars have a more difficult time adapting to life in mainland Ukraine than Slavic Crimeans, citing their ethnic differences as a barrier in a quote I used partially in Chapter Six:

Slavs adapt very easily, and there is really no difference whether you are from Crimea or from Lviv. Maybe just in the accent. I might not be able to speak Ukrainian, but at some point I will start to speak it easily. But Crimean Tatars, they are really from a different culture—they are Muslims, they are traditionalists. Very few Crimean Tatars assimilate so easily, very few. (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)

Other Slavic Crimeans I spoke with also recognized that Crimean Tatars have generally garnered more attention for their plight as a vulnerable indigenous minority, affording them greater access to cultural and community development resources than Slavic Crimeans, whose differences from other Ukrainians are not so urgent or apparent. First and foremost, *Krym SOS* is recognized as an organization that caters specifically to the community of displaced Crimean Tatars, for better or for worse. With a sense of respect and reverence—but also a hint of resentment—one ethnic Russian woman described to me the advantages that organizations including *Krym SOS* give to Crimean Tatars over Slavic Crimeans in mainland Ukraine:

There are certain organizations, like *Krym SOS* and others, that offer a lot of help to the Tatars. There's no way to wedge yourself in there because the Tatars... well, you understand the niche they fill, they really have suffered a lot, but [these organizations] help them specifically, you have to belong to that group. They help them a lot, with grants and everything else. So it's impossible [for Slavic Crimeans] to get their foot in the door. I am Russian, I don't have any Ukrainian blood whatsoever, only a [Ukrainian] conscience. It's very hard to break into [Crimean Tatar circles]. We understand each other, we communicate. They live their own lives, they travel abroad to symposia and such, they get money to do this. Some are involved in business, I talk with some of them, I write them on Facebook, but they have their own lives. But that being said, I respect,

understand, and love these people, and I understand that they have suffered greatly as indigenous people. (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

Such perceptions are not altogether misplaced; although she stated firmly that the organization offers humanitarian assistance to all IDPs regardless of ethnicity or place of origin, *Krym SOS* co-founder Tamila Tasheva explained to me that the work they do to support, develop, and preserve the cultural of internally displaced peoples is necessarily and exclusively geared toward the Crimean Tatars:

We work on a lot of projects meant to bring attention to issues of Crimean Tatar culture, once we understood that we are also interested in engaging in cultural matters and that we need to promote it somehow. We have focused only on Crimean Tatars, because it just doesn't make sense to demonstrate Russian culture here. We could demonstrate Ukrainian culture, because Ukrainians also live in Crimea, but it's kind of the same thing. What's the point? There is a community of ethnic Ukrainians living in Crimea, but they are still in their country, and everybody talks about Ukrainian culture here. So, that's why we decided to focus [cultural work] only on Crimean Tatars. This is independent of the fact that we, the founders of the organization, are Crimean Tatars. We don't only focus on Crimean Tatars [outside of cultural projects], we don't have that right, we are a human rights organization. We defend and help all those who need it. (Interview 008, Tamila Tasheva)

### **Civic-Minded Criticisms of Crimean Tatar Ethno-National Identity**

But while some Slavic Crimean IDPs are respectful of the ethnic differences between themselves and the Crimean Tatars, and understand why they nurture and defend an ethnic identity separate from inclusive models of Crimean-ness and/or Ukrainian-ness, others espouse the view that clinging to an ethnic identity is regressive and counterproductive to the project of building a civic, forward-looking Ukrainian nation. “What difference does your ethnicity make?” one ethnic Russian interviewee posed to me, “Jewish, Armenian, Russian, Azeri—you live in a country where there should be no kinds of distinctions made according to ethnic background” (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s). It is here, in the debate between a liberal, civic-

minded, “color-blind” model of post-ethnic political nationalism on the one hand, and a progressive, “multicultural” model of nationalism attentive to the collective rights of ethnic and indigenous minorities on the other hand, that the discourse of trans-ethnic solidarity among Crimean IDPs begins to break down.

Curiously, in my conversations with Slavic Crimeans I encountered references to how Americans view race and ethnicity as both a preoccupation to be avoided in the development of Ukrainian civic nationalism, and as a model to be followed. In one case, I interviewed a young ethnic Russian woman from Sevastopol who happened to be a high school exchange student in the United States when the annexation occurred. She responded thusly to a question meant to probe her understanding of ethnic differences within the Crimean IDP community:

See, this is the weird thing about Americans; I think, and I'm not trying to judge, but you guys pay too much attention to the descent of people, like where they come from originally. Even though a lot of you were really born in the same country, in the United States, you say, "oh but your parents are from here, your parents are from there." At some point I don't even know where people are from, if they are Crimean Tatars, or if they are, I don't know, Bashkir or something. (...) I think that my generation has lost much of this, they don't see themselves as too different from others in Crimea. Like, I am Russian, my descent is Russian, because all my relatives are from *Russia* Russia. So, because we are younger, we try to look at things more open-mindedly. It just doesn't make much of a difference whether I'm talking to a Crimean Tatar or a Russian or a Ukrainian, if we are all here then we chose to be here, and we have the same ideas at least, to some extent, and we kind of think the same way, so let's just get along. (Interview 042)

The other example came from *Krymskaia Diaspora* founder, Anatolii Zasoba, who relayed to me the argument that the United States had nearly overcome its racial divides to become a color-blind society, and that this is what Ukraine should strive for with regard to ethnicity. His gravely misinformed understanding of race in the United States aside, Zasoba's contempt for the politics of ethnicity in Ukraine is clear, and although he does not refer to them explicitly in the following

quote, his resentment of the Crimean Tatars for perpetuating these politics with respect to Crimea is only thinly veiled:

There is this idea of “measuring” whose ethnicity is cooler or more indigenous in this or that territory. When I was in the States last year, I really liked a lecture I heard from a professor about how America is on the brink of becoming a post-racial country, beyond any kind of racial distinctions. But we [in Ukraine] still aren’t even thinking about race, we are still on the issue of ethnicity and still trying to divide ourselves. This is really splitting us apart. I have an [adopted] daughter who is mixed-race [*mulatka*], and we are sufficiently progressive in our views in the sense that we are open to the world and to the differences that exist between people. Maybe this is one of the reasons why we resettled [in Kyiv], and why we want to live in a European country. So, to summarize, I am all for rejecting the ethnic differences that divide us, and for recognizing that Crimea is a multiethnic territory with a centuries-old history, with many different peoples, and there is no need to squabble with this tug-of-war over whom Crimea belongs to. We need to just live together as neighbors and try to exist in love and harmony with each other, regardless of one’s religious preferences or ancestry. (Interview 004, ethnic Russian man, 20s)

Regardless of how they may interpret racial and ethnic politics in the United States, many Slavic Crimean IDPs have consciously chosen to minimize or downplay their own ethnic characteristics, instead prioritizing Ukrainian citizenship within their hierarchical orderings of self-identity categories and admonishing those who continue to emphasize their own ethnic identities. “In my view, the difference is in what we give top priority to [*chto my stavim vo glavnu uglu*]” continued Zasoba, “I don’t prioritize ethnic difference; I, like many of our Crimean IDPs, prioritize the fact that I am a citizen of Ukraine, this is in first place. I am a Ukrainian specifically from the perspective of citizenship, and not ethnicity” (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba). He also made explicit the group of IDPs whom he believes continue to champion ethnic identity to the detriment of harmonious civic relations within Ukraine: “For them, ethnicity is more important than citizenship. They are first of all Crimean Tatars, and in second place they are citizens of Ukraine. For us, it’s the other way around” (Interview 004, Anatolii Zasoba). Olga Skripnik, an ethnic Russian and founder of the human rights organization *Al’menda*, expressed

similar views regarding the supremacy of civic identity over ethnic identity, and unabashedly accused the Crimean Tatar political leadership of using ethnicity as a tool of divisiveness and to cynically advance their own interests:

There exists a problem of identity. For us the primary identity in the current situation is civic [*grazhdanskaia*] identity. I am a citizen of Ukraine regardless of my ethnicity, and [the occupiers] came after me in Crimea because I supported Ukraine, because I spoke out against the occupation. This is civic identity; it is actually the dominant [form of identity] and people are suffering specifically because of it. But sometimes, because of the actions of the Crimean Tatar leaders, this identity is erased and a division of people into ethnic categories is introduced: there are Crimean Tatars, and there is everybody else. This is an enormous problem for us because it is a division of society within Crimea. These people [in Crimea] already endure repression, and if there is such a fracture among them it will be very difficult for them to coexist together. Furthermore, for the past two years the leaders of the Crimean Tatars have frequently used this topic [of identity] to advance their own agendas, for example the matter of their own careers. (Interview 033, Olga Skripnik)

Skripnik elaborated further about why she believes the Crimean Tatars' political leaders—along with state officials and institutions who she believes pander to their ethnic politics—are doing harm to Ukrainian civic society, alleging state discrimination through what might be labeled in the United States as “affirmative action” policies that benefit Crimean Tatar organizations over those run by Slavs or with more civic orientations:

In the new Ukrainian budget there are 60 million hryvnias [approximately \$2.5 million] allotted to finance the *Mejlis*. In this way, the directors of certain Crimean Tatar organizations received additional government resources, while other organizations like ours or other Ukrainian or Russian organizations—for example the Ukrainian Cultural House—did not receive any such resources. This is discrimination. For two years there has been governmental discrimination toward different organizations that are helping people from Crimea and other IDPs. This concerns Crimea specifically, because there is no such discrimination in the Donbas. In the Donbas they are all simply citizens of Ukraine, but division of identities has taken place in Crimea. There are some organizations who work for and defend all citizens of Ukraine, and for them it makes no difference if they are Crimean Tatar or Ukrainian or a Belarusian; the main thing is that you are a person from Crimea and a fellow citizen. But the Crimean Tatars have considerable political power, and I mean specifically the *Mejlis*, which advances the division of these identities. (Interview 033, Olga Skripnik)



As a vulnerable indigenous community struggling simply to preserve and safeguard their cultural against the threat of eradication, Crimean Tatars generally do uphold their ethnicity as a paramount component of identity. However, as I detailed in Chapter Five, by no means does this prohibit them from simultaneously identifying as proud Ukrainian citizens. Their particular vision of Ukrainian patriotism is one that celebrates rather than neutralizes ethnic and cultural differences, leaving plenty of room for the simultaneous expression of ethnic and civic identities in ways that seemingly elude the political imaginations of some Slavic Crimeans. Indeed, as one young Crimean Tatar explained to me during a focus group session, Crimean Tatar ethnicity and Ukrainian citizenship are deeply intertwined and inextricable components of his self-identity:

I am a citizen of Ukraine, a Ukrainian, but I am a Crimean Tatar by ethnicity. Most importantly, probably, I am Crimean Tatar, and then a Ukrainian. If I hadn't been a Crimean Tatar, then I wouldn't have returned to Crimea, and I wouldn't have become a citizen of Ukraine. Thank you to Ukraine for giving me citizenship. But I returned to Crimea, and this happened because I am a Crimean Tatar. In no way do I discriminate against any institutions of power or citizenship, but it happened logically that I've been a citizen of two different states. It's only because I am a Crimean Tatar that I returned to Ukraine. Ukraine gave me citizenship without any problems, it gave it to many deportees at that time, almost all of them. We must thank Ukraine for this. (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

### **Crimean Tatars' Long Shadow Over the IDP Community**

Hence, as seen both in the debates surrounding civic versus multicultural nationalism and the question of Crimean Tatar national autonomy, the most divisive issues within the community of Crimean IDPs are not about ethnic differences themselves, but about whether those differences should be grounds for kindling separate identities and bestowing separate rights, and whether doing so is detrimental to the project of fostering Ukrainian civic nationalism. But while some prominent Slavic Crimean IDPs such as Zasoba and Skripnik have framed grievances with

their active Crimean Tatar counterparts as a question of civic versus ethnic identity, others express resentment toward Crimean Tatars because of a belief that they hog the spotlight, divert attention from issues facing all Crimean IDPs, and center their own claims of belonging to Crimea. Often, these resentments are tied to the debate concerning Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy. “Yes, you took the words right out of my mouth” responded one ethnic Russian interviewee when I asked whether she felt that Crimean Tatars had dominated discussions concerning Crimea and its IDPs. She continued:

Yes, this is how it is. I understand that this is now their chance to dot all their i’s and demonstrate to whom Crimea belonged in the first place, but the fact that their resolutions and declarations all talk about how Crimea should only be theirs, that they don’t talk about anybody else, this is kind of offensive. We also have the same rights. I understand that these are questions that need to be answered, but there is no need to divide us, we all lived there together. This rhetoric of theirs is not very welcoming to me, if I’m being honest. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

Another interviewee said that she feels invisible as a Slavic Crimeans in mainland Ukraine because the attention Crimean Tatars have drawn to themselves creates the impression that they are the only truly Crimean people among the internally displaced. “It’s only the Crimean Tatars who are seen, because they really have an active civic and political position,” she argued, “so, by default, they are viewed as Crimeans—as the real Crimeans—while for the others it’s like they’ve stayed in Crimea, like they are separatists. This is really common” (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). Expressing similar sentiments, another ethnic Russian interviewee told me that she resented the implication that Slavs somehow do not belong in Crimea, or that Crimean Tatars were the only pro-Ukrainian contingency within the region, impugning that some Crimean Tatars in fact supported or accepted the annexation:

To me, it seems like they emphasize the idea that Crimea is only for Crimean Tatars. I am not a Crimean Tatar and neither are my parents, but I was born in Crimea. I can understand them, but I consider Crimea mine as much as they

consider it theirs, because I was born and raised there. According to the television and according to the media, Crimean Tatars are the only pro-Ukrainian people there, and the rest are not. I don't want to talk about any statistics, but I know of cases of Crimean Tatars who voted for Russia, and there are those who say, "it's all the same, the important thing is that we live well." It varies. (Interview 067, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

One of the more damning appraisals of the Crimean Tatars and their supposedly divisive politics came in a rant from an ethnic Russian woman now living in Lviv, who not only resented the attention and sympathies the Crimean Tatars have elicited within Ukrainian society, but contended that such sympathies are misplaced because their support for Ukraine is not as steadfast as people may think. "I think I may have a somewhat unpopular opinion regarding the Crimean Tatars," she began,

I simply observed that during the time of the Euromaidan in Crimea, the Crimean Tatar community just didn't show up [to the demonstrations]. They didn't do anything, they just observed. They have a very strong community, they really do support each other, but they just weren't there in general. There were maybe one or two leaders who sometimes came to the demonstrations, but that was the maximum, they were never there in any large numbers. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s)

Her allegations do not comport with the accounts I had heard from Crimean Tatars themselves who had actively participated in the Crimean Euromaidan demonstrations, and who had insisted that Crimean Tatars were in fact one of the primary groups in attendance. She continued:

There was a certain rhetoric in the media before the annexation, at the time of the Euromaidan; they were talking about their problems, about the problems of their people in Crimea, about how they don't have enough seats in the parliament, about how they were given no help with reclaiming land—in the sense that they returned [to Crimea] and wanted to be given land so they could build homes. They all talked about these problems, that is, the problems internal to their community. They never said anything about Ukraine, truthfully. I heard this and saw it with my own eyes, and nobody can convince me otherwise because I participated [in the demonstrations]. Then, when everything happened, many people had to leave Crimea, including the Crimean Tatars. To tell you the truth, I never understood all this noise about how, "oh, the Tatars were sent away" [after the annexation]. This was their personal decision, and many stayed. For some [the occupation] is difficult, but others accepted it, and others have probably come

around to it. I don't know, it seems to me that the decision is different for each person. If they decided to leave, it means they decided to leave. Yes, I agree that [Crimea] is their historical homeland, I absolutely agree with this. But to me it seems like there is a bit of profiteering from this [*spekuliatsiia na situatsii*]. This is my personal opinion. (Interview 063, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 30s)

With such harsh and seemingly misinformed opinions circulating among some Slavic Crimean IDPs, I find it difficult to disagree with the assessment of ATR director Ayder Muzhdabaev that a long-standing xenophobia continues to shape some attitudes towards the Crimean Tatars despite the recent improvements in their public image:

It seems to me that there are many IDPs from Crimea who hated Crimean Tatars when they lived there, and they continue being the same xenophobes here [in the mainland]. There are xenophobes who stayed in Crimea, who don't like the Crimean Tatars, and there are xenophobes who came here, and they continue to hate the Crimean Tatars. I view this as a general kind of xenophobia, but it's just a milder form. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

But other Slavic Crimeans are more understanding and supportive of their Crimean Tatar compatriots. Some recognize the injustices that the Crimean Tatars have suffered, and advocate for the restoration of their collective rights up to and including national-territorial autonomy. In at least one case, an ethnic Ukrainian interviewee agreed that Crimean Tatars have garnered the lion's share of attention with respect to the issues facing Crimean IDPs, but rather than attributing this to some sense of entitlement or divisive politicking, he cited their ability to organize and self-advocate in a way that Slavic Crimeans have not been able to replicate:

Without a doubt, of all the groups of Crimean IDPs here, only the Crimean Tatars have been able to put up a united front. Not only is there a lack of unity among the Russians and Ukrainians who left Crimea, there's a growing rift. There are a few IDP organizations, a few public centers, and even a few Crimean media outlets that have relocated [to the mainland], but unfortunately, they often do not get along with each other. So, there is no single voice that could speak for all Crimean Ukrainians and Russians—for the Slavs in general, relatively speaking. Therefore, their problems are lost in the face of the problems of Crimean Tatars, who can and willingly do talk about themselves and about their own problems. (Interview 043, ethnic Ukrainian man, 30s)

Furthermore, Tamila Tasheva of *Krym SOS* argued that Slavic Crimeans have no unique cultural attributes that they may deploy to draw attention to themselves or raise awareness about their struggles in the same way Crimean Tatars can, and pointed out that it is the Crimean Tatars who provide Crimean Slavs with opportunities to celebrate their own Crimean-ness:

Slavic IDPs do not have their own kinds of holidays or anything else that they could celebrate separately within their own Crimean community. They can only go to those celebrations in the mainland that are organized within a given city, and just join in the celebrations of the local community, and that's it. Although, on the other hand, I would say that Slavic Crimean IDPs do come to celebrations organized by Crimean Tatars, regardless of whether or not they are religious in nature. There was recently a *Kurban-Bayram*<sup>40</sup> festival, and it wasn't only Crimean Tatars there. They are interested, they come to the celebrations just to check it out and to meet with some of their fellow Crimeans [*s kakim-to svoimi zemliakami*]. (Interview 008, Tamila Tasheva)

Again, the major rifts within the Crimean IDP community come down not to any sort of ethno-cultural incompatibilities between Slavs and Crimean Tatars, but rather to the question of whether ethnic identity—namely that of the Crimean Tatars—should be promoted or used to inform policies and public perceptions regarding the Crimean IDP population at large.

### **Whither Crimea's Small Minorities?**

Generally lost in these debates are the views of Crimea's small ethnic minorities also displaced to the Ukrainian mainland, who make up a small but nevertheless noteworthy contingency within the larger Crimean IDP population. Lacking significant numbers or prominent institutions to help raise their profile, these peoples may find themselves alienated or disengaged from debates between their Slavic and Crimean Tatar compatriots concerning the role of ethnic identity. Members of small ethnic minority groups made up 7.2% of the sample

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<sup>40</sup> Known as *Eid al-Adha* in the Arabic world and *Kurban-Bayram* in the Turkic world, this is one of Islam's two holiest holidays, commemorating Abraham's sacrifice of his son in obedience to God.

from my online survey (N=36), including respondents who identified themselves as Jewish, Belarusian, Polish, Armenian, Bulgarian, Azeri, Greek, German, Lithuanian, Uzbek, Ossetian, Gagauz, Chuvash, Lak, and Mari, with only a single respondent representing each group in most cases. Unfortunately, I managed to speak with only a handful of people belonging to small ethnic minority groups, so I am unable to draw informed conclusions about their role in these debates either collectively or as atomized communities. In an effort not to exclude them from my discussion, I may make the very general assessment that some ethnic minorities express a certain solidarity with the Crimean Tatars on the grounds that they too are a regional and national minority. For example, an ethnic Greek woman I spoke with expressed a great deal of affinity for the Crimean Tatars, as she too has experience being a minority:

I always felt sympathy for [the Crimean Tatars]. All of my best girl friends are Crimean Tatars. Personally, I'm not a very religious person, even though I was baptized as most children are. But I don't follow the Orthodox way and so on, I am a little bit different. But the idea is, still we have completely different points of view, we have different allegiances, we have different cultures, we maybe even dress a little differently, we think differently, we have different family traditions and so on. Greeks and Crimean Tatars, they are, well, very different, so to say. On the other hand, they are quite the same, you know, with all this history that is a little bit similar, maybe it connects people. I mean, why do people always try to find something different between them when there is so much in common? (...) So, of course I do feel some connection to these people, but it's not only to Crimean Tatars. I just have always felt that it was quite unfair, life was unfair to them. The government—the Crimean government—was unfair, and the Ukrainian government was also unfair. (Interview 007, Greek woman, 20s)

I also spoke with a member of the extremely small-numbered and endangered Krymchak people, who, alongside the Crimean Tatars and the similarly rare Karaites, represents one of Crimea's three indigenous peoples. Both the Krymchaks and Karaites practice an ancient form of non-Talmudic Judaism, but aside from religious differences they share many ethnic attributes with the Crimean Tatars and therefore remain close allies (Banek 2014). The Krymchak man I spoke with—who alone represented around 0.5% of the entire Krymchak population of Crimea

before resettling in Lviv—unsurprisingly expressed a strong bond with the Crimean Tatars and a close affinity for their culture:

There are very few Krymchaks; even in Crimea, in the very place where they are supposed to be, there are only around 202 or 204 of them. So, I'm used to being in the minority. Coming here, I just became a minority in a different place, but there is also the question of tolerance, and it seems to me that things are much softer here. I think that the population here is more tolerant. The only thing I've lost lies in the fact that Crimean Tatar culture is very similar to Krymchak culture, and having sufficient access to it in Crimea, having a concentration of Crimean-ness with the Crimean Tatar at Karaite peoples created a certain national backdrop that was very comfortable for me. We had a lot of similar values, we really loved our land, and we really loved our tolerance. For example, in Crimea we were invited to *Kurban-Bayram* celebrations, and the Crimean Tatars would always bring meat for us, and we would bring the matzo. We always participated, it was always like that as long as we could remember. For me this was natural, when different religions could exchange with one another. (Interview 058, Krymchak man, 40s)

I cannot speak directly to how these or other small minorities may relate to the question of ethnicity that some Slavic and Crimean Tatar IDPs have grappled with, but their reverence and respect for the Crimean Tatars as another minority and/or indigenous people may hint at where their sympathies lie.

### **Religiously-Minded Criticisms of Crimean Tatar Ethno-National Identity**

Crucially, it is not only Slavic Crimeans who criticize the Crimean Tatars from a civic position for prioritizing ethnicity in the way they construct personal and collective identities; invisible to most Slavic Crimeans are debates internal to the community of Crimean Tatar IDPs, wherein the emphasis on ethnic identity is similarly critiqued but from a conservative religious standpoint. Just as some Slavs have argued that the Crimean Tatars' fixation on ethnic identity is harmful to the project of Ukrainian civic nationalism, some Crimean Tatars who identify primarily as Muslims also insist that a preoccupation with ethnicity over religion is misguided, and only serves to isolate them from Muslim communities both domestic and global.

This view is shared by other Ukrainian Muslims who are not Crimean Tatar, including the country's premier Islamic spiritual leader, Mufti Said Ismagilov of *Ummah*, the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (Figure 39). Born and raised in Donetsk of Volga and Penza Tatar descent, Ismagilov told me that while Crimean Tatars are the only group of Muslims indigenous to the territory of Ukraine, *Ummah* believes that there are around one million Muslims living in Ukraine—including the occupied territories of Crimea and the Donbas—while others estimate that the country is home to as many as two million Muslims (Interview 038, Mufti Said Ismagilov). Aside from being indigenous, Ismagilov explained that Crimean Tatars are also distinct among Ukrainian Muslims for the degree of religious conflict they have endured with their non-Muslim neighbors in Crimea:

When I went to Crimea, I saw what they have there, what goes on there, how they live, and it is completely different from what is happening in the other oblasts of Ukraine. Crimean Tatars were in constant conflict with the Russian population of Crimea, including over religious matters. There were conflicts between Orthodox Christians and Muslims, but there was nothing like this in other parts of the country, in all the other *oblasts* of Ukraine. So, earlier when I would go to Crimea, I understood that they lived as if on a different island, as if they were far away from us and they have their own local problems that don't affect the rest of the country. The whole rest of the country didn't understand these local problems. (Interview 038, Mufti Said Ismagilov)

But beyond the unique circumstances of their tensions with Crimean Slavs, Ismagilov also accused the Crimean Tatars of isolating themselves by retreating into exclusionary aspects of their national cultural, and even creating exclusive Crimean Tatar religious institutions that alienated other Muslims in Crimea:

The problem is that the Crimean Tatars always kept to themselves after their return from deportation. They are a closed ethnicity in a few different senses. Crimean Tatars create their own religious institutions. Before the beginning of the occupation of Crimea, they had been very poorly represented in all the other regions of Ukraine besides the [Autonomous] Republic of Crimea. In general, all of their attention was focused on Crimea, and their goal was the revitalization of national and cultural components [of their identity]. So in Crimea, let's say, even



before the occupation began, the Muftis decided to deliver their sermons only in the Crimean Tatar language. Of course, this put other Muslims in an uncomfortable position, because those who came to the mosques but did not know the Crimean Tatar language did not understand what kind of spiritual values the Imam wanted to convey to them. This was and is a problem. There has been very weak interaction between Crimean Tatar and all the other Muslims in Ukraine. (Interview 038, Mufti Said Ismagilov)

Moreover, Ismagilov was further concerned that Crimean Tatar IDPs continue to distinguish themselves as an ethno-national community in mainland Ukraine and once again aspire to create their own separate religious institutions, thereby isolating themselves further from the community of Ukrainian Muslims at large:

Even now after the occupation of Crimea, they still want to keep to themselves. Now, after however many thousands of them have come to [mainland] Ukraine from Crimea, they still want to create their own separate spiritual administration. My question is, why? You can come and pray with us, we are all Sunni Muslims, we are all the same. But they want to be separate, they want their own separate religious leaders, they want their own separate organizations, and even as they have gone to all the other regions of Ukraine, they remain a closed community. This is a problem. (Interview 038, Mufti Said Ismagilov)



**Figure 39:** Said Ismagilov, Mufti of the UMMA Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine. (Photo source: [http://umma.in.ua/?page\\_id=1845](http://umma.in.ua/?page_id=1845))

Along with the perception that Crimean Tatars purposefully do not integrate into the larger community of Ukrainian Muslims, Ismagilov and others also express concern that most Crimean Tatars prioritize ethnic identity over religious identity, and are thus not sufficiently devout in their observance of the Islamic faith. Ismagilov views this as a consequence of and reaction to their tragic national history; “earlier, in the past, religious identity came first for Crimean Tatars, it was the most important thing,” he noted,

but then the Crimean Tatars went through all the stages of secularization, just like all residents of the Soviet Union, when religion was forbidden, and the [Soviet authorities] fought against it. But then after the deportation, when they ended up scattered across Central Asia and some in the Urals or elsewhere, their affiliation with Islam ceased to define them. Now, Islam no longer comes first for many Crimean Tatars, now national belonging comes first for them—the fact that they are Crimean Tatars, all of their cultural trappings, and not just that they are Crimean Tatars, but also the reproduction of their culture, norms, and traditions. This definitely includes their linguistic heritage and being able to speak their own language. Their religious heritage only comes after all of this, in fourth or fifth place in the hierarchy. Adherence to Islam does not come first for many Crimean Tatars these days, only for those who are very religious; for them Islam undoubtedly comes first, but there are not many of them. (Interview 038, Mufti Said Ismagilov)

Similarly concerned with the state of Crimean Tatars’ religious adherence is Imam Murat Suleiman of the Islamic Cultural Center in Lviv, who, unlike Ismagilov, is a Crimean Tatar himself. “Unfortunately, if we take Crimea, there are 300,000 Crimean Tatars, but only 20% of them are properly devout,” he explained, clarifying that “I don’t mean those who just go to the mosque once a year to be seen there. No, I mean those who are always observant; they pray, they fast, they live according to a proper Muslim lifestyle. (...) All Crimean Tatars are Muslims, thank God, but a Crimean Tatar should really care about this” (Interview 077, Imam Murat Suleiman). With respect to the Crimean Tatars who are lax in their religious devotion, the Imam further elaborated on why it is important for Muslims to remain religiously and spiritually engaged:

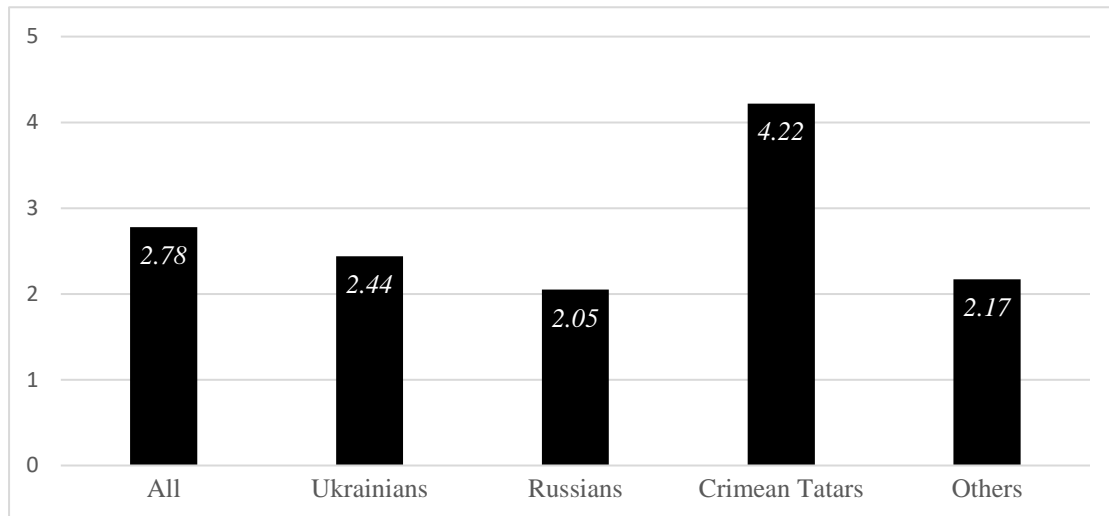
A lot of Muslims are lazy, they don't come to pray. This is a very big problem. They don't try to improve themselves in matters of religion. We offer courses on religion in our center, any Muslim can come and improve their level of understanding of our religion. We should know about our religion, this is the duty of every Muslim. A Muslim should know his religion well. We're not saying that they should be specialists, that they understand the more complex issues 100%. No, but Muslims are obliged to know the most fundamental things about Islam, because they could go somewhere where nobody else around them may know how to address certain problems. This is bad. Or for the sake of their family, they should be able to impart this knowledge within their family as it grows, so that the family has adequate information about their religion. (Interview 077, Imam Murat Suleiman)

### **The Nexus of Islam and Crimean Tatar Ethnicity**

Despite accusations of inadequate or improper adherence to Islamic principles, Crimean Tatars overwhelmingly identify as Muslims and cite religion as an important component of their identities; 85.6% of Crimean Tatar survey respondents chose Islam as their faith,<sup>41</sup> and all Crimean Tatar respondents combined delivered a mean score of 4.22 when asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 the importance of religion to their self-identity (Figure 40). These figures stand in stark contrast to those returned by Slavic survey respondents; only 55.1% of ethnic Russians and 64.1% of ethnic Ukrainians stated that they are Christians of any denomination, with respective mean scores of 2.05 and 2.44 out of 5 on the importance of religion to their self-identities. Crimean Tatars therefore appear to be the most religiously committed subset of the Crimean IDP population, but like many Muslim peoples of the former Soviet Union, their Islam tends to be quite moderate in practice; most are rather lax in their observance of prayer and fasting rituals, relatively few Crimean Tatar women regularly wear a *hijab* or other head-coverings, and many young Crimean Tatars in particular forgo prescribed Islamic rules regarding the consumption of alcohol and/or pork. In one comical example, I became acquainted with a

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<sup>41</sup> Crimean Tatar survey respondents who did not identify as Muslims include 12.8% who indicated they are non-religious, atheist, or agnostic, and 1.6% (only 2 respondents) who identified as Jewish.



**Figure 40:** Average survey response rates (scale of 1 to 5) to the question, “How important are your religious beliefs to your self-identity?”

young Crimean Tatar man who worked as a waiter in a Lviv restaurant that specialized in serving a rare type of pork from the Hungarian *Mangalica* pig breed. As a broad generalization, the Islam of most Crimean Tatars often functions as a cultural rather than spiritual or moralistic component of identity.

Moreover, Crimean Tatars’ understanding of Islam is frequently filtered through the lens of ethnicity; many refer to it as simply one component of a broader ethnic identity, or speak of a unique Crimean Tatar version of Islam to which they prescribe. “In general, Islam in Crimea is unique,” Mustafa Dzhemilev told me, citing Crimea’s long-standing propensity for religious tolerance and couching this within a discussion of the Crimean Tatars’ national character:

Crimea was always tolerant towards all religions, synagogues and Christian churches stood alongside [mosques]. The Crimean Khan, for example, financed the construction of churches and synagogues, so there was a lot of diversity. This is still the most important thing. Because of our democratic principles, our national movement roused the sympathies of many people from many national backgrounds, so the Crimean Tatars have no phobia of different nationalities. This is another positive aspect of our national movement. (Interview 045, Mustafa Dzhemilev)

In a similar vein, ceramic artist Rustem Skibin proposed that Crimean Tatars, like all Muslim peoples, observe their own unique vision of Islam formed within their specific ethno-national milieu:

For me, religion is very ambiguous, because today we see many different currents, we see problems arising within religion itself. Our religion, our Islam, is a Crimean Tatar version, because the religion of every nation is formulated along with the specific characteristics of where it comes from, of the nation in which it arises. So, the Islam of Arabs is distinct in some ways, if we are talking about certain components, about worldviews and the surrounding environment. It is the same thing for Crimean Tatars. (...) I kind of feel that we have sort of an unstable understanding [of Islam]; there are adherents of one type, and there are adherents of another. (Interview 002, Rustem Skibin)

Skibin hereby reaffirms the view—repeated for better or for worse by average and religiously conservative Crimean Tatars alike—that Islam is subordinate and subservient to ethnicity within mainstream discourses of Crimean Tatars’ hierarchies of identity.

But while Dzhemilev, Skibin, and others assert that Crimean Tatar national culture influenced the development of their particular iteration of Islam, more conservative Muslims contend just the opposite; according to Imam Suleiman, Crimean Tatar culture is derived from its Islamic foundations:

Islam is not just a religion, it is the religion on which our culture was founded. Our culture was founded on our religion. We can take anything from our culture, and we will see that there are traces of our religion there. It comes from our religion, from there our Crimean Tatar culture and traditions were formed. There are some things that appeared recently, which many people say the Crimean Tatars created; no, we must look at how our ancestors lived their lives. They tried to ensure that absolutely all of their actions were done in accordance with religion. (Interview 077, Imam Murat Suleiman)

Paralleling the argument of some Slavic Crimeans that a focus on ethnic identity only serves to divide the IDP population and inhibit civic nationalism, Suleiman also asserted that ethnicity is inconsequential in the face of religion and Islamic unity, and that a preoccupation with ethnicity is detrimental to the construction of a transnational, multiethnic community of Muslims:

I am a representative of Islam in Lviv and I do not try to distinguish myself as a Crimean Tatar. We are all brothers and it doesn't matter who you are—an Arab, a Dagestani, a Chechen, an Afghan, we are all Muslims. (...) Yes, I am a Crimean Tatar, if that is of interest to anybody. Maybe to somebody this is a good thing, maybe to somebody else it's bad, but I don't try to distinguish myself with this because it would be superfluous, and maybe it would even be disagreeable to Muslims of different nationalities. They would think, "why is he setting himself apart?" It could even mean ugly relationships with other Muslims. I am a Muslim and it doesn't matter who I have surrounding me. I have my own objectives and my own obligations before the Lord, and it is along this path that I walk. (Interview 077, Imam Murat Suleiman)

Echoing this sentiment, one devout Muslim man I interviewed argued that Crimean Tatars must focus on religious and spiritual components of their identity rather than those linked exclusively to national culture if they truly wish to rehabilitate and strengthen themselves as a community:

Some Crimean Tatars are of the belief that we will develop and flourish once we have protected our language, once we have developed our crafts, once we have developed our cuisine, etc. This is where our strength is, we are Crimean Tatars, and there are only 350,000 of us. This is the first position. The second position is that we, as Crimean Tatars, are a part of the Muslim population, which lives throughout the world, and there are 1.5 billion of them. There are not just 350,000 of us, there are 1.5 billion, and as Crimean Tatars we are one part of this whole group. We will once again become great when we cling to our religion and sustain our way of life. This is the second position. Which position is stronger, the first or the second? In general, being a Muslim is not something you inherit, it's acquired, it's a worldview. Once a person understands things, he declares, "I testify that there is no God but Allah, the one God, and that the prophet Muhammed is the last in his line of prophets." He becomes a Muslim as soon as he pronounces this. He can be American, Ethiopian, Black, Chinese, Japanese, Crimean Tatar, it doesn't matter. I was fortunate to be born into a family of Muslims, in a family of Crimean Tatars. I never had to study a different religion, which would have been a complicated process. That's why I say thank God that I am a Muslim, I like this very much, and I am proud that I am a Crimean Tatar, because we also have our own history that is connected with Islam. I believe that we can play an important role in the future. Therefore, first of all, we say that we are Muslims of Crimea. (Interview 076, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

For the majority of Crimean Tatars, who are concerned that their national identity and culture are already endangered, the drive for Islamic universalism through the erasure of ethno-national differences constitutes an additional threat to their national cohesiveness. One

interviewee, considered an elder statesman within the Crimean Tatar community, explained that such attitudes are incomprehensible to those such as himself who are fighting for national self-determination, and that national solidarity ultimately trumps religious universalism:

There is one part [of the Crimean Tatar population] that we comprehend, and another that we still do not comprehend, where there exists a certain religious component, where they view themselves as part of a large Muslim *ummah*,<sup>42</sup> including here in Ukraine. But for a Muslim like a Palestinian who is a citizen of Ukraine, information from Palestine will always be more important than information from Crimea. While we may all be Muslims, we still have our own problems. (Interview 032, Crimean Tatar man, 60s)

Another Crimean Tatar interviewee, who resettled along with his family in the small western Ukrainian city of Drohobych, noted that several other Crimean Tatar families had also relocated to the city, but to his dismay most of them identify as Muslims and not Crimean Tatars. Moreover, he explained that many of these families consisted of Crimean Tatar men married to non-Crimean Tatar women who had converted to Islam, and in his view such developments only hasten the loss of national identity and culture:

First of all, I am a Crimean Tatar. Some of my [co-ethnic] brothers say that they are Muslims first of all. Now [in Drohobych] there are 20 families [from Crimea]. From these 20, three of them are Crimean Tatar, and 17 are Muslims of Crimea. Many of the Muslim [men] from Crimea have wives who are not Crimean Tatars, they are Muslims. If they are Muslims, they have no nationality. That's why I say that we are, first of all, a Turkic people and we should be marrying others who are the same. We are Crimean Tatars, we are a small nation, we could possibly just disintegrate. But for the Muslims of Crimea, if a girl had been a Christian but then accepted Islam, that's it, she's a Muslim now. There is no nationality, it's just erased. This is bad, but ok, everybody has to decide for themselves. (Interview 068, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Surprisingly, as our interview continued, he also implied that forsaking national identity for a religious one is a more advanced and “responsible” [*otvetstvenno*] way of identifying that he had

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<sup>42</sup> While *Ummah* is also the name of the Religious Administration of Muslims in Ukraine, it is an Arabic term referring to a global, supra-national community of Muslims.

simply not yet achieved. But in the meantime, he is a proud representative of the Crimean Tatar nation:

There are many of us Crimean Tatars here, but the citizens of Drohobych already see how we are diverse. For example, the flag. I raised our Crimean Tatar flag on the top of Mount Hoverla.<sup>43</sup> For me, this flag of my small nation is something very important. The Muslims here, they are a bit different, because they don't have a nationality. The Prophet Muhammed, praise be unto him, called on all of humanity to erase such barriers. I'm not ready yet. I'm still a Crimean Tatar. (Interview 068, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

In places like Drohobych that have absorbed a relatively high concentration of displaced Crimean Tatars who are strictly observant in their faith—i.e., those who primarily identify as Muslims rather than Crimean Tatars and who left occupied Crimea largely due to religious persecution—there are some concerns that a skewed perception of the Crimean Tatars is taking root. Worried that local citizens' encounters with these religiously conservative and less socially engaged Muslim families may create a biased and false impression that they are representative of the Crimean Tatar community at large, some Crimean Tatars feel obligated to present a more accurate representation of their national community and the moderate version of Islam that most practice. Along with his wife, the interviewee in Drohobych quoted above recalled encounters with local community members who were surprised to meet a Crimean Tatar woman who did not cover her head:

W: Sometimes when I say that I am a Crimean Tatar, the first thing people ask me is, "then why don't you wear a headscarf?"

M: By the way, when we first came here, they all started asking us, "so, there are some Crimean Tatars who don't cover themselves up?" That's how it went. They saw my wife and said, "are you really a Crimean Tatar?" She would say, "yes, I am a Crimean Tatar." That's when they started to understand that there are Muslims from Crimea, and then there are Crimean Tatars. (Interview 070, Crimean Tatar man and woman, 40s)

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<sup>43</sup> Mount Hoverla, located in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine, is the country's highest point. Since the annexation, some Crimean Tatars have climbed to its summit and raised the Crimean Tatar flag in a ritual meant to mimic the tradition, carried out every year on the anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, of carrying national flags to the peak of Chatyr-Dag, the highest point in Crimea.



Numerous interviewees also told me about a small village in the Vinnytsia Oblast of central Ukraine where a large group of Crimean Muslims—supposedly affiliated with the international Islamist group *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*—have relocated. There, the insularity of the community and the locals’ fears of religious extremism have purportedly resulted in some small-scale conflicts and growing misconceptions about Crimean Tatars, as Tamila Tasheva of *Krym SOS* explained to me:

Now there is a community of Crimean Tatars in the Vinnytsia Oblast who profess a more orthodox form of Islam. A large community of 150 people lives in the village of Nova Hreblia, which is not big itself. This group of Crimean Tatars settled some kind of a ghetto there. They don’t really have any kind of communication with the local community there, who sees that the women behind the fences are covered in black, and that the men are constantly going here and there, and there are some men who are fighting in the ATO in Eastern Ukraine. A certain friction has arisen there, and in Vinnytsia and the Vinnytsia Oblast they have started to perceive all Crimean Tatars as they do these people who live in Nova Hreblia, where some conflicts have emerged. This is a problem, the issue is the perceptions of identity on the part of the local community, who now perceive Crimean Tatars as a single people through the prism of that one group that lives there. (Interview 008, Tamila Tasheva)

### **Crimean Tatars Negotiating Religion and Ethnicity: Lessons from the Carpathians**

Unfortunately, during my time in the field I was unable to visit and speak with members of the Muslim community in Nova Hreblia, so my knowledge and understanding of the social dynamics there are based only on hearsay. However, I was able to meet with and interview members of a few conservative Muslim families who had relocated together to a small Carpathian village not far from the Polish border. I was invited to travel to the village by Enver, an aid and assistance coordinator from the *Krym SOS* office in Lviv, who was delivering care packages provided by international aid organizations. Visiting with Enver, who proudly identifies as both a Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian citizen, provided a unique opportunity to

contrast opposing viewpoints on the roles of ethnicity, citizenship, religion, and homeland in the construction of Crimean Tatar and Muslim identities.

Our first stop was a run-down dormitory that housed two IDP families with a total of 10 people—including five small children and one grandmother—living in a complex of shared rooms (Figure 41). Unfortunately, as per their prescribed gender roles, the women spent our visit in the kitchen preparing food while Enver and I met with the male heads of the household, and I was thus prevented from speaking at length with the women or hearing their perspective. Over copious quantities of traditional Crimean Tatar dishes, including meat dumplings called *manty* and savory pies known as *kobete*, the two men—one a Crimean Tatar and the other a Dagestani who had lived in both mainland Ukraine and Crimea for most of his life—discussed with us their experiences of displacement and resettlement, along with the roles that Islam and ethnicity play in their lives. Like other conservative Muslims I had spoken with, the men asserted that ethnicity is secondary to the higher calling of Islam, and argued that ethnic belonging in and of itself does not bestow an Islamic identity. “What kind of person should be called a Muslim?” posed the Dagestani man before providing his own answer; “if we know that ‘Muslim’ translates as ‘somebody obedient to God,’ then we see that a person either observes the Koran or they do not. If they don’t, they are just a Tatar or they are just an Uzbek, but they are not a Muslim.” He then turned and referred to Enver, revealing that the men had been engaged in an ongoing conversation with him on this very subject over the course of his previous visits, and expressed concern that Enver’s fixation on ethnic identity and his more liberal approach to religion precludes his status as a true Muslim:

Nothing interferes in the normal construction of a functional relationship with Enver—he helps us, and we help him. But who will be his real friends? Who will look him in the eye and tell him the truth? I tell him, “Enver, you are in a bad situation, you need to save yourself, you need to save your soul, you must accept

Islam and exempt no part of it. You must adjust to Islam, not Islam to yourself. Islam can never be modified to fit a person, the Lord created you and he does not need to adapt to those who serve him, on the contrary, his servants must adapt to their creator.” So, we are open in our position, and we always seek a dialogue. Whenever the conversation is about Tatars being Muslims... no, Tatars are Tatars, and Muslims are Muslims. But we never deny that we are, let’s say, a Tatar, or in my case a Dagestani. We never deny this, I recognize that I am a Dagestani, that I am from Dagestan. He’s a Tatar. We recognize this, we do not hide it, but we do not confuse this with Islam, Islam is something separate. (Interview 080, Muslim man, 30s)

Enver, out of respect to our hosts, simply gave an awkward smile and nod in acknowledgement that they had indeed told him this before. Then, echoing the same rhetoric used by proponents of a color-blind civic identity, the Dagestani man added that “[a] Russian person or a Ukrainian, like a Tatar, can be a Muslim. It brings interethnic and interracial unity” (Interview 080, Muslim man, 30s).



**Figure 41:** Two internally displaced Muslim families now residing in a dormitory in a small Carpathian village. (Photo by author)

Our conversation then turned to Crimea, Ukraine, and the meaning of place and patriotism within a trans-ethnic, deterritorialized Muslim identity. The Dagestani man—who did

most of the talking during our interview—stated that Islam does not deny the affective role of place or home(land), nor prevent its followers from loving the place they come from, but reemphasized that such loyalties, like ethnicity, are always subordinate to an all-encompassing Islamic consciousness and devotion to God:

Patriotism should come in moderation. For us, living in accordance with God's laws comes first. This is the most important thing. Loving our homeland is not forbidden, on the contrary, it is a good thing when a person loves his homeland, when he is not ashamed that he is a Ukrainian or a Tatar or whatever else he might be. But to place your national identity and the cult of ancestry above the Creator is reprehensible, it is forbidden. We should all know that we are the descendants of Adam and Eve, peace and blessings be upon them both. We should not forget who our Creator and true master is, and why we are here—we are here to implement monotheism in all aspects. (Interview 080, Muslim man, 30s)

I then asked the Crimean Tatar man about his thoughts on homeland and what the concept means to him, and while he reasserted the supremacy of religion and reverence to God above any earthly attachments to place, he did concede that both he and his wife feel a special sense of attachment to Crimea that approximates the feeling of a homeland:

I want to live this life as a monotheist, and to die a monotheist—bowing to the one God, living properly, and dying like this, but not placing anybody else alongside God [*ne pridavat' Bogu sotovarishchei*]. One should not bow to anybody else, only the one God. I consider my homeland to be wherever I can build a proper life, not placing anybody else alongside God. This is how I live, and this is what I consider [a homeland]. Of course, it is said that Crimea is the homeland of the [Crimean] Tatars, but for my wife... to tell you the truth, I really am drawn to Crimea because my relatives stayed there. My aunts and uncles are there, that's why. I also get the feeling in Crimea that it is a homeland, because people look at you differently there, as if you are at home. As it happens, here you feel like you are a guest. I felt very differently there, it turned out that way for some reason. Our relatives also felt this way in Uzbekistan, maybe the Uzbeks looked at them a different way. The Tatars had Crimea from the beginning, so that's why they are drawn to Crimea. My wife is also drawn very strongly to Crimea. If the situation is made right, we would want to return to Crimea. I could go anywhere, even to America, where I have never been. I want to live and die as a monotheist, for me this is the most important thing. I say that in any place, just like with any person, there are pluses and minuses. (Interview 080, Muslim man, 30s)

In his answer, I sensed a deliberate effort to suppress feelings of place attachment that may intercede in his larger commitment to living in accordance with the teachings of his faith.

Our second and final stop was to deliver aid to another Crimean Tatar Muslim family of five who had initially lived in the same dormitory with the others, but had recently moved into a modest house just down the road (Figure 42). With the help of a small grant, the family had managed to purchase two cows and some basic equipment to begin making and selling organic cheese. Once again prevented from speaking at length with the female partner, we sat with the male head of the household and conversed over the mountain of *plov* that his wife had prepared for us. With a conviction surpassing that of his friends in the dormitory, he denounced the separation of peoples into ethnic and national groups and reaffirmed the indivisibility of all people in the eyes of God:

I don't welcome nationalism, I relate to all races and all peoples the same. I see no advantages to people uniting around some kind of nation. I relate to all people in the same way, especially since I live according to my religion. The Lord alone created all of us to be different, he said it himself in the last scripture, about different skin colors and languages. With this he was sending a message, that people should see each other and become closer to one another. For me, all people are the same, and so I don't make distinctions like this. I never even thought about this and it has never presented any advantages for my life. (Interview 081, Muslim man, 30s)

I asked him if he had been following the debate concerning the declaration of a Crimean Tatar national autonomy in Crimea, and he responded that he was unaware of this issue. Taking a more active role in the discussion this time, Enver delivered a long speech explaining why he believes this is an important symbolic step toward restoring rights to the Crimean Tatars, then gave our host the opportunity to weigh in. "I am interested in national politics and international politics," he responded, attempting to meet Enver halfway,

but I still live according to my religious beliefs. I see the use in all this, I get it, but I just stay away from it all. I cannot be a part of a [national] unit, because I live according to the laws that were written down by the last prophet, which the Lord handed down. So, my circle is very small, it's my family. (Interview 081, Muslim man, 30s)



**Figure 42:** Krym SOS employee Enver delivers humanitarian aid to an internally displaced family of Muslims at their home in a small Carpathian village. (Photo by author)

Growing frustrated with our host's repeated denials of any sense of ethnic or national belonging, Enver became more direct, asking pointed questions in an attempt to elicit any concession of allegiance to nation, homeland, or country. Our host remained steadfast in his ambivalence:

E: We live in Ukraine, and you also have a Ukrainian passport. What kind of connection do you have with this Ukrainian passport, what associations do you have? What do you think this gives you, do you feel like a citizen of Ukraine, or

does it give you any kind of additional worldview or values? (...) You also spent a long time living in Crimea, and there must at least be some feelings related to this, and we won't even talk about patriotic feelings. Maybe some nostalgia or something else you can name, or have you completely abstracted yourself from these things?

M: Of course I have good memories of life in Crimea. For example, when I was on holiday there, you cannot cross these days out from your life. But I do not consider this advantageous in relation to my spiritual life and all of my values. There were good times in Crimea, when I was relaxing, going to the beach, or going to the forest to collect mushrooms and hazelnuts. That's all good, but when there is unpleasantness beyond that, then the good things don't matter against this backdrop.

E: You are a citizen of Ukraine, I am a citizen of Ukraine. This is a fact. Austin is a citizen of America, maybe he can say something more specific about that. We all have our own considerations about this. What does it signify for you to be a citizen of Ukraine?

M: What can this possibly signify for a person, in general?

E: A question for a question... (Interview 081, Crimean Tatar and Muslim man, 30s/40s)

Attempting to find a point of agreement, I raised the fact that he had made a conscious choice to live in Ukraine over Russian-occupied Crimea, to which he responded that he finds it easier to live in accordance with his religious principles in his small Carpathian village than in Crimea, where religious persecution has grown fiercer:

AC: At the very least, you've decided that it's better to live in Ukraine than in Russia, in occupied Crimea.

M: It is easier to live according to my religion here.

E: It's more comfortable and safe.

M: Yes, more than in Crimea. There, we are viewed negatively and with bias. It's more difficult there than here. I just don't approve of nationalism. People of any nation can be good or bad, so you cannot judge an entire nation by a single person, or vice versa. This would be incorrect and unfair. For me, if a person is good, then that's good, and if they are bad, then he must be corrected. (Interview 081, Crimean Tatar and Muslim man, 30s/40s)

While the conversation remained always civil and respectful, the stark contrast between discourses of mainstream Crimean Tatar ethno-nationalism and attachment to homeland on the one hand, and Islamic universalism on the other, was never made clearer to me than in this interaction.

## On Islam, Community, and Diaspora

While those who prioritize a Muslim identity typically denounce ethnic or national identity as divisive or even heretical, most Crimean Tatars who uphold an ethnic identity will argue it is religious fundamentalism that poses a threat to the unity of their fragile nation. One such interviewee even stated that it was religious divisions that precluded the existence of a Crimean Tatar diaspora in mainland Ukraine, as a diaspora requires a united front. “No, this is not a diaspora,” he responded to my question of whether one existed, “we are strongly divided. We are divided on the grounds of... I don’t know, some have declared themselves Wahhabis, some have declared themselves *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, some have just stayed Sunnis. In this sense, we are divided by words” (Interview 036, Crimean Tatar man, 40s).

On the other hand, I also heard the argument that it is the Koranic imperative to organize into *Jamaats*—an Arabic term for communities of Muslims—that will safeguard the unity of internally displaced Crimean Tatars and ensure that they will, in fact, constitute a diaspora. “As far as I understand, a diaspora is just like a community in principle, like a *Jamaat*, a community that needs to stick together,” one devoutly religious Crimean Tatar interviewee explained,

It’s when you go somewhere away from your home, and you unite with others around some kind of interests—a common homeland, a common language, any kind of common interests—and we do try to unite. This makes it a diaspora. (...) Naturally, I am here, and if we are going to use the word “diaspora,” then I understand that I am part of this diaspora and I also want to contribute just like every active Crimean Tatar, so that our nation does not disintegrate, so that our Islamic identity is protected. (Interview 076, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Similarly, Imam Murat Suleiman of the Islamic Cultural Center in Lviv insisted that it is adherence to religious principles that will allow the Crimean Tatars to endure as a



national group according to its prescribed cultural and religious characteristics, and in good standing with its Creator:

Of course, if I am a Crimean Tatar, then I should look after my people, I should protect my people, and I should try to improve the lives of my people, but along with this we should also place the values of religion ahead of all else. Why? Because if we abandon religion and speak about nationality, then it would be easy for a person to draw whatever he wants from different nations, and along with this he will take those things that are forbidden by religion. Lifestyles, for example, or even a girl's appearance. Many may want to become more European, but we have strict religious decrees about how a Muslim woman should dress, and it doesn't matter if you're a Crimean Tatar woman, or a Russian woman, or a Ukrainian woman. You are a Muslim woman, you are bound to observe the regulations of your religion. So, for me and for many observant Muslims, religion will always be in first place because God's contentment comes before all else. We have much more important values. If the Lord is content with us, then he will give us everything. If we are a worthy people, the Lord will give us everything. If we are not worthy and we don't care about the things we say, if we are in no way spiritual and have no connection with the Lord and do nothing to please him, then our people might just disappear. People could shout all they want about their nation, but nobody would hear them, and nobody would receive them. (Interview 077, Imam Murat Suleiman)

## **Conclusions**

To summarize, the role of ethnicity and its utility as a basis for diasporic cohesion are rather contentious points within the community of Crimean IDPs. Crimean IDPs are highly ethnically diverse, rendering moot the question of "a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness," and thus failing to satisfy this particular "common feature" of diaspora when viewed as a holistic migrant population (Cohen 2008, 17). As I have argued, many IDPs do maintain a sense of distinctiveness among other Ukrainians rooted in Crimean-ness or Crimean Tatar-ness, but these categories fracture along the same ethnic fault lines that separate Slavic Crimean from Crimean Tatars. But following Anthias (1998), ethnicity is not the only type of solidaristic bond that can unite migrant communities around a diasporic consciousness, and in the case of Crimean IDPs we do see that political

imperatives—namely the return of Crimea to Ukraine as an part of its integrous territory—can function as a near-universal cause célèbre that undergirds a certain holistic solidarity and divided sense of territorial belonging. A common diasporic consciousness transcending ethnic divisions may therefore be said to exist—or, rather, *happen*—when and where the matter of Crimea’s deoccupation is experientially salient and can act as a centripetal force to unite Crimean IDPs around a common cause and universalizing sense of Crimean-ness in exile.

However, as the return of Crimea is a political goal shared by the majority of Ukrainians, instances where this objective is uniquely salient to the experience of internal displacement from Crimea are rare. Indeed, as I discussed in Chapter Twelve, the question of what to do with Crimea if and when it is deoccupied is far more important and controversial in ways unique to Crimeans themselves, creating divisions that weaken rather than strengthen prospects for a sustained, multiethnic diasporic consciousness. Disagreement over the hypothetical creation of a Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomous region is one example of how the question of ethnicity as grounds for social collectivization and allocation of rights has generated rifts within the Crimean IDP population.

This broad debate over the role of ethnicity pivots specifically on Crimean Tatar ethno-national identity, as Ukrainian and Russian ethnic categories have lost much of their salience among Crimean IDPs to the ascendant discourse of Ukrainian civic identity, and other ethnic minorities are too small to have any major impact on these debates. On the one hand, many Slavic Crimean IDPs disapprove of how Crimean Tatars have leveraged their ethnic identity and indigenous status to build social networks and advocate for rights separate from the Crimean IDP or Ukrainian national communities at large. On the other hand, smaller groups of conservative Muslim Crimean Tatars have similarly argued that fixating on ethnicity or nation rather than

religious identity undermines Islam's universalizing force, recklessly splitting the global *ummah* into atomized national units and elevating them above the one God. Crimean Tatar IDPs who profess a strong ethno-national identity are therefore flanked from both sides—externally and internally—by critics who see harm in such particularist, exclusionary ways of identifying, and who espouse the view that social identities should be grounded in more inclusive and universalizing criteria, be they civic or religious.

While I am sensitive to these arguments and agree on principle that it is important to strive for more inclusive frameworks of identity, I disagree with the suggestion that ethnic identities are incompatible with or contradictory to these objectives, particularly in the case of the Crimean Tatars. I have demonstrated that the identities of Crimean Tatar IDPs are multitudinous, seamlessly incorporating ethno-national, regional, religious, civic, supra-national, and cosmopolitan elements that simultaneously engender meaningful solidaristic bonds beyond the closed circle of ethnic kinship. Like their Slavic counterparts, Crimean Tatar IDPs actively participate in the discursive construction of Ukrainian civic identity, and they also strongly identify as Muslims even if their more conservative critics impugn their purity or piety in practice. In my view, accusations that Crimean Tatar IDPs are isolating themselves and creating social schisms by advocating for their collective rights or celebrating their ethnic culture are therefore misplaced and misguided.

However, it appears in this case that ethnicity may indeed play a crucial role in the long-term viability of a diasporic consciousness among some Crimean IDPs, specifically the Crimean Tatars. An unshakeable sense of belonging to the Crimean homeland is the core tenant of Crimean Tatar national identity, and as long as they nurture and preserve this identity, Crimean Tatar IDPs will forever consider themselves displaced even as their Ukrainian-ness grows

stronger and deeper. It is precisely their ethnic identity that sustains the profound link to their homeland, firmly anchoring in Crimea one of the poles between which their senses of territorial belonging are splayed, and therefore enabling a prolonged diasporic condition. Ethnicity as such is not the only criterion for forging a resilient sense of belonging rooted in Crimea, as well-developed regional identities also persist among many Slavs and other minorities displaced from Crimea. My argument is that a diasporic condition characterizes any migrant who feels simultaneously *in* and *out of place*, whether or not belonging to an ethnic group is at the root of these feelings.

But discourses of civic or religious universalism are meant to neutralize and subsume exclusive categories of identity, including both Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness, and therefore require that fixations on ethnicity or region give way to a more universal embrace of civic nationhood or religious consciousness. Ultimately, the “color-blind” model of civic society espoused by some Slavic Crimean IDPs requires ceding the distinctions or privileges of exclusionary identity categories to a greater civic Ukrainian-ness, while advocates of a purely faith-based Islamic identity similarly insist that attachments to place, ethnicity, and nation should be dissolved in favor of a worldview informed, above all else, by the tenants of Islam. In short, both of these paths, if followed, led away from Crimea and its grip on how IDPs identify, and their diasporic condition will grow dimmer the further they follow these paths. But Crimean Tatars who steadfastly identify as members of their ethnic community will still kindle the flame of their Crimean belonging, therefore remaining diasporic as long as they remain displaced. Ethnicity is not the only solidaristic bond that can sustain a diasporic condition among migrants, but in this case, it appears to be the most salient and resilient.

## **Chapter Fourteen: Crimean IDPs' Relationship with Host Society**

While much of the diasporic experience is characterized by the social and political dynamics internal to a community of migrants, the reception and treatment they receive from the societies that host them also play an important role in the emergence of diasporic identities. Processes of integration and assimilation that may weaken diasporic consciousness are likely to be accelerated if the government and/or citizenry of a host society are more compassionate and accommodating in their acceptance of migrant peoples, while more fraught or hostile attitudes toward migrants may create barriers to assimilation and inclusivity that reinforce diasporic consciousness. Indeed, the seventh point in Cohen's list of diasporas' "common features" pertains to the tensions that may emerge in the encounter between migrants and host societies; Cohen argues that diasporas often exhibit "a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group" (2008, 17).

In this case, assessing whether a "troubled relationship" exists between Crimean IDPs and their host society is a bit problematic given that at the scale of the nation-state, Crimeans were already paradoxically a part of this society; they were already citizens of the same state, subject to the same laws and social policies, speaking the same language(s), and sharing much of a common history. Crimea was a fully integral part of Ukraine before the annexation, and nearly all Crimeans who chose to relocate to the mainland already felt a meaningful sense of belonging to and solidarity with the Ukrainian populace that now serves as their ostensible "host," obfuscating any distinctions between a Crimean "self" and an all-Ukrainian "other." However, as Johnson and Coleman (2012) note, discourses of socio-cultural "others" are not directed exclusively at groups located or originating outside of a given state or society, as processes of

“internal othering”—usually directed at people from a particular sub-state region— are frequently integral to the construction of normative national identities. As a long-standing bastion of pro-Russian/Soviet sympathies with higher concentrations of ethnic and/or linguistic Russians, southern and eastern Ukraine—especially Crimea and the Donbas—have typically produced Ukraine’s foremost “internal others” during much of its independent history, these regions have presented perennial foils to the drive toward cultural Ukrainization and greater European integration. This stigma has eased considerably since the Euromaidan with regard to southern and eastern Ukrainians in regions still under Kyiv’s control, but the status of “internal others” has only deepened and intensified for residents of Crimea and the Donbas who now live beyond the state’s *de facto* reach. Thus, while the label of “other” or the distinction between “hosts” and “guests” are complicated by the internality of their migration and displacement, IDPs from both Crimea and the Donbas may nevertheless encounter hostility, discrimination, or exclusion that amounts to a “lack of acceptance,” and which may result in “troubled relationships” with local citizens and/or state authorities.

### **Crimean IDPs’ Warm Reception in Mainland Ukraine**

As I have addressed, Crimean IDPs generally feel that they have been embraced and supported by their fellow Ukrainians rather than rejected. Even as animosities toward the people of Crimea for welcoming the annexation have become entrenched within Ukrainian society, there appears to be a broad understanding among Ukrainians that those Crimeans now living in mainland Ukraine have rejected Russia and deliberately chose to live in and support Ukraine. I was interested to learn whether the Crimean IDPs I interviewed and interacted with had experienced discriminatory attitudes or policies directed at them because of their Crimean

origins, and in most instances this was not the case. In fact, several interviewees shared examples of how members of their local host communities had gone out of their way to assist or accommodate them, making them feel welcomed and accepted in their new homes. “Everything is different here, naturally, but nobody here has discriminated against me whatsoever, and my children have had no problems either. I have a 9-year-old and a 5-year-old, and I haven’t seen this at all,” said one interviewee who had relocated with his family to Lviv. He elaborated about how locals had helped his family overcome initial language barriers;

As it so happens, when we came here my children generally did not speak a word of Ukrainian, and I specifically brought them to a Ukrainian-language school. It was really touching to see that, right away, my oldest son’s classmates spoke with him in Russian so that it would be easier for him. I really doubt that this would have happened in Crimea; if a Ukrainian-speaking boy had moved to the Hero City of Sevastopol, I doubt that they would speak with him in his own language out of respect. (Interview 058, Krymchak man, 40s)

One Crimean Tatar focus group participant recalled a similar instance when the compassion and understanding of locals in Kyiv helped her and her visiting relatives from Crimea overcome structural obstacles to integration, namely the availability of emergency health services to those not officially registered as residents of the city:

I haven’t felt any discrimination. I remember, after the annexation I had some relatives visiting me from Crimea. As it turned out, one of my relatives got sick, she developed a case of pneumonia. The ambulance came, and I explained that we are not registered here yet. I always compare this to how it would be in Crimea if the ambulance came and demanded such documents. Here, they said, “you’re from Crimea? No documents necessary.” They took her to the hospital, and the doctor said, “we don’t need anything from you.” They had such concern and understanding about the fact that we are from Crimea. There is no discrimination. (Focus Group 003, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

I was also reassured by a local volunteer at an IDP resource center in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson that there too, IDPs from Crimea had encountered virtually no instances of discrimination from the local community:

We carried out a three-month study on the question of discrimination, we looked at this question as it pertained to discrimination toward Crimean Tatars here in mainland Ukraine, and in principle, when we spoke with people who left Crimea, we found practically no instances [of discrimination]. They are absolutely accepted here as normal. We have friendly people here in Kherson, so there are generally no issues in the encounter between the local residents and IDPs. (Interview 035, Kherson IDP Hub volunteer, 20s)

As I discussed in Chapter Five, attitudes toward Crimean Tatar IDPs have been especially positive since many Ukrainians have come to recognize their pro-Ukrainian sentiments and their efforts to resist the annexation. As such, I heard from a few Crimean Tatar interviewees that they have experienced “positive discrimination” in mainland Ukraine, with locals eager to embrace or assist them specifically because of their ethnic status. “I sometimes feel positive discrimination,” commented *Krym SOS* co-founder Alim Aliyev, “in certain situations, if there is a Crimean Tatar, it means that they need to be given everything, so to speak” (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev). Also citing “positive discrimination,” another Crimean Tatar IDP recalled the time he and his brother had gone to the migration services office in Kyiv to apply for local registration, where the attendant had acted rudely and antagonistically toward them until she noticed the distinctive names in the passport, and her demeanor suddenly became much friendly and more accommodating upon realizing that they were Crimean Tatars (Interview 013, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). Another Crimean Tatar noted how his ethnic status made him “cool” in the eyes of locals in Lviv, although he was aware of other instances of discrimination:

It’s really friendly here, you can feel it. “Crimean” is somehow cool, people relate really well to it. There’s been no discrimination because I am from Crimea or because I am a Crimean Tatar, nothing like that. There is discrimination here, but I haven’t encountered it, at least. I’m only speaking for myself, but I think on the whole there has been nothing like this. (Interview 087, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

The relatively low occurrence of discriminatory attitudes toward Crimean IDPs is further corroborated by survey responses; I asked survey takers whether they had encountered



discrimination due to the fact that they are from Crimea, to which a full 71.8% responded “no,” with very little variation in this response rate across ethnic subgroups within the survey sample (Table 16). Many of the respondents who opted to provide additional details about their experiences with discrimination were insistent that there was indeed a lack thereof in their own encounters with the local communities that now host them; “On the contrary, I have found friendly relations and understanding everywhere,” wrote a 36-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man, while a 46-year-old ethnic Russian man noted that “attitudes have been friendly everywhere, and I would say with curiosity.” A 35-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman suggested that “maybe I only interact with good people, everybody has been more sympathetic towards me,” and in another case of what might be called “positive discrimination,” a 46-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man wrote that the situation is, “mostly the other way around, I was hired at my job specifically because I am from Crimea.”

**Table 16:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, "Have you encountered discrimination because of the fact that you are from Crimea?"

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	28.2	25.5	31.9	28	33.3
No	71.8	74.5	68.1	72	66.7

### **Instances of Discrimination toward Crimean IDPs**

But while it is encouraging that over two-thirds of survey respondents reported that they have not experienced discrimination because of their Crimean origins, that leaves the remaining 28.2% who have. Several respondents who did report encountering discrimination provided some additional details about their experiences, revealing isolated instances of ethnically or politically motivated animosities towards Crimean IDPs of all backgrounds. For example, a 39-year-old Ukrainian woman wrote that “[t]he return of ethnic Ukrainians to their native places is

not welcome by the current populations there (my ancestors were removed from the Kyiv Oblast), some greet us with hostility. Many government officials openly say that people like me and my children should go back to Crimea and live in Russia.” In a similar vein, some survey respondents wrote that locals had accused them of being traitors despite the widespread acceptance that Crimean IDPs had explicitly rejected Russia and supported Ukraine; “[a] lot of people believe that all Crimeans—especially Russian Crimeans—are traitors or, at minimum, they are responsible for the occupation,” stated a 32-year-old ethnic Russian man, while a 38-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman living in Lviv wrote that the locals “can easily identify us by our accents. In everyday situations this is often a reason for locals to insult and threaten us.” Brushing off such occurrences, a 19-year-old woman who declined to provide her ethnicity wrote that “[a] couple of times people have told me to ‘go back to Russia [*valit’ obratno v Rashku*],’ but I understand that there are plenty of idiots everywhere, so everything is ok.”

At only 25.5%, Crimean Tatars provided the lowest rate of affirmative responses to the question of whether they have experienced discrimination, and only a few offered additional details about their negative encounters with locals. In a strange reversal of the accusations of treason direct at others, one 25-year-old Crimean Tatar woman living in Odesa wrote that “a lot of people believe that things are better in Crimea and that we made the wrong choice when we left. There have been a lot of unnecessary conversations because of this.” In a short but telling response, a 33-year-old Crimean Tatar man wrote simply, “nationality” as an explanation for the discrimination he had encountered.

Remarkably, I encountered very few instances where interviewees affirmed that they had experienced discriminatory attitudes in their interactions with local communities, with the vast majority insisting that they have felt welcomed, supported, and accommodated. One notable

exception came from an ethnic Russian woman who had relocated to Lviv, and who struggled with feelings of isolation and alienation exacerbated by her poor knowledge of the Ukrainian language. She described these feelings to me along with some examples of the discriminatory attitudes that she and her young son have encountered:

How they look at you here ... It's like, you don't ask for anything, you buy an apartment here, you don't ask for anything from our wretched [*neschastnoe*] government, and still they look at you like some kind of alien [*kak na prishlogo*]. Do you understand? We encounter this constantly. Yes, we are not from Donetsk, and there is a certain difference. When you say that you are not from Donetsk, but from Crimea—"ah, well ok, you haven't come from the war, you rejected a Russian pension and all those prospects, so you deserve respect, I can respect you." This changes things. Nevertheless, some kids were picking on my son in school. I was in Odesa, and there they were also picking on a kid from Donetsk. When I was on the beach there in the summertime, some old woman was saying awful things about "separatists, separatists." I shut her up [*prikryla etu lavochku*], but still. (Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

In another case, an interviewee serving in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in eastern Ukraine referred vaguely to the negative and discriminatory attitudes he had encountered in Kyiv, to where he had first relocated with his family. As we corresponded through Facebook Messenger, he was defiant in his assertion of being a true Ukrainian in the face of rhetoric meant to exclude him:

There are some people in Ukraine who consider themselves the masters of some territory and try to divide us and keep us out. We understand that this is more a struggle for a place under the sun. When we started showing up here, it became a competition for the locals, I heard a lot about how Kyiv isn't flexible, that there are too many of us, etc. But that which doesn't kill us makes us stronger. By definition, I cannot be superfluous in Ukraine; I am a Ukrainian, my ancestors are Ukrainians. Ukraine is one singular country, we are not in the Middle Ages or the Soviet Union, when we could only live in a certain region. This is my country and my people, and I will not betray them, and furthermore I took the risk of going to war for the sake of their lives. So, for anybody who opens their mouth about my identity, I will set them on the path of truth by any means, or I will explain it to them clearly and concisely. (Interview 089, ethnic Ukrainian man, 20s)

For others, interactions are not colored by discriminatory attitudes *per se*, but they nevertheless feel that their status as Crimeans frequently puts an uncomfortable social distance between themselves and local residents, contributing to a feeling of being “othered.” “When I go to Crimea, I understand that I no longer belong there somehow,” stated one interviewee, “but when I come to Kyiv, I understand that I’m different all the same in some small ways, that I think differently, speak differently, and do things differently from the locals. (Interview 018, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). In this same interviewee with a small group of friends, one young man explained that he felt people in Kyiv treated him differently because he is from Crimea; “At that moment [when I decided to leave Crimea], I had many friends and acquaintances in mainland Ukraine, and I came to show them that I stand with them,” he explained, “[b]ut now, when I say that I am from Crimea, this is at minimum a reason for people to pay some extra attention to me. They immediately start asking, ‘well, how is it there?’” (Interview 018, ethnic Russian man, 20s).

### **Contrasting Experiences of Discrimination with Donbas IDPs**

While some Crimean IDPs do report that they have been “othered” or have experienced discrimination in their interactions with locals in mainland Ukraine, there is broad consensus that they have received a much warmer reception than have IDPs from the Donbas. The differences in how Crimean and Donbas IDPs are perceived has much to do with the circumstances of their displacement, as journalist Pavel Kazarin summarized for me:

There is a difference between IDPs from Crimea and IDPs from the Donbas, because the people who left Crimea did so not because of a war, not because of bombings. This was political migration, it was not done under the influence of those circumstances, it was a conscious choice. Among the Crimeans who came to Kyiv there are no supporters of Russia or of the Kremlin’s politics. But there are a lot of different people among the residents of the eastern regions who came

to Kyiv. They relocated to Ukraine not because they accepted Ukrainian values or are focused on Ukraine themselves. There was a war happening near their homes, so they left just to save their own lives. Among the IDPs from the Donbas and Luhansk you meet a lot of different people with different political views, but not among the people who left Crimea. (Interview 029, Pavel Kazarin)

Another interviewee suggested that a certain element of *schadenfreude* has influenced the way that many Ukrainians view the fate of the Donbas and the people displaced from the region; “in Ukraine there is a popular idea that the Donbas kind of had it coming with Russia, you know, like, ‘maybe if you didn’t want a war you shouldn’t have screamed for Putin to send his troops, you should have thought about that!’” When I asked whether these feelings of sour grapes also extend to the people of Crimea, she responded “well, for the Crimeans who stayed there, yeah. Not for those who came here” (Interview 016, ethnic Russian woman, 20s). Sociologist Iryna Brunova-Kalisetskaya offered a more nuanced and historicized take on why Donbas IDPs experience more discrimination, citing long-standing negative stereotypes about the Donbas, the legacy of the deposed President Yanukovich who hailed from the region, and the open wounds of the ongoing war in the east:

In the last five years especially the negative stereotypes about the Donbas, starting from Yanukovich and his politics, have been rather strong. And now when people see somebody from the Donbas, they put all these stereotypes on them. Second of all, there was no violence or war in Crimea, so nobody from other regions of Ukraine are dying there, but a lot are in the Donbas. So, when somebody sees people from the Donbas—especially men—they start to ask, “why has my son died there, and you are here not even trying to defend your own territory?” So, the negative stereotypes and discrimination against IDPs from the Donbas are tough. (Interview 019, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

The contrast between discriminatory practices toward Crimean and Donbas IDPs is most pronounced in the realms of housing and employment. In many cases, Donbas IDPs arriving in large numbers and with few financial resources have been forced to seek accommodations in a number of “compact settlements” or “collective centers”—typically old, decrepit dormitories or

sanatoria spread throughout the country that have been converted into temporary housing for the displaced (OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine 2016, 12). Crimean IDPs, who are generally more upwardly mobile than their Donbas counterparts, are much less likely to require such accommodations, and this affords them a certain advantage in their efforts to socially integrate and build new lives in their places of relocation. “A lot of Crimean IDPs integrate quickly, they quickly enter a new reality and adapt to life in Kyiv, and Crimean IDPs rarely live in compact settlements,” explained Olga Skripnik from the Human Rights Group *Al'menda*,

But IDPs from the Donbas, for how many there are, they don't have financial opportunities, they are more likely to live in compact settlements. These are essentially IDP ghettos with their own internal problems, and they are often in far-off regions, so these IDPs don't have the chance to make social connections or to look for work. Crimeans came here in a different way, they aren't found in these places of compact settlement, because there wasn't anything like that when they arrived. They left from the beginning in order to continue their lives in Kyiv and Lviv without returning to Crimea, so they have social connections, and their integration in new cities happens much more quickly. A lot of them have already found new places of employment, they have started renting their own housing, things like this. (Interview 033, Olga Skripnik)

But those Donbas IDPs with the social capital and financial resources required to rent apartments in larger cities have frequently been met with prejudice and discriminatory practices. Unfortunately, because my research was focused specifically on Crimean IDPs, my interactions with Donbas IDPs in the field were minimal, and I was not able to develop a well-informed understanding of their struggles with their direct input. However, several Crimean IDP interviewees spoke of the contrasts they saw between their own experiences with housing and employment and those of their Donbas counterparts. “I agree that there is more discrimination toward the people from the Donbas,” one interviewee offered, citing stories he had heard from the realtors through whom he managed to find a small room to rent:

I rented a room from a family of realtors, they look for property owners who will rent out their living spaces, they look for renters, and then they take their cut.

They told me that they had some cases where the apartment owners said they just don't want anybody from Donetsk or Luhansk, that they would allow renters only under the condition that they are not from Donetsk or Luhansk. Because of this, I agree that attitudes towards people from the Donbas are somewhat worse here. Why, I don't know. Maybe because Crimea really was taken more peacefully, nothing there was lost except for the territory, while people are really dying in the Donbas. That's where the difference is. (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s)

“With the Donbas, there is an idea that all those *vatniks* are just fleeing the war, and I know that they face a lot of discrimination when it comes to renting apartments,” another interviewee explained, “so, if you are registered in the Donbas, most landlords just won't even speak to you. It's no problem for Crimeans.” She also cited negative rumors about the unruly behavior of Donbas IDPs that may impact how apartment owners view prospective renters who have been displaced from the east:

I even heard some cases when landlords would rent out places to people from Donetsk who would refuse to leave when they run out of money, or they would bring a hundred of their relatives, or they would hang a banner of the Donetsk Peoples' Republic from their balcony. I've heard that, but it's just rumors. (Interview 016, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

In other cases, interviewees contrasted the prejudice and discriminatory housing practices experienced by Donbas IDPs with the proactively positive attitudes that have made it easier for Crimean IDPs—especially Crimean Tatars—to find affordable housing. A volunteer in the *Krym SOS* office in Kherson explained that prejudice towards Donbas IDPs had grown acute in and around the southern Ukrainian city, and cited an example of somebody who was willing to provide free housing specifically to Crimean Tatars, but explicitly excluded people from the Donbas in this offer:

We had some local media outlets who started publishing stories about how IDPs from the east were more prone to theft and things like that. Although there were only a few isolated incidents, these outlets really actively harped on them, and this created a negative aura around the IDPs from the east. After that, out in the rural areas there were a few cases of discrimination towards IDPs from the ATO zone. We accept any offers from people who want to help others; for example, some

people came to us who had an empty home they wanted occupied out in the countryside, not far from the city, with three floors, a garage, a *banya*, and a sizeable piece of land. They agreed to let people live there for free, they only had to pay for the utilities like electricity and water. But they only wanted Crimean Tatars, they were not offering it up for people from the east. We monitored the situation in our local media for a long time, to see how many fake articles were being written. Recently we have seen that this trend has practically come to an end, but we still see cases where people are refused housing. People aren't allowed to rent an apartment once the owner learns that they are from the ATO zone, they won't take them on. We see similar issues with employment. These are the kinds of problems we see. (Interview 034, *Krym SOS* volunteer, 20s)

While discriminatory housing practices do affect some Slavic Crimeans along with IDPs from the Donbas, one Crimean Tatar interviewee noted that being Crimean Tatar is an enormous advantage when looking to rent an apartment:

Russians are probably discriminated against more often. A huge part of discrimination towards IDPs in Kyiv is in apartment rentals, because practically all the real estate agents have started asking which region you came from, and they do not want Donbas people. Some of them do not want Crimeans either, but when I went to different agents and told them my name, in most cases they asked, "well, are you Crimean Tatar? Yes? Oh, ok, this will help you, then." In the minds of people here, Crimean Tatars did a lot to preserve Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in Crimea, so this is why their attitude is much softer [than towards Slavic IDPs]. Several times the agents said to me, "oh, you are Crimean Tatar, I will tell this to the landlord," and this helped. (Interview 013, Crimean Tatar man, 20s)

By all accounts, there was a great outpouring of empathy and support for displaced Crimeans in the very beginning of the Crimean IDP crisis before the war in the east had begun, with hundreds of offers from Ukrainians across the country to provide temporary housing to those just beginning to arrive from occupied Crimea. In our interview, *Krym SOS* co-founder Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk recalled the very early days of the occupation, when they first founded the organization and released a call for volunteers who could offer temporary homes for the hundreds of IDPs beginning to trickle into the mainland. The response, she explained, was overwhelming:



On the first day of the occupation we published our email address and wrote an announcement that we are looking for accommodations for Crimean IDPs who will be coming to the territory of the mainland, and literally on the first day we received around 600 letters with offers from different regions of Ukraine, saying that they are ready to take in Crimean Tatar families, military families, families of Crimeans who are leaving the territory of Crimea because of the annexation. I remember well how our call center started working and we began processing all these offers. This was all founded on completely voluntary initiatives. (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk)

One interviewee told me how he and his family were the beneficiaries of such generosity upon their arrival in Lviv, where a family of five opened their home and happily let them stay rent-free for an entire year while they got their feet on the ground. He explained that the experience had a profoundly positive impact on his own worldview in the tragic wake of his family's displacement:

They gave us a part of their apartment, they have two floors and they gave us the whole second floor. We had everything we needed there. From the very first day, they told us, "this is our common home, imagine as though occupiers had come to Lviv and we came to live with you in your home in Crimea. Make yourself at home here." And they really did everything to make us feel comfortable. They also had three children, and we have a young child too. They really taught us a lesson, they showed us an example of true humanity, how a person can do something not for money, but just because they are a person and they decided that in this moment, this is their mission. We had been similarly hospitable to people in Crimea, but we had asked money from them, and here they did it for free. This is really important. We changed because of this, we became different thanks to the people of Lviv, specifically in terms of humanitarianism. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

### **Struggles with Housing and Employment**

But while many Crimean IDPs reported positive experiences in their quest for housing, this was not the case for everybody. In fact, at 54.7%, a majority of survey respondents said that they had encountered problems with housing or employment since relocating to mainland Ukraine, including 51.4% of ethnic Ukrainians at the lowest end, and 60.8% of Crimean Tatars at the highest end among ethnic subgroups (Table 17). Not all of these troubles are attributable to

discriminatory practices, as some survey respondents pointed to financial difficulties in their supplementary explanations. “It’s difficult to find housing options for long-term rent at a decent price,” commented a 31-year-old ethnic Russian woman, while a 33-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man wrote that “I’ve had to spend the night on the streets.” One survey respondent, a 35-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, wrote that she was forced to live in a dormitory when she first arrived in the mainland due to financial constraints caused by her family seizing and blocking the sale of her apartment:

For a year and a half we lived in terrible conditions in a dormitory. Now we have to rent a home in a village. We can’t sell off our portion of our apartment in Sevastopol, our relatives have seized it and changed the locks, they are preventing the sale or ownership of our property. They have been renting it out illegally this whole time, stealing it from me and my children.

**Table 17:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, “Have you encountered problems with employment or housing after your relocation?”

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	54.7	51.4	54.3	60.8	55.6
No	45.3	48.6	45.7	39.2	44.4

In fact, the inability to sell property in Crimea or leverage it for bank credit came up periodically as a financial hinderance to securing long-term housing. “There is no housing for IDPs and nobody is providing it, Ukraine does not compensate for the loss of our own homes,” wrote a 45-year-old Ukrainian woman in her survey response, “[t]here is no point in renting a different place to live and working just to make the rent. Some lost their homes and others are profiting from this, and IDPs are given nothing.” Also citing the inadequacy of government housing policies, a 35-year-old Ukrainian woman wrote that IDPs should be given prioritized access to land and subsidized housing in urban areas:

The housing issue has not been solved, they refuse to give us access to land, although we have this constitutional right. We have to wait with everybody else

for access to land, regardless of our extremely difficult living conditions. There are no benefits or credit available for housing, for buying land or property in the city. There is generally no socialized housing in the cities.

But housing woes are not only financial, as landlords in mainland Ukraine “reluctantly rent housing to IDPs,” in the words of a 45-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman in her survey response, A handful of interviewees also reported that they had encountered discriminatory attitudes and practices when searching for an apartment, but in most cases they attributed this to the unfair and misinformed association of Crimean IDPs with Donbas IDPs. “We had to urgently change apartments about six months after we arrived here,” recalled one interviewee who had resettled in Lviv,

For more than two months I wasn’t able to find an apartment, we were denied only because we are from Crimea. If I had started looking for an apartment in the very beginning, then I would have found one, but then the waves of IDPs from the east started coming, and some rumors started spreading. There were some really ugly and unpleasant stories connected to the people from Donetsk, so people somehow started to lump us all together—“you ran away and didn’t want to fight,” something like that. They started to sort us all into one group. (...) This is when I felt a certain discrimination. (Interview 073, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

“We ran into problems when we needed to rent an apartment here,” explained a Crimean Tatar interviewee in Kyiv, who had to hide from potential landlords the fact that she was recently displaced:

We would make calls and they would tell us that they might not have a place for Crimeans. They said they do not rent to IDPs from the Donbas or Luhansk, and if you are from Crimea then they will have to see what your behavior is like and then decide. By the way, when we rented our apartment I said that I had been living in Kyiv for a long time. I had to lie in order to rent it, because they didn’t want people like us, even though it was somehow generally recognized that Crimean IDPs are the ones who were against [the annexation], or something like that. (Interview 005, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Even Sergei Kostinsky, a prominent Crimean IDP who works for the Ukrainian Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting, recounted how he had encountered prejudice and skepticism

during his search for an apartment in Kyiv; “I heard that some people have really been refused housing, and when I was looking for an apartment, they even asked me, ‘are you a separatist?’ I had to explain to them that no, I am not a separatist, I’m an ethnic Ukrainian” (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)!

Along with housing, many IDPs have also struggled to find permanent employment since arriving in mainland Ukraine. However, as with their difficulties securing housing, not all Crimean IDPs cite discrimination as the cause of their unemployment. “I can say that the most difficult thing in Kyiv is finding work, because now the economy has really declined, and it’s rather serious,” lamented one interviewee whose struggles with unemployment had dogged him since his arrival in Kyiv; “[a] lot of companies have closed, and this is the main problem. I wouldn’t say that I have seen any discrimination for the fact that I am from Crimea, let’s say. I’ve seen none of that, the main thing is just work” (Interview 022, ethnic Russian man, 40s). Persistent unemployment was the major concern for another interviewee from Lviv, although she attributed her lack of work to her poor knowledge of the Ukrainian in the heavily Ukrainian-speaking city rather than any discriminatory practices targeting Crimeans:

What work is there? All of my friends who went to Kyiv have found work, even my friend from Moscow who quit his job as a journalist there and left. Everybody has found work in Kyiv, but not here [in Lviv], here there are different conditions. Everything is linked to language here, I’ve wasted a year looking; “sure, we’ll call you! Yes, maybe we can find a niche for you.” But then the director will leave, or there are some reductions in operations, etc. I don’t know what to do.  
(Interview 065, ethnic Russian woman, 50s)

I encountered practically no allegations of discriminatory hiring practices toward Crimeans or IDPs in my interviews; in fact, some reported that finding work was easy or that employers were eager to hire them, and that this stood in stark contrast to the increasing difficulty of finding work in occupied Crimea. One Crimean Tatar interviewee managed to

parlay her knowledge of the English language into multiple employment opportunities in Lviv, and it was this availability of open positions that drew her to the city in the first place:

I found out that there was some kind of work here. I didn't know exactly what it was, but it was at some IT company, and they needed English speakers. But I couldn't apply unless I was here, you couldn't just apply for it without living in Lviv. So, I knew for sure that they needed new people, so I came here, I rented an apartment, and I went there and got the job after a week. I started working and it was a crazy experience for me. I was trying to find work in Crimea for half a year, and I here I found it in just one week! Actually, I changed my workplace several times since being here, and it was funny because I quit one job and found a new one a week later! It's just so funny, I don't know why, but it was very easy.  
(Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

A volunteer at an IDP resource center in Kherson even told me that there are employers in the city who go out of their way to specifically hire IDPs from both Crimea and the Donbas; “[t]here are organizations that specifically hire IDPs, they emphasize the point that they are ready to employ people from the Donbas or from Crimea. They make it a priority to employ these people, to help them integrate” (Interview 035, Kherson IDP Hub volunteer, 20s).

But while discriminatory hiring practices were rarely mentioned in interviews, several survey respondents asserted that they had, in fact, experienced discrimination when looking for work. A 55-year-old Crimean Tatar man alleged in his survey response that he had experienced both ageism and prejudice toward his Crimean origins; “[l]ocal residents have accused me of being a traitor, because I didn’t prevent the Russian occupation [of Crimea] with my own bare hands. Many employers refuse to hire people not only because of their age, but because they are Crimeans—‘we only hire our own.’” “When I was applying for a job and the employer opened my passport and saw my place of birth, his attitude changed sharply,” wrote a 23-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, “and there was no further opportunity for me to work there.” A 50-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man noted that employers in Lviv will not hire IDPs because they are not sufficiently settled and may therefore be unreliable, but he declined to label this discrimination,

citing the warm reception IDPs have receive in the city; “The community in Lviv has very happily accepted us, including in schools, and the officials have all been normal. Employers don’t treat us very well, because they want permanent workers while IDPs ‘sit on their suitcases,’ but you can hardly call this discrimination.”

Thus, while some have been on the receiving end of prejudiced or discriminatory attitudes and policies because of their Crimean origins, these experiences appear to be the exception rather than the rule. A slight majority of survey respondents have encountered hurdles when trying to rent an apartment or find work, but many of these instances may be credited primarily to difficult economic or social circumstances rather than intentional discrimination on the part of housing or employment providers. Some Crimean IDPs have also encountered nakedly prejudiced or discriminatory attitudes from other Ukrainian citizens, but such instances appear to be fairly rare and have not tainted the inter-personal relationships that most Crimean IDPs have developed since arriving in the mainland.

The prevalence of discrimination toward Crimean IDPs also pales in comparison to that directed towards Donbas IDPs, whom many Ukrainians treat with hostility or at least trepidation due to long-standing stereotypes about the region, bitterness over the deadly conflict in eastern Ukraine, or assumptions about their political loyalties. For better or for worse, Crimean IDPs have mostly benefitted from an understanding that anybody who left occupied Crimea did so conscientiously and in support of the Ukrainian state—or they are at least given the benefit of the doubt. As such, the prevailing narrative about how the people of mainland Ukraine have received Crimean IDPs is generally positive, with testimonies of the Ukrainian people’s empathy, compassion, support, and assistance far outweighing those of their prejudice, discrimination, or hostility. “People in Ukraine, in principle, are very friendly and hospitable,” confirmed one

interviewee in Lviv, “and they want to help most of all. In the very beginning there was such an outpouring of help, especially for Crimeans, and people practically started crying about our circumstances more than we did” (Interview 059, ethnic Russian woman, 40s). However, as she continued, this interviewee hinted at problems beyond those that would impact Crimean IDPs’ daily interactions within their host communities;

But when you come for a month, or two or three, when you come as a guest, that’s one thing. Then you start to encounter different aspects. There really are some nuances. The authorities are the same as they are in Crimea, at first the Lviv officials were all smiles and it seemed like they were ready to help with everything, but it was never the case, and it’s just the same in the rest of Ukraine. They are not there to help you, it’s the same old story. Unfortunately there are no systematic changes in our country, even though we relocated here with great certainty that something must be done, otherwise we will lose Ukraine. Unfortunately, the situation continues as it was (Interview 059, ethnic Russian woman, 40s)

### **Criticisms of the Government Response to the IDP Crisis**

Most Crimean IDPs do appear grateful for the way the Ukrainian populace has received them, but they are far less satisfied with the way their government has responded to the occupation of Crimea or how it has addressed the problems associated with their displacement. In fact, assessments of the government response are particularly damning; I asked survey respondents whether they believed the Ukrainian government was working sufficiently on the problems faced by Crimean IDPs, and a staggering 90.1% responded that it was not (Table 18). With an 85% disapproval rate, ethnic Ukrainians were slightly more generous towards the government, while disapproval rates were even higher than the overall average among ethnic Russians (92.2%), Crimean Tatars (95.2%), and other minorities (97.2%). Only two survey respondents who positively assessed the government response—both ethnic Ukrainians—offered additional explanations for their answers; “I think it is doing all it can in this complicated

situation,” wrote a 47-year old woman, while a 33-year-old woman generously pointed to the fact that “[i]t’s working well enough, but not on improving things, just on the deteriorating conditions, coming up with something new to combat them every time.”

**Table 18:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, "Do you think that the government of Ukraine has worked sufficiently on the problems of Crimean IDPs?"

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	9.9	15	7.8	4.8	2.8
No	90.1	85	92.2	95.2	97.2

On the other hand, Crimean IDPs’ grievances with their government are broad and multifarious, with dozens of survey respondents volunteering supplemental explanations for why they disapprove of the government’s response. Some are concerned primarily that government officials are inactive or inadequate in their efforts to address the most pressing economic or social needs of IDPs; “[t]hey are all words and no action. It gives the impression that they have tossed us aside,” wrote a 33-year-old Crimean Tatar man, while a 38-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman wrote that “[o]ur government is not fully cognizant of what it needs to be working on. I am disappointed in what has happened in Ukraine since the Euromaidan.” “Nothing has been done in these last two years, the people have seen nothing, and their spirits are sinking,” wrote a 20-year-old Crimean Tatar woman, while one 46-year-old ethnic Russian woman provided a more detailed account of the ineffectiveness of the Ukrainian government:

Ukrainian authorities and organizations that are meant to help IDPs act like our problems don’t exist. IDPs get nothing from the government except for humiliation with documents. I appealed to the president and to the Kyiv city authorities for help a few times, but I got lousy responses. The president’s receptionist told me that “you did not properly fill out the appeal, try again.” This happened dozens of times! And the Kyiv city commissioner said, “unfortunately, we can’t help you in any way, try moving to a village.”



Others complain of corruption in the way government officials have dealt with the IDP crisis; “[t]he government officials don’t need us, they need money ‘for the IDPs’ from the state budget and from international organizations, which they just plunder” wrote a 50-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man, and a 29-year-old Crimean Tatar man similarly stated that few officials are willing to push for needed changes, “because it would leave them without their comfortable ‘income’ (corruption and all these things).” In a particularly damning indictment, one 53-year-old Crimean Tatar man simply wrote that “[t]he state is profiting off our grief.”

Another frequent criticism is that Kyiv is doing nothing to fight for the deoccupation and return of Crimea to Ukraine, as hopeless as the struggle may seem. “The government doesn’t bother with the problems of IDPs. For two years of occupation they have done nothing to get Crimea back, and this is the main problem,” stated a 34-year-old ethnic Russian man, while a 54-year-old ethnic Russian man complained that “[t]he authorities in Ukraine are doing absolutely nothing to create an internal policy with respect to the occupied territory of Crimea.” In a blunt assessment, a 51-year-old Crimean Tatar man asserted that “Ukraine gave Crimea away,” while a 29-year-old Crimean Tatar man simply lamented in his supplemental explanation that “Crimea is still occupied.”

Most grievances pertain directly to the government’s handling of the IDP crisis, but some contend that the problems are broader and endemic to Ukraine as a whole. “The government doesn’t work with its own citizens, let alone the IDPs,” one 42-year-old Crimean Tatar man wrote, while a 45-year-old Ukrainian woman argued that “[t]he government of Ukraine doesn’t work enough on the problems of its citizens, there’s no point in dividing them into categories. There is not enough attention paid to the problems of Crimean IDPs, nor to the problems of

others.” In a biting criticism, a 39-year-old Ukrainian woman stated that “[t]he Ukrainian government doesn’t care about Ukrainians.”

### **State Discrimination and Policies Targeting IDPs**

But crucially, while some point to broader structural problems at the heart of Kyiv’s inadequate response to the IDP crisis, others believe that they have been directly targeted by government policies that make their lives as displaced peoples more difficult, and some have explicitly framed this as a form of state discrimination or exclusion. “Most of the discrimination that I feel comes specifically from government agencies,” wrote a 26-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, while a 29-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman alleged that government officials “complicate our living conditions and create the feeling as if I am no longer a citizen of Ukraine! It is very insulting!” Clearly showing a sense of bitterness and resentment, a 35-year-old ethnic Armenian man stated that “[f]or two years since the moment I registered [as an IDP], I have not once felt that the government was interested in my situation (with the exception of my taxes, of course).”

Most of the problems that Crimean IDPs face with state discrimination and exclusion come down to a cumbersome bureaucracy or arcane policies—products of Ukraine’s post-Soviet governance and the slow march of reforms—that place unnecessary restrictions on what they, as internally displaced peoples, are legally able to do or accomplish. Some policies create unique problems under very specific circumstances, such as the case of one young Crimean Tatar couple I interviewed who were frustrated by the steps they must take just to be able to bring their newborn daughter back to Crimea to meet her family:

If we want to go back to Crimea now so our parents can see our baby—who was born in Ukraine—she must have an international passport from the moment of her

birth in order to cross the administrative border with Crimea, she needs an international passport to cross the border from the Ukrainian side. So, the border guards won't let us through with only our internal passports where there is a stamp that says we have a child. We now have to fill out all this separate paperwork for this little person. But on the Russian side of the so-called Crimean-Russian border, in Dzhankoi or in Armyansk, it is enough to just show proof of the child's birth, and show our Ukrainian internal passports with the record of our child and consent between the parents, and we can be on our way. The Ukrainian government creates obstacles to us being able to travel to our native Crimea in order to visit our relatives and show them their granddaughter and niece. This is the kind of discrimination we face. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

### **The Woes of Residential Registration**

But the vast majority of bureaucratic barriers that Crimean IDPs face are related directly to the matter of their residential registration, or *propiska*, as it is known in Russian and Ukrainian. Another holdover from the Soviet period still used in many post-Soviet states, the *propiska* is a stamp inside every Ukrainian citizen's internal passport that indicates the address at which they are legally registered as a resident. The *propiska* does not prohibit Ukrainian citizens from moving or residing at an address different from the one listed in their passport, but certain public services and civic privileges—including those related to emergency medical treatment, employment, pensions, voting, and property ownership—require citizens to be registered at an address within the same regional or municipal jurisdiction where the service is provided. Changing one's *propiska* to reflect a new address can be a difficult or complex task, typically requiring ownership of the property at the new address, or the agreement of the property owner to register their renters. Many property owners will refuse to register their tenants due to the burdensome time and paperwork involved, as well as the added liability.

As such, most Crimean IDPs—and even some Crimeans who have lived in the mainland since before the annexation—remain officially registered at their former Crimean addresses. Some have managed to change their *propiskas* with the agreement of their new landlords, and

others with adequate financial resources have purchased new homes or apartments, making the process of re-registration more straightforward. But in most cases, because of the byzantine policies and processes involved, Crimean IDPs are unable to update their *propiskas* to reflect their current places of residence within mainland Ukraine, and are thus officially recognized as non-residents within the communities where they now reside. One example from my interviews highlights the absurdity of this system; after marrying an American man during her time as a Fulbright student in the United States, this interviewee returned to Ukraine to live in Kyiv with her husband only to find that obtaining residency was easier for him than for her:

There are debates about what kinds of things we can and cannot do as non-residents. My husband and I were joking about this, because he had to obtain his temporary residency permit in Ukraine. So, he obtained it, so he is a resident in Ukraine, and I am not! And the very reason he obtained his residency is because I'm a citizen of this country, so it's just so messed up, all this stuff. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

With the influx of millions of IDPs registered at addresses located in the occupied territories of Crimea and the Donbas, the Ukrainian government has introduced a new system of IDP registration that helps alleviate the burden placed on these non-residents. Obtaining a certificate of IDP registration—referred to in Russian as a *spravka*, a generic term for a legal document confirming certain biographical information—grants internally displaced peoples certain rights in the places where they have resettled, including some that are otherwise withheld from non-residents. Privileges for such *spravka* holders include: access to social payments such as pensions and housing subsidies; access to additional credit through certain banks to pay for housing; access to educational institutions at all levels; the right to obtain an international passport or other documents that must otherwise be processed in the *oblast* where one is registered according to their *propiska*; the right to start or continue operating a private business; and the right to vote in presidential or parliamentary elections at local polling places.

Additionally, registered IDPs are eligible for a temporary state subsidy available exclusively for internally displaced peoples, although the sum is rather meager, coming to about \$18 per month for those who are employed and \$35 for those without a job, with additional benefits for the disabled (Kakovy privilegii spravki pereselentsa 2018).

Compared to a *propiska*, an IDP *spravka* is relatively easy but nevertheless time-consuming to obtain, as one interviewee explained:

It's not really difficult, it's just paperwork. Ukraine is famous for bureaucracy, so it just takes a lot of time and energy sometimes. For example, I moved from one apartment to another and I had to re-register, so it takes some time. There are a lot of people there [at the registration office]. I can't say that it's super uncomfortable or anything, you just go through all the paperwork, and that's it. (Interview 060, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

However, survey results suggest that many Crimean IDPs have opted not to register as IDPs; only 64.6% of survey respondents indicated that they have obtained their IDP *spravka*, including only 61.8% of ethnic Ukrainians at the low end, and 77.8% of other minority groups at the high end (Table 19). While this means that a majority of Crimean IDPs have registered as such—including majorities within each ethnic subgroup—this nevertheless leaves thousands without such privileges and protections.

**Table 19:** Survey response rates (percent) to the question, "Are you registered as an IDP?"

	All (N=497)	Ukrainians (N=220)	Russians (N=116)	Crimean Tatars (N=125)	Others (N=36)
Yes	64.6	61.8	65.5	64.8	77.8
No	35.4	38.2	34.5	35.2	22.2

Some of those without an IDP *spravka* may have already obtained a *propiska* for their new place of residence, thus transcending the legal category of an IDP. But others have refused to register as an IDP on principle, rejecting the label of an IDP and the small benefits it may bring, arguing that they are merely citizens of Ukraine who moved from one region of the

country to another. “We haven’t registered, I don’t see the point of receiving an IDP *spravka*,” one interviewee in Lviv told me, adding “[h]ow am I an IDP? I am a citizen of my country, I voluntarily changed my place of residence. I don’t see any kind of preferences from the state—first of all, the benefits are miniscule, and secondly, you have to go and pick it up [*ikh khodit’ vybivat’*]. I don’t think my family needs this now” (Interview 062, ethnic Ukrainian man, 30s).

State statistics regarding the population of IDPs are based only on the number who have registered to receive their *spravkas*, and therein lies the problem with accurately tracking the total IDP population—especially those from Crimea who are generally less likely to require the financial assistance that IDP registration provides. Moreover, it appears that many Crimean IDPs even decline the state subsidies and other financial benefits to which this status gives them access. Only 63.2% of survey respondents who are registered IDPs said that they have accepted the government assistance that this status affords them, while only 24.1% of all survey respondents indicated that they have accepted any kind of government assistance provided for IDPs.<sup>44</sup> Such is the case for Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk, who had lived in Kyiv for years before the annexation while keeping her Crimean registration, but who nevertheless registered as an IDP:

I came to Kyiv 10 years ago to attend Kyiv National University, so I don’t consider myself an IDP, maybe you could call me a labor migrant. But because I have Crimean registration, it turns out I am, in fact, an IDP. I even have an IDP *spravka*, and when I went to get it they proposed that as an IDP, I will be able to receive some kind of financial assistance from the state. I turned it down, but in principle the state recognizes me as an IDP here. (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk)

A common refrain is that the financial benefits available to IDPs are so small as to hardly be worth the effort to receive them, and that the pitiful amounts offered are indicative of the state’s

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<sup>44</sup> Additionally, only 8.7% of survey respondents indicated that they have received any kind of humanitarian aid from NGOs or other sources.

more general, systemic indifference towards the IDP population. “The state hasn’t assisted in any way,” one interviewee stated angrily, arguing that “[t]hose social payments they give out are a mockery, it’s enough for one meal in a restaurant, plus a coffee and a pastry, and that’s it for the month. It’s not even enough to say that the government has tossed [IDPs] aside” (Interview 053, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 40s). Echoing this sentiment, a 49-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman wrote in one of her supplemental survey explanations that “Ukraine isn’t concerned about its citizens. Oh, excuse me, I forgot that Crimeans are hardly even citizens, they are non-residents. That’s Ukraine for you.”

### **Restrictions on Voting Rights**

As survey results indicate, the state’s attempts to alleviate IDPs’ social and economic woes through the *spravka* system have proven inadequate. In fact, because of their status as non-residents, many IDPs remain deprived of crucial rights and privileges enjoyed by other citizens, even if they possess an IDP *spravka*. Perhaps one of the most fundamental rights denied to non-resident IDPs from both Crimea and Donbas is the right to participate in local elections. Possessing a *spravka* does allow IDPs to vote at local polling places in state-wide presidential or parliamentary elections, but it does not grant them the right to participate in electing mayors or deputies for any regional, municipal, or sub-municipal governing assemblies. As far as many Crimean IDPs are concerned, this is a major violation of their rights as Ukrainian citizens and as a vulnerable population, and it constitutes a form of state discrimination.

“It’s absolutely clear that the government is not doing enough,” stated Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk, “and it seems to me that the cornerstone of this is the fact that IDPs are not allowed to vote in local elections. Human rights organizations have stated that this is unacceptable because

it is a violation of human rights, the right to the expression of one's will" (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk). "Maybe I also want to vote!" exclaimed one interviewee when discussing the ways she has felt excluded by state policies toward non-residents, "I am also a citizen of Ukraine, but I am unable to do this. This changes our relationship [to the state], because we feel some kind of indifference" (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s). Tellingly, in his supplemental explanation for whether he has experienced discrimination, a 38-year-old ethnic Ukrainian survey respondent wrote that "I don't have the right to elect local authorities, I should have a say in the place where I am located."

Tamila Tasheva, co-founder of *Krym SOS* and director of its operations in Kyiv, explained that the government has made some effort to address the voting restrictions placed on Donbas IDPs specifically by allowing them to vote in their regional elections—i.e., in those parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts still under state control—without having to return to the region to cast their vote. However, this still denies them the right to participate in local elections where they now reside, and does nothing to extend voting rights to Crimean IDPs:

We are lobbying on the question of elections so that IDPs have the right to vote, because the question of voting in local elections is very important for the integration of internally displaced peoples within their host communities. For example, today we heard that the president said something to the effect that they are ready to help IDPs vote, but that they will organize separate locations where they can vote for authorities in the Donbas. So, let's say that I am an IDP from the Donbas living here in Kyiv, in the Pecherska District. I go to the hospital here, I have a child whom I bring to a local daycare, I have already familiarized myself with the local politicians and what not, but for some reason I'm supposed to vote for people back there [in the Donbas]. This does not allow me to integrate here, to choose the authorities that I want, who will decide on issues that affect me like the quality of health services, education, and everything else. This is just nonsense. So, the president understands this problem in different terms, and we are now hearing from him that, ok, the IDPs from the east can go back somewhere close to home and vote there, or they could vote under some controlled conditions in Kyiv. They say people can go back where they came from to vote, but Crimeans really cannot go back and vote for the authorities there, because elections in



Crimea cannot possibly be carried out in accordance with Ukrainian law now.  
Whom can they elect? (Interview 008, Tamila Tasheva)

In cases such as these, where state authorities have taken steps—however unsatisfactory—to safeguard the rights of IDPs in ways that only impact those from the Donbas, Crimeans are increasingly left with the impression that the very country they proudly supported and defended has forgotten, abandoned, or deliberately marginalized them.

Not all Crimean IDPs are convinced that they should deserve the right to vote in local elections where they have only just resettled. “I understand that it is a problem if you are not given the opportunity to exercise your electoral right when there are parliamentary or presidential elections,” noted Sergei Kostinsky, “but it is not so simple for local elections. Does somebody who moved here from some other region have the right to choose the local authorities, when it’s not certain whether they will integrate or return to where they came from?” (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)? He continued, informing me that he has kept his Crimean registration on principle, but nevertheless feels it would be an infringement on the rights of local citizens for recently arrived IDPs to influence their electoral politics:

I have Crimean registration. That being said, I can change my registration, I can register in Kyiv or any other Ukrainian city, but this is my principled position, to keep my Crimean registration. This is my form of dissent toward the occupation. But do I really have the right to change my registration and influence the choice of whom Kyivans want to see as the leader or the deputies of their city? I don’t believe that I have this right. (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)

Remarkably, Kostinsky also argued against the rights of IDPs to vote in local elections by drawing a direct comparison to the voting restrictions placed on transnational migrants, effectively placing internal and international migrants into a single category of people whose rights must necessarily be restricted:

When you come to this country from Russia, for example, or from Germany or from the USA, you don’t just immediately get the right to vote. You have to get

citizenship, you have to live here for a certain number of years. In other words, you integrate into the citizenry, and only then may you get the right to vote. Here, it's the same thing. (Interview 015, Sergei Kostinsky)

In truth, Kostinsky was the only interviewee or survey respondent who argued against the right of IDPs to vote in local elections, and it was a major point of concern and grievance with all others who raised the issue. In fact, one interviewee who had re-registered in Kyiv and had participated in local elections argued that the contingency of residency for voting rights is a problem effecting all internal migrants within Ukraine, and must be addressed not only for the sake of IDPs:

I voted in the local elections, I already have Kyiv registration, in all my time here I've done everything I need to do to make this happen. I voted in the local elections because I work here, and I pay my taxes and so forth. But when people ask me whether or not IDPs should be given the right to vote, I say that if we give the right to vote to economic migrants—as they call us—then there are also people who have already been working here in Kyiv for many years who do not have this right. I have friends who have been living in Kyiv for 8, 10, 15 years without Kyiv registration, and they don't vote in local elections or go back to their home regions to vote there. It's not possible for IDPs to go back and vote in their home regions. I don't understand the problem, if they don't have the ability to go back and vote at home, then what's the difference? They are still already living here. (Interview 030, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

### **Discriminatory Policies Affecting Crimean IDPs Specifically**

While some exclusionary or discriminatory state policies affect all of Ukraine's IDPs or even all of the country's internal migrants equally, there are others that impact Crimean IDPs exclusively in ways that seem especially—or even deliberately—cruel and unnecessary. Differences in how Kyiv treats IDPs from Crimea and from the Donbas are mostly a consequence of the distinctive statuses of these territories; In Crimea, the territory of two Ukrainian administrative regions—the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the separately-administered City of Sevastopol—has been occupied entirely and claimed by a foreign state,

while only portions of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts lie beyond state control and have been claimed only by separatist governments there, without formal annexation or even recognition from Russia or any other state. Although much of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts' territory is occupied by Russian-back separatists—including both the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk themselves—the administrative functions of these regions remain intact, however limited and displaced. But no Ukrainian authority remains intact anywhere on the Crimean Peninsula, leaving Kyiv to improvise new policies meant to affect Crimea *in absentia* or to regulate the movement of people and things between the occupied region and the rest of the state. Some of these policies have had needlessly adverse impacts on Crimean IDPs.

A few survey respondents—but no interviewees—complained of restrictions on carrying most personal items and transferring funds across the border between Crimea and the mainland in either direction. In response to the Crimean Tatar-led civic blockade of Ukrainian goods entering Crimea in the autumn of 2015, the Ukrainian government enacted a formal embargo on trade with the occupied region in December of that year. Carelessly, the embargo was also applied to most bank transactions and to personal items larger than what could fit in a suitcase, effectively prohibiting Crimeans from moving their money and personal belongings to the mainland—a problem that did not affect incoming IDPs from the Donbas. This policy was not enacted until several months into my fieldwork, and thus it did not have a direct impact on the majority of interviewees who had already moved to the mainland along with their belongings before the policy took effect. However, the policy was devastating for some survey respondents who had arrived in the mainland after December 2015. “The government generally does not help in questions of relocating from Crimea,” wrote a 63-year-old ethnic Ukrainian woman, explaining that

It's even worse, Declaration 1035 of the Cabinet of Ministers forbid IDPs from taking their domestic belongings when they relocate. IDPs cannot officially bring their things across the border, or transfer the money for the homes they've sold. We have to leave it all behind. So a lot of people who would like to relocate just can't do it.

A 50-year-old ethnic Russian man also called out the “[a]bsolutely stupid and near-sighted policies” of the Ukrainian government, including “the inability to bring our things [from Crimea], disloyal attitudes on the border, and so forth.” Fortunately for incoming IDPs, the policy affecting the transfer of personal items was declared unconstitutional and revoked in May 2017, allowing Crimeans to once again bring their personal belongings with them to the mainland, but not before doing damage to their perception of state authorities and the government's commitment to the internally displaced.

But the state's most egregious transgression in the eyes of Crimean IDPs is a policy that has legally rendered all Crimean *propiska* holders non-residents for tax purposes, a specific type of non-residency that severely curtails access to banking services in particular. This policy is tied to a Ukrainian law declaring Crimea a Special Economic Zone for a period of 10 years from the time it took effect in September 2014. The policy is a stop-gap measure meant to officially exempt Crimean residents and businesses from tax and trade regulations while the region remains occupied and beyond the control of the state, and is unrelated to a similar law declaring Crimea a Special Economic Zone of the Russian Federation following the annexation. To facilitate the Ukrainian law, all Ukrainian businesses and individual citizens registered within Crimea were declared non-residents for tax purposes during the ostensibly temporary period of occupation. The unintended consequence of this declaration is that Crimeans arriving in mainland Ukraine retain this specific type of non-residency as long as they are registered at a Crimean address, creating additional problems that do not impact IDPs from the Donbas who

remain registered there. While arguing that most of the difficulties Crimean IDPs encounter are the same ones affecting all Ukrainians, one interview pointed to the matter of Crimeans' non-residency for tax purposes as the only real exception:

90% of the problems of IDPs in Ukraine are Ukraine-wide problems, which demand reforms first and foremost. The other 10% are problems caused by their relocation. It seems this way to me, because in the year and a half since I've lived here, I haven't run into any such problems that only affect IDPs, except for the declaration by the National Bank about IDPs from Crimea not being residents in connection to the law of the Special Economic Zone in Crimea, etc. (Interview 030, ethnic Ukrainian woman, 20s)

This policy has complicated the procedures for Crimean IDPs to pay their taxes, but their primary concern is that the status of non-residency for tax purposes denies them the right to simple banking services within Ukraine, including opening a savings account, being issued a debit or credit card, or simply accessing the funds already in their accounts. These limitations were confirmed and officially implemented in November 2014 by Resolution No. 699 from the National Bank of Ukraine, issued in accordance with the law on the Crimean Free Economic Zone (National Bank of Ukraine 2014). These restrictions, more so than any other ill-guided policy enacted in response to the Crimean annexation or IDP crisis, have infuriated many Crimean IDPs and created the impression that Ukrainian state authorities are truly indifferent to their suffering. Some, including one 29-year-old female survey respondent who listed her ethnicity as "citizen of Ukraine," even know the hated resolution by its official number; "[m]ore than anything," she wrote, "there is discrimination because of the status of non-residents according to Resolution 699 from the National Bank of Ukraine." Others were less specific but equally assertive in their contentions that this policy amounts to discrimination targeting only Crimean IDPs; "[b]anking services," wrote a 43-year-old ethnic Ukrainian man by way of explaining his experiences with discrimination, adding, "there is discrimination in conducting

business activities.” “The banks view Crimeans as non-resident” wrote a 37-year-old Crimean Tatar man, and a 29-year-old Ukrainian woman stated that “[e]ssentially, I am now unable to get a bank card because I am from Crimea.” Other survey responses reveal more nuanced and personal ways that the policy has negatively impacted Crimean IDPs; “*PrivatBank*<sup>45</sup> froze my account, stole money from it, and blocked any transfers” a 37-year-old Jewish man wrote, while a 34-year-old ethnic Belarusian man explained that “Ukraine recognized Crimeans as non-residents. The banks blocked Crimeans’ accounts, they haven’t given us our money. It’s impossible to remove a Crimean-registered car from my account.”

Banking restrictions resulting from this particular non-residency status also came up frequently in interviews, and several recalled personal experiences of being denied services at the bank. Interviewees repeatedly complained that these restrictions are humiliating and dehumanizing, making them feel as if they are excluded from the Ukrainian body politic despite all they’ve sacrificed to remain a part of it. “They’ve just forgotten about us, we don’t exist,” one Crimean Tatar interviewee in Kherson stated bitterly in reference to Ukrainian state authorities. He continued:

It’s insulting that the banking system does not consider us residents of Ukraine. This is really insulting, because at my lowest point, when I was in the doldrums and ready to ask for some credit, I asked the bank if I would be able to get some, and they told me, “you cannot, you are not a resident of Ukraine.” It was like an ugly scar left on my chest and my heart. We had waved the flag for Ukraine in Crimea, and then we come here and we are nobody. This is really unpleasant and offensive. (Interview 036, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Olga Skripnik, founder of the human rights organization *Al’menda*, similarly claimed that this non-residency policy effectively amounts to the loss of citizenship for Crimean IDPs, and she

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<sup>45</sup> *PrivatBank* is Ukraine’s largest commercial bank, whose primary shareholder was the controversial Jewish-Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky until it was nationalized in December 2016.

underscored the absurdity of the situation by pointing to the fact that her husband—a Russian citizen—has more rights than she does in this regard:

Anybody who has it in their passport that they are registered in the territory of Crimea—like me, for example, and like my colleagues—is a non-resident here. As it happens, my husband is a foreigner, he is a citizen of another country, but if he is able to get a tax number in Ukraine, he will have more opportunities in the bank than I do as a citizen of Ukraine, because I am not a resident. I cannot open a bank account, but he can. This is a colossal problem and it must be solved, because this is a blow to Crimean identity, as only Crimeans are non-residents, this situation does not affect people from the Donbas, because there is a law about the Free Economic Zone of Crimea, where it is specifically written that people who are registered in Crimea are non-residents. So there is a kind of paradox—it turns out that in this matter we are not discriminated against as citizens, we are in fact like non-citizens. (Interview 033, Olga Skripnik)

Perhaps the most harrowing tale of being denied banking services because of a Crimean *propiska* came from one interviewee who had been studying in Minnesota as a Fulbright student at the time of the Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea, and who had actively participated in the small Minneapolis demonstrations in solidarity with the protestors on the Maidan during the winter of 2013-2014. After returning to Ukraine with her American husband to begin a job in Kyiv, she needed a Schengen visa to attend a work-related conference in Budapest, and went to a local bank to pay the required visa fee. Upon seeing the Crimean *propiska* in her passport, the teller informed her that the bank was unable to process her request because she is not a resident of Ukraine, jeopardizing her entire work trip. “I started getting very emotional,” she recalled while recounting the incident,

and that was the first time that I remembered standing in the cold in Minnesota with those Ukrainian flags, far away from my country, protesting and thinking that I am a part of my country, that my country cares about me, and here I am standing in this stupid bank, knowing that my country doesn't give a shit about me, absolutely. I am a nobody, I don't even know why I fought so much to come back. There was absolutely no reason, everybody else would have applied for refugee status and stayed in the states. No, I was very stupid, and I thought that my country needs me! Now my country doesn't need me. I almost started crying, I was just speechless. (...) I was humiliated for the very reason that I believe in this

country and I want to be a part of it. I was pointed to the door—"out, we don't need you"—that kind of thing. It felt so wrong and so hurtful. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

But just as she felt the immense weight of the state's discriminatory policies, the Ukrainian spirit of civic solidarity that so many Crimean IDPs have lauded became her saving grace. "And then," she continued, "the teller said, 'well, maybe you can ask somebody in the line if they can offer their passport, so you can give them the cash and they can use their passport information for your payment.'" At first she was skeptical that anybody would be willing to stick out their neck and help a stranger,

but then there was some guy standing there in line, you know, looking at me as I'm about to start crying, and he said, "oh, I should help out a Crimean girl." So he came up and gave his passport information. It was just a miracle right there, and I said, "thank you so very much!" He said, "well, are you sure that you are a normal kind of person?" I said, "yeah, here is my business card, you can send me an email, whatever you need." So he said, "oh, ok, I will trust you." It was kind of in a joking way, but at the same time it's kind of scary to offer up your passport information for some stranger in the line. So anyway, because of him I was able to pay my fee. (Interview 027, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

This incident perfectly encapsulates the contrasts and contradictions that Crimean IDPs have experienced in their interactions with the state and with their host communities. On the one hand, ill-conceived and poorly-implemented state policies meant to alleviate problems associated with the IDP crisis have actually exacerbated many of the difficulties that IDPs—especially those from Crimea—face in mainland Ukraine. On the other hand, Crimean IDPs mostly report that their fellow Ukrainian citizens have shown them great empathy, support, and generosity, making them feel welcome and accepted in their host communities while the state effectively excludes and marginalizes them.



## Conclusions

Returning to the question of whether Crimean IDPs maintain a “troubled relationship with host societies” in mainland Ukraine in line with Cohen’s seventh “common feature” of diaspora (2008, 17), the answer is complex and dependent upon which components of Ukrainian society are brought into focus. Prejudice and discrimination have indeed tainted the interactions between Crimean IDPs and locals in certain instances, in some cases inhibiting their ability to secure housing or employment. However, such instances appear to be relatively rare, with a strong majority of 71.8% of survey respondents stating that they have not experienced discrimination as a result of their Crimean origins. Moreover, Crimean IDPs appear to be targeted by discriminatory attitudes far less frequently than IDPs from the Donbas, who bear the stigmas of both long-standing regional stereotypes and suspected complicity in the war in eastern Ukraine. Accordingly, most of the discrimination that is directed towards Crimean IDPs is similarly rooted in resentment over Crimea’s fate and suspicion that IDPs may have been in some way complicit.

Remarkably, there seem to be very few reported cases of prejudice rooted in ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other cultural differences; in fact, for all their distinctive ethno-cultural trappings, Crimean Tatar IDPs generally experience the highest levels of empathy, compassion, and acceptance from Ukrainian citizens and those within their host communities. If anything, Slavic Crimeans are more likely to arouse the suspicions of other Ukrainians, as Crimean Tatars are now widely recognized for their resilient opposition to the annexation and support for the Ukrainian state. Where they do exist, social prejudices toward Crimean IDPs are primarily of a political nature and therefore similar to those oriented toward Donbas IDPs but much less intense or commonplace. In this sense, I would argue that the relationships between Crimean IDPs and

their host society are not holistically “troubled,” nor do they suggest “a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group,” as per Cohen’s prescription (2008, 17).

However, the story is radically different with regard to the relationship between Crimean IDPs and the Ukrainian state authorities responsible for creating, implementing, and enforcing policies that affect them directly. Only one in ten survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the government’s response to the IDP crisis, and numerous survey respondents and interviewees alike explicitly framed laws and policies regarding IDPs as forms of state discrimination. Most egregious are the policies restricting voting rights and access to banking services, both of which are tied to the archaic *propiska* system and exacerbated—in the case of banking—by the declaration of a Free Economic Zone in occupied Crimea that negatively impacts Crimean IDPs exclusively. As one 29-year-old ethnic Russian woman wrote in response to the question of discrimination, “I encounter discrimination every time I go to government agencies because of the Crimean address registered in my passport.” One interviewee pointed to a variety of interrelated problems while describing her family’s experiences with state discrimination, explaining that the problems only tend to exacerbate each other when there is no effort on Kyiv’s part to address them:

We’ve felt the most discrimination due to the fact that we are not considered residents of Ukraine, because our registration in our passports say that we live in Simferopol, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine. We cannot vote; there were some elections, and we weren’t allowed to vote. We have to open a new bank account here if we want to get a bank card, but they blocked our accounts because, according to the law, we are not residents of this country. You have to register as an IDP, then get temporary registration in Lviv, and only then can you get a bank card that is considered normal and will work everywhere like everybody else’s. This is the problem. (...) How are we supposed to get registered in an unfamiliar place if we are renting an apartment and the landlord does not want to register us? This means we have to find a new apartment, but without registration we cannot get the bank card we need. These issues are all interconnected. Even if this is all done according to the laws of Ukraine, they

aren't interested in what happens to us. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Many Crimean IDPs see state discrimination not merely in the government's passive inability to address existing problems, but in the active measures it has taken that make the situation worse "Not only does the government of Ukraine do practically nothing to ease the problems of IDPs, it creates additional problems!" exclaimed a 70-year-old ethnic Lithuanian woman in her survey response, pointing to "denial of the right to vote, the impossibility of bringing our belongings from Crimea, violations in banking services, etc."

Moreover, many Crimean IDPs believe that this ill-treatment they have been dealt does indeed constitute a "lack of acceptance," or worse. "We share the experience of being discriminated against as displaced people," one interviewee commented with respect to the question of what unites Crimean IDPs;

For example, we are not allowed to vote [in local elections], even though I don't know who is running in the district where I live, I just arrived. And the other thing, both of my accounts were blocked by the bank. It's just, like... oh my god. We understand that there is a war happening, and these are the circumstances, and we understand that our state is not perfect, but you have this feeling of being inferior in some way. (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

While this interviewee suggested that she has been made to feel "inferior" as a Crimean IDP, another interviewee argued that discriminatory and exclusionary policies toward Crimean IDPs make her feel as if she—along with Crimea itself—is no longer considered part of Ukraine:

I don't get any support from the Ukrainian government. The Ukrainian people are very welcoming, friendly, and accepting, but the government of Ukraine ... being an IDP and not having certain rights, not being registered, not being a resident ... it is a fact that they do not recognize Ukrainian citizens who came here with Crimean passports as residents. This is such nonsense, and yet they declare everywhere that Crimea is a part of Ukraine, about sovereignty and borders and all of this. It is such a contradiction. This is really upsetting, it limits these relationships. It's not that they've tossed us out, it's how we've been cut off. Crimea was carefully cut away with scissors and sewn up with thread, and we are

somehow still a part [of Ukraine], but in reality, in essence, we are no longer a part of it. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

To summarize, there is indeed a convincing argument to be made that Crimean IDPs exhibit a “troubled relationship” with their host society if the focus is placed specifically on their relations with the Ukrainian government. Far less “troubled” are their interpersonal relationships with the Ukrainian populace, who have by and large embraced and accommodated their fellow citizens from Crimea in their time of desperation and need, although there are unfortunate exceptions to this rule. Cohen argues that a fraught relationship with a migrant community’s host society is a common but not universal element of diaspora and diasporic consciousness, as prejudiced or discriminatory attitudes and actions toward migrants create social barriers that may inhibit their integration and acceptance within host communities, and thereby reinforces their self-perception of “otherness” and the salience of identities rooted in their place of origin. Despite the fact that they are still Ukrainian citizens living in Ukraine, Crimean IDPs have effectively been rendered second-class citizens by policies that explicitly restrict their rights because of their place of origin—or rather, registration. Structural and systemic forms of exclusion therefore impact internally displaced Crimeans in ways similar to transnational and ostensibly diasporic migrants who have resettled beyond their state or origin, further bolstering arguments in favor of viewing Crimean IDPs through the lens of diaspora.

Feelings of exclusion or discrimination at the hands of the state are mitigated by the welcoming embrace of the Ukrainian people, and it is these relationships and the concomitant sense of belonging to the Ukrainian civic nation that sustain Crimean IDP’s Ukrainian-ness rather than confidence in their political leadership. This complex relationship with Ukrainian society may not speak to “the possibility that another calamity might befall” the Crimean IDPs, following Cohen’s take on the consequences of such “troubled relationships” undergirding

diasporic consciousness (2008, 17). Crimean IDPs are still guaranteed the basic protections of Ukrainian citizenship despite the matter of their residency, and the likely source of any additional “calamity” would be external, with threats of further Russian revanchism in Ukraine still looming. But the relationship between Crimean IDPs and their host society—specifically the state presiding over it—will remain duly “troubled” until exclusionary policies are adequately addressed or rescinded, further contributing to their diasporic condition in the meantime.

## **Chapter Fifteen: Crimean IDPs' Relationship to Global Diasporas**

Diasporas are typically understood to span across multiple locations beyond an original place of origin, with migrants dispersed to and forming diasporic exclaves in at least two external locations generally framed at the scale of the nation-state. I challenged this narrow understanding of migrant dispersal in Chapter Ten by pointing to the spatial patterns of Crimean IDPs' resettlement, revealing that diverse motivating factors have scattered them to a variety of locations within Ukraine, amounting to no less of a “dispersion” than if they had migrated internationally. Nevertheless, as theories of diaspora remain stuck in a strictly transnational paradigm, another commonly cited characteristic of diasporas is their interconnectedness across multiple branches located in different states around the world. Cohen argues in the eighth point of his list of diasporic “common features” that diasporic communities typically exhibit “a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial” (2008, 17). In other words, it may not be enough for diasporas to merely be “dispersed” across multiple locations beyond their place—usually country—of origin, for they should also demonstrate mutual solidarities and affinities that transcends their individual outposts to form a global diasporic consciousness, even if their links to the original home(land) have waned.

A discussion of how Crimean IDPs share “a sense of empathy and co-responsibility” among their various points of resettlement in mainland Ukraine would be redundant, as I have demonstrated at length the shared sentiments, experiences, objectives, and solidarities that unite the Crimean IDP population whether they live in Kyiv, Lviv, or elsewhere. However, it is worth considering how Crimean IDPs may perceive or interact with other diasporic Crimeans located

outside of Ukraine. But while I have also pushed back against the assumption that ethnic homogeneity is an inherent element of diaspora—which is again reified in Cohen’s deference to “co-ethnic members” of global diasporas in the very point under discussion here—ethnicity does indeed present a problem when trying to conceptualize a global Crimean diaspora. To put it bluntly, there is no such consciousness, as far as I am aware, of a global, multiethnic “Crimean diaspora” consisting of migrants from Crimea specifically. Crimeans have certainly emigrated to locations around the world much as any other peoples from the post-Soviet space, but the strength of ethnic and/or nation-state affinities generally acts as a centripetal force once they are removed from their own national context. Crimean-ness loses its salience as a distinctive and unifying category of identity outside of Ukraine—with the possible exception of Russia or other post-Soviet locales—where the much larger and well-established Ukrainian, Russian, and Crimean Tatar diasporas are more likely to provide emigrants from Crimea with a sense of security, familiarity, or community, and subsequently influence their diasporic consciousness.

### **One Crimean’s Experience in the Ukrainian Diaspora**

The scope of my research did not allow for any investigation into the identities of Crimeans who migrated internationally either before or after the annexation of Crimea, and so I may not speak definitively to the complete absence of a Crimean diasporic consciousness outside of Ukraine. However, I was able to speak with one woman who had initially emigrated to Canada in the wake of the annexation, but who returned to Ukraine to begin a job in Kyiv around the same time I began my fieldwork, and her experiences may be instructive. Shocked and horrified by the arrival of the “Little Green Men,” this interviewee and her parents applied for and received Canadian visas even before the illegal referendum was held, and they quickly fled

from their small village outside of Simferopol to live with the interviewee's sister, who had emigrated years before and now lives in Calgary.

Feeling helpless and depressed while watching from abroad as the occupation of her home region unfolded, and despite already being fluent in English, the interviewee sought comfort and community in the local Ukrainian diaspora, for which Canada—and especially the province of Alberta—is well-known (Satzewich 2002). “I started to look at the Ukrainian diaspora,” she told me, including organizations like

the Congress of Ukrainians in Canada, and the *Spilka Ukrainskii Molodi*—the Ukrainian Youth Association—and I reached out to those people and they invited me to the first event. It was a World Cup game, I watched football there, and this is how I got involved. I joined the choir, even though I had never sung before! And you know, I got involved with them somehow, and they were really nice and welcoming people, and they saw that "oh you are from Crimea, oh, and you're not a separatist!" (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

As an ethnic Russian, she admitted that her sense of being Ukrainian was rather weakly-developed before the events of 2013-2014, but her perspective changed as she was drawn into the local Ukrainian community and developed an appreciation for its culture:

I was fascinated, to be honest, to see all those Ukrainian *zabavas*, which are like big parties with live Ukrainian music, dances, and polka. It's more mixed with influences from the other countries neighboring the western part of Ukraine, but still, it's so fascinating and so beautiful, and I had never thought that Ukrainian dances are so powerful and so beautiful. (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

But while she became more familiar with Ukrainian ethnic identities and traditions linked primarily to regions of western Ukraine where much of the diaspora in Canada originates, she also made it her mission to familiarize them with aspects of contemporary Ukraine and especially Crimea, about which, she said, many Canadian-Ukrainians are misinformed:

I wanted to tell people more about Crimea, insisting that this is part of Ukraine as well, and that it's not the people who decided what happened there. So, I was trying to promote that, I was trying to tell them more about Crimean Tatars, and I



also tried to explain that Crimea is multi-ethnic, because they are from the western part of Ukraine, so it's all about the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian identity for them. But now they are understanding more, after the Maidan revolution their understanding of Ukraine shifted from just ethnic things to more political things now, I think. Crimean Tatars are also Ukrainians, and they believe it now. Even ethnically Russian people are also very Ukrainian, because we have roots in Ukraine. It's the same thing as being a Canadian, right? You can have any kind of origins and different religions, but you are still Canadian. This is what I wanted to show them as well [about Ukraine]. (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s)

Thus, this interviewee rather easily integrated into the larger Ukrainian diaspora upon her arrival in Calgary rather than seek out any particularly Crimean community—which, given the relatively small population of Crimea, is not even likely to exist there. Moreover, she infused the Ukrainian diaspora in Calgary with her own brand of Crimean-ness by couching it within its larger Ukrainian context, thus rendering Crimean-ness more familiar to the diasporans and expanding their notion of what it means to be Ukrainian. “I was definitely part of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, 100%,” she told me, explaining that “I was really welcomed, and those people have become my second family, they understand me well, and they have the same worries and the same vision, perspective, and goals as me” (Interview 017, ethnic Russian woman, 30s). While this is only one example, from which we may not draw definitive conclusions regarding the diasporic experiences of Crimeans abroad, it nevertheless speaks to the power of ethnic and/or national affinities that help explain why a nominal Crimean diaspora has not materialized outside of Ukraine, or why Crimean-ness may lose its salience as a way of identifying—particularly for Crimean Slavs—in transnational contexts.

### **The Global Crimean Tatar Diaspora**

But while Crimean-ness may not generally find diasporic expression beyond Ukraine, Crimean Tatar-ness certainly does, as this is an ethnic rather than regional framework of identity.

Indeed, diasporic communities of Crimean Tatars have existed outside of Crimea for more than two centuries, first forming with the exodus of Crimean Tatars to parts of the Ottoman Empire following the Russian Empire's annexation of Crimea in 1783. Because of this initial emigration and subsequent waves of Crimean Tatars fleeing to Ottoman lands from the Russian Empire—especially during the Crimean War in the 1850s—Turkey is now the undisputed center of the Crimean Tatar diaspora, where up to about five million citizens are estimated to have Crimean Tatar heritage, with the largest concentration found in the Anatolian city of Eskişehir (Jin Oh 2006). Much smaller branches of the global Crimean Tatar diaspora are also found in other former Ottoman territories—chiefly in the eastern Romanian region of Dobruja—as well as other Eastern European and post-Soviet states, with small outposts in Western Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Notably, some tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars remain in Central Asia and Russia as a result of the 1944 deportation, with the largest concentration by far found in Uzbekistan. Thus, while there may be no global “Crimean diaspora” to which the Crimean IDP population may relate holistically, the question of how Crimean Tatar IDPs in mainland Ukraine relate to the global Crimean Tatar diaspora—and whether they form a constituent part of it—is a relevant one.

Perhaps because of their relatively small population within Crimea or Ukraine as a whole, Crimean Tatars are accurately aware of the larger presence and influence of their global diaspora, and they generally take great pride in the achievements of their ethnic kin no matter where they may now reside. For example, ATR director Ayder Muzhdabaev offered a boastful description of some of the more distinguished and successful Crimean Tatars living both at home or abroad:

There are some famous Crimean Tatars whom we are proud of. For example, there's the jazz guitarist Enver Izmaylov,<sup>46</sup> he plays in the “tapping” style, by tapping the strings. He is famous in the world of jazz guitarists, he also tours in Europe and America, he plays with American musicians. What other famous people are there? Oh, in a university in Dallas there is professor Ali Aliev, he is now working on creating material that makes objects invisible.<sup>47</sup> It was ordered by the US Department of Defense, this is all open information. He makes this material, like an invisible cap, which can be used for peaceful purposes, or for the military. (...) There's also the owner of the Candy Company Ülker in Turkey, he is also the decedent of Crimean Tatars.<sup>48</sup> There are a lot of people there who don't even know that they are Crimean Tatars. There was the best footballer in Asia in 2008, Server Djeparov, he's from Uzbekistan but he's also a Crimean Tatar.<sup>49</sup> There is also a Crimean Tatar Olympic champion in wrestling, in the 1972 Munich Olympics.<sup>50</sup> Even India doesn't have any Olympic champions,<sup>51</sup> there are a billion people who live there and they don't have one Olympic champion, but the Crimean Tatars—of which there are really only 500,000 throughout the world<sup>52</sup>—they have an Olympic champion. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

Some also expressed a strong sense of solidarity with and gratitude toward the global Crimean Tatar diaspora—especially in Turkey—for providing moral and financial support to those Crimean Tatars who returned to Crimea and struggled to rebuild communities there with little support from the Ukrainian government. I interviewed one Crimean Tatar woman who still lives in Crimea but frequently travels to mainland Ukraine, and who strongly admonished Kyiv for inhibiting the development of the Crimean Tatars while the diaspora helped propel it:

There's no need to be singing all the time about how great the Ukrainians are for saving us. Excuse me guys, but you destroyed us for 20 years, you also ridiculed

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<sup>46</sup> Enver Izmaylov lives in Crimea, making him the only person mentioned here by Muzhdabaev to not be part of the global Crimean Tatar diaspora.

<sup>47</sup> Dr. Ali Aliev, an Uzbek-born Crimean Tatar, is a research scientist at the Alan G. MacDiarmid NanoTech Institute at University of Texas at Dallas.

<sup>48</sup> Murat Ülker is the son of the late Sabri Ülker, who was born in Crimea but fled the Soviet Union for Turkey with his family when he was still a child in 1929. In 1944 he founded the Ülker confectionary company, which is now a subsidiary of the Turkish conglomerate Yıldız Holding, of which Murat Ülker is the chairman. He is considered to be one of the wealthiest people in Turkey.

<sup>49</sup> Server Djeparov, an Uzbek citizen of Crimean Tatar decent, currently plays professional soccer in Iran, and was named Asian Footballer of the Year in both 2008 and 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Rustem Kazakov, a Crimean Tatar born in Tashkent in 1947, won gold in Greco-Roman wrestling at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.

<sup>51</sup> Muzhdabaev's statement here is inaccurate, as India took the gold medal in the men's 10-meter air rifle event at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

<sup>52</sup> Perplexingly, this figure would exclude the millions of Turkish citizens with Crimean Tatar heritage who constitute the vast majority of all ethnic Crimean Tatars worldwide.

us the way Russians ridicule us now. It was just more latent, you interfered in our lives, it was the same with schools and with the institutions that we had, practically everything. It's the efforts of our diasporas around the world that sustained us, our Turkish connections supported and helped us. (Interview 021, Crimean Tatar woman, 40s)

There is also a perception among some Crimean Tatar IDPs that a purer form of the Crimean Tatar language and culture have been preserved in some small pockets within the diaspora, beyond the destructive Soviet policies that sought to eradicate Crimean Tatar identity after their deportation. "There are villages in Turkey where they speak the pure Crimean Tatar language," one interviewee insisted, explaining that

The Turkish and Crimean Tatar languages are very similar, and they have preserved it in Turkey. We forgot it in the Soviet Union. But consider this, if my ancestors had left [for Turkey] in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and if we were living there now, I am 100% sure that I would be speaking the Crimean Tatar language. (Interview 068, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

### **Increased Engagement with the Global Crimean Tatar Diaspora since the Annexation**

Beyond such social and cultural affinities for the global Crimean Tatar diaspora, there is also a fairly wide degree of formal, institutionalized engagement between the Crimean Tatar communities in Ukraine and abroad. This is exemplified most clearly by the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars. First conceived during the fifth *Qurultai* in 2007 and carried through under the initiative of the *Mejlis* elected that year, the first Worldwide Congress of the Crimean Tatars was held in Bakhchisarai in 2009, where the agenda was focused on the rights of Crimean Tatars as indigenous peoples within their Crimean homeland, and on strategies for appealing to the Ukrainian government and international organizations for support in securing and protecting these rights (Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People 2009). In attendance at the congress were 420 delegates representing Crimean Tatar communities located in Ukraine and 12

additional countries: Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Germany, Poland, France, the United States, and Canada.

The Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars fell into a period of inactivity after its first meeting, but it was re-energized following the annexation of Crimea, holding its second meeting in Ankara, Turkey in August 2015. The second meeting was convened to address the many pressing issues that Crimean Tatars in Crimea and Ukraine at large now face with their homeland under occupation, but the primary outcome of the meeting was the creation of a smaller Executive Committee formed by key delegates from multiple countries. Since the Ankara meeting, the Executive Committee has convened every few months in various countries containing Crimean Tatar diaspora communities—including Ukraine, Turkey, Romania, Poland, and Lithuania—to further coordinate strategies for addressing the problems of Russian occupation in Crimea and for broadcasting the plight of the Crimean Tatar people on the world stage (Putilov 2016).

Besides revitalizing the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars, there are signs that the annexation of Crimea has also precipitated a revival of Crimean Tatar ethnic identities within the global diaspora, especially in Turkey. “If you’re paying attention, you will definitely notice that there has been a growth in national consciousness within the Crimean Tatar diaspora, and this is a very important point,” noted Gayana Yuksel, a member of the *Mejlis* and founder of the QHA Crimean News Agency. As she explained,

The main reason is the occupation of Crimea, because whether you want to or not, whether or not you are connected to the events there, it’s still something you hear about. (...) [T]he diaspora itself, especially in Turkey, is very active. This can be seen in the fact that they held the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars in Ankara, it’s seen in the fact that the Executive Committee of the Congress is working. It’s seen in the fact that they commemorate May 18 there; I was in Ankara for May 18 [2016], and there was a large number for Ankara, 5,000 people, they had never gathered so many people for this event before, 5,000

Crimean Tatars came from different corners of Turkey to march. (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel)

I was unable to travel to Turkey and investigate questions of identity within the Crimean Tatar diaspora there myself, so I cannot speak directly to Yuksel's claims about the growth in Crimean Tatar national consciousness there. However, during my fieldwork I did meet a handful of Turkish Crimean Tatar youths who have become more attuned to their Crimean Tatar heritage and more deeply engaged with the Crimean Tatar community in mainland Ukraine since the annexation, frequently traveling to Kyiv and other cities to participate in Crimean Tatar cultural and social events. Conversely, it came to my attention that several young Crimean Tatars from Crimea have opted to attend universities in Turkey rather than mainland Ukraine since Crimean universities lost their global accreditation as a consequence of the annexation. I regret not having the opportunity to interview Turkish Crimean Tatars traveling to Ukraine or those from Crimea attending Turkish universities, as this would have helped deepen my understanding of how the annexation may have spurred more active engagement between Ukraine-based and other diasporic Crimean Tatars. But anecdotal evidence suggests that such engagement—particularly between Crimean Tatar youths in Ukraine and Turkey—has grown more robust in recent years.

### **Distinguishing Crimean Tatar IDPs from the Global Diaspora**

But although affinities and solidarities spanning Crimean Tatar communities worldwide are generally strong and appear to be getting stronger, most Crimean Tatar IDPs draw important distinctions between the global diaspora and those Crimean Tatars located in Crimea or mainland Ukraine. For one, the Uzbek branch of the diaspora—which, after Turkey, is ostensibly still home to the second largest population of Crimean Tatars outside of Crimea or Ukraine as a whole—appears to be mostly peripheral to Crimean Tatar IDPs' conceptualizations of their

global diaspora. On the surface this may seem perplexing, as the vast majority of Crimean Tatars over the age of 30 in Crimea or elsewhere in Ukraine were themselves part of the diaspora in Uzbekistan before they returned to Crimea, and presumably still know individuals who stayed behind. Indeed, as Mustafa Dzhemilev suggested to me, the relatively recent divergence between the Uzbek- and Ukraine-based Crimean Tatar communities lends the two groups a certain socio-cultural closeness compared to other diasporic populations; “those who live in Uzbekistan—and according to our estimates there are around 100,000 Crimean Tatars there by their mentality—are roughly the same as those who live in Crimea,” he stated, “because we left there not that long ago” (Interview 020, Mustafa Dzhemilev).

However, as Gayana Yuksel noted, [t]here is a certain connection with the Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan, but it’s in tatters because there are not very active people there” (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel). While not explicit, I detected in this and other statements offered by elite Crimean Tatar interviewees a subtextual disappointment in the Crimean Tatar diaspora in Uzbekistan for failing to return to Crimea when the opportunity finally came, in a sense betraying the Crimean Tatar national movement that fought for decades to achieve this right, and essentially becoming assimilated Uzbeks. Even though it is home to a sizeable portion of the global Crimean Tatar population, interviewees often skipped over Uzbekistan when listing branches of the diaspora while including countries with very small Crimean Tatar communities, such as Lithuania, Poland, Canada, and the United States. What’s more, I have observed instances in which Crimean Tatar IDPs condemned Uzbek Crimean Tatars for voicing support for Russia; a heated row played out on social media in July 2018 as members of a Facebook group for Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan wrote posts in support of Russia and its performance in the World Cup. The posts triggered denunciations from Ukraine-based Crimean Tatars who

accused the posters of siding with their occupier and oppressor, and prompted one to issue an ultimatum to all his friends who are members of the group to either leave it or risk being “unfriended.”

My general impression is that many Crimean Tatars in Ukraine have more or less written off their ethnic kin in Uzbekistan as no longer forming an important part of the global community of Crimean Tatars, and this appears to be reflected in the operations of the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars. Although the wider Congress includes delegates from Uzbekistan, they appear to be absent from the more important Executive Committee, and in an exchange with Refat Chubarov—who heads both the *Mejlis* and the Executive Committee of the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars—he dismissed the notion that they may ever hold a meeting in Uzbekistan for ostensibly logistical and political reasons:

RC: We have a union of all the diasporas, it’s called the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars. We held our second congress last August in Ankara, we elected an Executive Committee that includes representatives of all the diasporas from 12 countries, and every two months we hold meetings in one of these countries. We held the first meeting in Romania, in Constanța, we have a large diaspora there. The second was in November in Kyiv, but because of the unordinary situation here with the blockade, we decided we will hold another one in Ukraine. The next will be in Lithuania, where we will meet in April. We decided to meet in another three months, then in Turkey, then in Warsaw, and so on.

AC: Will there be one in the US?

RC: It would be too expensive to hold it in the US, and we have a small diaspora there. The diaspora is mainly in Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Ukraine, if we are talking about all of our people.

AC: And Uzbekistan too?

RC: I think that it would be almost impossible to hold [a meeting] there.

AC: The government won’t allow it?

RC: Yes, we will hold them in these primary countries. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

Thus, despite their recent separation, a significant social and political schism seems to have eroded the relationship between Crimean Tatars in Ukraine and Uzbekistan, with the latter devolving into a more vestigial branch of the global Crimean diaspora.



By comparison, affinities for and political engagement with the diaspora in Turkey are much stronger, as Crimean Tatars generally view their ethnic kin there and the state to which they belong as powerful supporters and allies in their struggle for indigenous rights. This can be seen in the Turkish Crimean Tatar diaspora's heavy involvement in the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars, and in the extensive cultural and political exchange between Turkey and the Crimean Tatar community in Ukraine. Nevertheless, many argue that there are significant differences between the Crimean Tatar populations in Ukraine and Turkey, contending that the latter has thoroughly assimilated into the ethnic Turkish population over the course of more than two centuries. Some attribute this trend to the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic similarities between the two peoples; "Turkey is the kind of country where people become Turks after one generation, their nation is too close to ours. It's like how Ukrainians in Russia become Russians very quickly, it's the same in Turkey, Crimean Tatars very quickly become Turks," stated ATR director Ayder Muzhdabaev before making the poignant observation that "[t]hat's why it's better in Ukraine, here Crimean Tatars don't dissolve so quickly as they do there" (Interview 053, Ayder Muzhdabaev). Significantly, the ease with which Crimean Tatars have assimilated into the Turkish national body lends credence to the belief that Crimean Tatar national identity is best preserved within a Ukrainian state that includes Crimea itself.

To this point, I frequently encountered derisive comments about the perceived inauthenticity or inconsistency of Crimean Tatar identities within the Turkish diaspora, which, according to some interviewees, amounts to only a few token emblems trotted out for special occasions. For example, while speaking about the diaspora in Turkey, celebrated Crimean Tatar musician Dzhemil Karikov mentioned that

There is an event when all the Crimean Tatars gather, it happens once a year. They have some religious festivals, it's more Islamic, the national element has

been erased. There are purely Crimean Tatar events too, once a year in various cities, in Eskişehir, in Ankara. These are purely national, but little is left. There are communities there, the Crimean Tatars get together, but it all amounts to them coming to sing, dance, eat *chebureks* and some other national dishes, and that's it, that's where it ends. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)

Known for his staunch traditionalism and mission to preserve the Crimean Tatar musical heritage, Karikov is particularly disappointed in how little of it is left within Turkey, and critical of its diasporans' skewed and diluted knowledge of Crimean Tatar musical culture. He had this to say about his experiences exploring the remnants of Crimean Tatar musical heritage in Turkey:

When I tried to record some of their Crimean Tatar music, I thought it would be in a more pristine form because they left way back when, but I encountered some problems. They don't know more than 15 Crimean Tatar compositions, that's it. There are a few songs that have endured for some reason, but that's it. What's the reason for this? Maybe because the Crimean Tatar and Turkish languages are so close, a large layer of Turkish musical culture replaced the Crimean Tatar one. On the one hand, maybe the closeness of the language—they are almost identical—prevented [the preservation of Crimean Tatar musical culture], because they accepted the Turkish language in place of their own. In the realm of Crimean Tatar instruments, or those of Crimean Turks who live there in Turkey, they started to consider the accordion one of our national instruments. When I tell them that our ancestors played the *baglama* and the *saz*, they say, “no, that's Turkish.” I say they should look at the old artistic reproductions made in Crimea in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, where Crimean Tatars are depicted with their musical instruments. (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov)

Beyond the meager state of Crimean Tatar identities and heritage, some interviewees also expressed disappointment with the extent to which the diaspora in Turkey assisted those returning to Crimea at the end of the Soviet period, believing they could have done more as a relatively prosperous contingency of the global Crimean Tatar population. “Our people who now live in Crimea probably expected more from them,” again commented Karikov, adding, “[i]t was very difficult when our people returned to Crimea, they expected some material assistance from them [in Turkey]. I don't want to say that there wasn't any, because there was, but in the eyes of

a lot of average people, it was not properly distributed” (Interview 044, Dzhemil Karikov).

Moreover, he suggested that many Crimean Tatars expected more of their diasporic kin from Turkey to show solidarity and join them in repatriating to Crimea in the early 1990s, which only a scant few did. Gayana Yuksel’s husband is one of the rare examples of a Turkish Crimean Tatar who did head the call of the homeland and relocate there after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and she explained just how exceptional this was:

My husband is also a Crimean Tatar, but he is a Crimean Tatar from Turkey. If we had returned to Crimea from Central Asia, then my husband—as we like to joke—returned to Crimea from Turkey. He’s from the diaspora, to be sure. There are not many Crimean Tatars like this, because, as you know, there are a lot of Crimean Tatars in Turkey, but the overwhelming majority of them do not want to return to Crimea. So, he is a pretty unique person in this sense, because lots of people want to go to Turkey instead. People try to leave less prosperous countries to go to more prosperous countries, but my husband wanted to live in the homeland on principle. (...) We married at the end of the 90s, and with all of our opportunities we never even thought about the option of moving to Turkey, we always wanted to live in Crimea. (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel)

If more people from the Turkish diaspora had followed this example, the argument goes, than the Crimean Tatars may have been in a much stronger position during their fledgling years struggling to reconstruct their society within the Crimean homeland.

### **Situating Crimean Tatar IDPs within the Global Diaspora**

But while Crimean Tatar IDPs may view themselves as more authentic or committed to their national identity compared to their diasporic brethren abroad, a certain discourse has developed that places them alongside these communities under the rubric of a single, global Crimean Tatar diaspora living outside of the homeland. As I addressed in Chapter Eight, Crimean IDPs are divided in whether they view themselves are part of a diaspora, and in the case of Crimean Tatars just over half (51.2%) believe that they are. According to its official website,

the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People appears to concur in this assessment; one of the website's main sections is simply labeled "Diaspora," wherein a map is displayed with pinned flags for each country or territory that is home to a branch of the global Crimean Tatar diaspora, along with contact information for representative organizations and individuals in each country (Figure 43). Pinned alongside several other countries<sup>53</sup> is Ukraine, with contact information listed for the organization known as the *Zemliachestvo* of Crimean Tatars in Kyiv, whose creation predates the annexation of Crimea (Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People 2014).



**Figure 43:** Figure 12: Screenshot from the official website of the Mejlis, depicting locations of the global Crimean Tatar diaspora, including Ukraine. (Source: <http://qtm.org/en/diaspora>)

<sup>53</sup> There are discrepancies between those countries and territories pinned on the map and those with contact information listed; the map appears to include the pinned flags of Sweden, Latvia, and Tatarstan without including their contact information, while contact information is given for Lithuania without its flag appearing on the map. Along with Ukraine, both flag pins and contact information are shown for Turkey, Germany, France, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Poland, Uzbekistan, Russia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Romania, and Canada (Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People 2014).

The fact that the contact information for the diaspora in Ukraine has not been changed to reflect the large influx of Crimean Tatars to the mainland since 2014 perhaps suggests that IDPs are viewed as a separate entity, but several interviewees nevertheless drew direct parallels between their experiences and those of Crimean Tatars located in diaspora communities abroad. One of the strongest parallels lies in the fact that like all other major branches of the diaspora, Crimean Tatar IDPs were driven out of Crimea because of Russian policies and actions.<sup>54</sup> One young couple pointed to this historical continuity, drawing a direct line between the emergence of the Crimean Tatar diasporas in Turkey and Romania and those now living in mainland Ukraine:

M: Russia always wanted to destroy us, this is already the second annexation of Crimea. It's more accurate to say that this is the second annexation of the Crimean Tatars. Everything has to start with this point, that in our roots we have a hatred for Tsarist Russia, and now, in this moment, for [modern] Russia.

W: It's often stated that we hate them, but it's more like a strong dislike, because everything is laid out in our historical memory, and we remember everything. And by the way, that first annexation led to emigration from Crimea to Turkey and Romania, where the diaspora is now. It's the same thing now with Ukraine. (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar man and woman, 20s)

Another key parallel between Crimean Tatars abroad and in mainland Ukraine is the threat of assimilation. Lenur Isliamov, the prominent Crimean Tatar businessman and owner of ATR, described for me how Crimean Tatars risk assimilating within different diasporic settings, placing those in mainland Ukraine alongside those in Turkey and, surprisingly, those in Crimea itself, where he argues Russia now poses an assimilatory threat:

Now some assimilation has started happening, different types of assimilation—there's the Ukrainian kind of assimilation, and now there is also the Russian kind of assimilation. There is also the Turkish kind of assimilation, people go there and start to forget their own language. Yes, they remember *chebureks*, they remember *yantyks*, they remember the music a little bit, and they've got their flags—these

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<sup>54</sup> Of course, depending on the period, the responsible party has been either the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation, but these differences are largely immaterial to the broader narrative of Russian aggression against the Crimean Tatars.

are the attributes of any diasporic community. And they begin to adjust to life in the place where they are now located, they assimilate. They marry Turks, or they marry Ukrainians, and they marry Russians [in Crimea] now too. This is also a form of assimilation, a person survives in any given environment, it's what he must do. (Interview 084, Lenur Isliamov)

Similarly, Gayana Yuksel referred to Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine as a specific subsection of the global Crimean Tatar population alongside other diasporic communities; “yes, unfortunately,” she responded when I asked her whether a Crimean Tatar diaspora now existed in mainland Ukraine, adding, “[a]s you know, we have Lithuanian Crimean Tatars, Polish Crimean Tatars, and now they talk about the fact that there are Ukrainian Crimean Tatars.” However, she then qualified her assessment by pointing to an important distinction between Crimean Tatar IDPs and those in the global diaspora; “[b]ut the difference is in the fact that these people [i.e., IDPs] are leaving now. These people who are now in [mainland Ukraine], they have a temporary attitude, they left temporarily, they all hope for the situation to end so we will all return to Crimea and everything will be as it was” (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel).

### **The Preeminence of IDPs within a Crimean Tatar Diasporic Framework**

Indeed, the view that Crimean Tatar IDPs have become diasporic in ways similar to their co-ethnic communities abroad is also countered by the argument that their status is unique within the global Crimean Tatar population because of the specific nature of their relationship to the Ukrainian state, and because of the persistent belief that their displacement from Crimea is only temporary, thus making their connection to Crimea far more intimate. “We clearly distinguish between the diaspora in Ukraine and the diaspora in Turkey and other countries,” asserted Mustafa Dzhemilev, “because they were deported many years ago. They are detached from Crimea, they were not born in Crimea, so there is a significant difference, of course” (Interview

020, Mustafa Dzhemilev). It is worth highlighting here that while Dzhemilev draws this distinction, he nevertheless refers to both contingencies as “diasporas.”

But Dzhemliev’s very presence in mainland Ukraine and *persona non-grata* status in occupied Crimea is indicative of another important contrast between the Crimean Tatar diaspora within Ukraine and elsewhere; mainland Ukraine is now home not only to a significant population of Crimean Tatars, but also to much of its political leadership. Several members of the Crimean Tatar political elite—including most prominently Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov—have been forbidden from entering Crimea, and others have relocated voluntarily to the mainland while Crimea’s occupying authorities worked to weaken and curtail the activities of the *Mejlis* before officially declaring it an extremist organization and banning its operations in April 2016. Returning to a quote used in Chapter Six, *Mejlis* Chairman Refat Chubarov explained to me in February 2016 that

the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People is no longer in its complete form in Crimea. Eight members of the *Mejlis*, including myself as the Chairman, cannot live in Crimea now, so we live in the mainland, and our remaining 25 colleagues are located in Crimea, but four of those have joined the side of the occupier. Thus, the majority is left, with 21 people there and eight people here, and we try to coordinate our activities as best we can. (Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

At least two more members of the *Mejlis*, Ilmi Umerov and Akhtem Chiygoz, have since relocated to the Ukrainian mainland following their surprise release from Crimean jail in October 2017. Moreover, as of July 2018, the official website of the *Mejlis* lists a total of six suspended members, ostensibly for their legitimization of or collaboration with Russian authorities in Crimea, leaving a total of 27 active members from the original 33. Thus, at least ten *Mejlis* members—plus Mustafa Dzhemilev, who stepped down as its Chairman in 2013—now number among the internally displaced, while at most 17 members remain in occupied Crimea where they are forbidden from carrying out any activities under the auspices of the *Mejlis*.

Because much of the Crimean Tatar political elite is now concentrated in the Ukrainian mainland, with Kyiv now the center of their political activities, some have argued that the Crimean Tatar IDP community claims a unique status within the global Crimean Tatar population—something akin to an émigré community that contains a self-styled government-in-exile. In other words, Crimean Tatar IDPs are not just another group of emigrants like the diasporic communities in Turkey or elsewhere, they are the protectors and defenders of Crimean Tatar-ness itself, the keepers of the national flame while Crimea’s occupiers work to snuff it out. This is how Deputy Minister of Information Policy Emine Dzhappar presented it to me as she argued that Crimean Tatar IDPs should not be included as an integral part of the Crimean Tatar population living abroad:

No, I think that Crimean Tatar IDPs here play a coordinative role in these issues, because they are still the “prophets,” let’s say, of everything Crimean Tatar. We have our political leaders here, we have the *Mejlis* here, we have members of the *Qurultai* here, because they cannot work fully in Crimea, they cannot fulfill their obligations, they cannot fully be involved in the Crimean Tatar national movement, because everything is paralyzed by this repressive machine of modern Russia, let’s say. So, it’s kind of like a beheading—we have the head here, and the body is there [in Crimea]. (Interview 031, Emine Dzhappar)

Echoing this same sentiment, *Mejlis* member and director of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, Eskender Bariev, affirmed that “I really wouldn’t call us a diaspora here in Ukraine, because we consider Ukraine our state,” and moreover,

the leaders of the Crimean Tatar people are located here, there are members of the *Mejlis* here, and the primary political role and political activities connected with the Crimean Tatar people now emanate from the mainland part of Ukraine. So, when we discuss our strategy for public diplomacy, Ukraine and the rest of the world should help ensure that the center of transmission for the Crimean Tatars’ problems and the Crimean Tatar political elite is actually preserved and concentrated in mainland Ukraine. This is very important, because in Crimea they are working to make it the pro-Russian center of Crimean Tatars. They are doing this systematically. For now, they are losing, but this doesn’t mean that they won’t win after some time. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)



Put differently, the Crimean Tatar IDP community—and, first and foremost, its political elites—occupy a place of preeminence among all the Crimean Tatar people the world over, and to simply label them a “diaspora” just like any other, according to this view, is inaccurate.

Crucially, the preeminent status of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine as a whole had already been enshrined in some ways before the annexation and the beginning of the IDP crisis, as only Ukrainian citizens are allowed to participate in the *Qurultai* and serve as members of the *Mejlis* at any level.<sup>55</sup> Despite the fact that the global population of Crimean Tatars extends well beyond Crimea, with a population several times larger in Turkey alone, the political leadership made a deliberate decision to restrict participation in the *Qurultai* and representation in the *Mejlis* to those Crimean Tatars with Ukrainian citizenship. According to *Mejlis* member Gayana Yuksel, this was a political decision meant to preempt accusations of Crimean Tatar separatism:

There was a debate [before the most recent *Qurultai*] in 2013 about whether Crimean Tatars from the diaspora can participate in the *Qurultai*, and it was decided that only Ukrainian citizens can. (...) Questions arose about the voting process, about the fact that we have good representatives in the diaspora, so we should invite them to participate. For example, my husband could join the *Mejlis*, but it was the opinion of the majority, including Mustafa-*aga*,<sup>56</sup> that we would be accused of separatism again because of this. As you know, we Crimean Tatars have always been viewed as separatists, who want to separate, create an autonomy, and give this autonomy over to Turkey. If we gave the diaspora the opportunity to participate in these elections, this step would be something that could be used to accuse us of separatism. Mustafa-*aga* said, “whoever wants to participate, please, get Ukrainian citizenship and come vote.” (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel)

Ukrainian citizenship thus denotes a certain type of privilege within the contemporary Crimean Tatar community worldwide, bestowing the right to participate and serve within the echelons of

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<sup>55</sup> Along with the central *Mejlis* that includes the core 33 members, the larger structure also includes local *Mejlises* in towns and villages throughout Crimea and parts of mainland Ukraine, incorporating thousands of individuals at its various scales of operation.

<sup>56</sup> Crimean Tatars add the suffix “-*aga*” to the end of male first names to denote the person’s status as an elder or respected community member, with Yuksel using the title here to refer to Mustafa Dzhemilev.

the national political leadership, while the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars allows members of the diaspora to become politically engaged at the international scale. Therefore, it is not merely the current political elite now centered in Kyiv who serve as the keepers of the Crimean Tatar national flame; all Crimean Tatars with Ukrainian citizenship have the potential to someday ascend to the ranks of their political leadership while those outside of Ukraine do not. Given the strict restrictions on their political activities within occupied Crimea, this responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of the Crimean Tatar IDP community, creating a compelling case for why they are not merely a part of their national diaspora in a normative sense.

But whether these qualitative distinctions are significant enough to write Crimean Tatar IDPs out of the larger diasporic narrative completely is certainly a matter of debate. Setting aside the core transnationalist argument against the diasporic condition of Crimean IDPs, Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine still reside outside the territory of their national homeland, and still experience a schismatic sense of territorial belonging characteristic of other diasporas even if the conditions of their displacement or relationship to host societies are more complex. These conditions create something of a grey area for Crimean Tatar IDPs with regard to their place in the global distributive order of Crimean Tatars vis-a-vis the homeland, where relative degrees of removal from Crimea and senses of whether one is truly in-place territorially can grow more ambiguous the more one attempts to parse them. This ambiguity can be traced in the following exchange with Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk, during which she grew increasingly uncertain of how to discursively exclude Crimean Tatar IDPs from the larger diasporic population as our conversation progressed:

SM-B: There is a strong diaspora in the States, there is a strong diaspora in Canada, a strong diaspora in Romania, and naturally there is a strong diaspora in

Turkey. All of these people participate [in the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars], they help and, in some ways, advance the topic of Crimean Tatars. It's inappropriate to talk about a diaspora in Ukraine, because we are more like displaced peoples. There is a certain understanding of a *zemliachestvo* of Crimean Tatars that has functioned in Kyiv even before the annexation happened. It is a more important organization now, but here it is important to consider that due to the conditions in the occupied peninsula, our exiled self-governing body—the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People—now functions in Kyiv because our leaders Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov are forbidden from entering the territory of the peninsula.

AC: Do you think that there is an important difference between those Crimean Tatars who live here in mainland Ukraine and those who live in Turkey or Romania? Are they [in mainland Ukraine] part of this diaspora?

SM-B: It's not possible to say that. There is an organization—the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars. Every diaspora has its delegates and they make important, fateful decision about our country. To say that there is a Ukrainian diaspora along with this... the only thing I can say is that there are more representative from Ukraine within this organization, because there are more [Crimean Tatars] here over all, their representation of Crimean Tatars ... I don't know, it's difficult to say. (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk)

Given these ambiguities, it is no wonder the question of diaspora can be so thorny—and its answer so elusive—for internally displaced Crimean Tatars, who, unlike their Slavic counterparts, have a number of diasporic reference points with which to grapple as they situate themselves within their national community's distributive territorial hierarchy.

## Conclusions

To summarize, determining whether the Crimean IDPs community demonstrate “a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial,” in line with Cohen's eighth “common feature” of diaspora (2008, 17), requires that its ethnic subgroups be examined separately. There is no Crimean diaspora to speak of outside of Ukraine that would unite the various peoples of the region around a common Crimean-ness; while their total population is indeed rather small, the power of ethnic and/or national affinities and the presence of entrenched Ukrainian, Russian, and

Crimean Tatar diaspora communities is almost certain to supersede and preempt the materialization of any nascent “Crimean diaspora” abroad. Although there is no available research into this question, Crimean-ness is likely to lose its salience as a means of identifying and relating for Slavic Crimeans outside of Ukraine, as ethnic or national belonging are more powerful grounds for solidarity and community than regional identity beyond the contextual boundaries of Ukrainian. However, as my example at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, there is room for the ancillary expression of Crimean-ness within Ukrainian or Russian diasporic communities. The salience or dynamism of a diasporic consciousness among Slavic Crimean IDPs is therefore problematized by the fact that it may not be replicable outside the specific territorial context of the Ukrainian state.

The story is different for Crimean Tatars, for whom Crimean territorial belonging and ethno-national identity are inextricable, making Crimea itself the enduring point of origin and orientation wherever diasporic Crimean Tatars may be found. Crimean Tatar IDPs maintain an acute awareness of their global diaspora, and virtually all can list its primary branches if not some of its more prominent members. Interaction and engagement between Ukraine-based Crimean Tatars and those in the diaspora abroad have increased since the annexation of Crimea, and this can be seen most clearly in the revival and revitalization of the Worldwide Congress of Crimean Tatars. Certain branches of the diaspora figure more prominently than others within global networks of Crimean Tatar actions and affinities, with Turkey playing a far more important role than Uzbekistan, for example, despite the perception that ethnic heritage and identities are mostly vestigial for most Turkish Crimean Tartars. Nevertheless, cooperation and solidarity across these networks aimed at guaranteeing the rights of Crimean Tatars within their Crimean homeland certainly meet the criteria of “a sense of empathy and co-responsibility”

shared across the diaspora, especially now as Crimean Tatars face grave new threats in occupied Crimea.

However, while Crimean Tatar IDPs are firmly embedded within their global diasporic network and share important experiential characteristics with its other branches, some contend that they are distinct from their ethnic cohorts outside of Ukraine and should not be lumped in with the others. The distinctions rest, for one, in the fact that most Crimean Tatar IDPs view themselves as only temporarily displaced, remaining more intimately connected to Crimea and adamant about their eventual return than those in the global diaspora. Furthermore, the presence in mainland Ukraine of the most important members of their political elite, coupled with the privilege given only to Crimean Tatars with Ukrainian citizenship to participate in the *Qurultai* or serve in the *Mejlis*, means that Crimean Tatar IDPs play a far more consequential role in the political life of their global ethnic community than its other diasporans. In light of these important differences, there is some sense that Crimean Tatar IDPs may occupy some nebulous position between the diaspora and those remaining in the homeland, but defining it or describing it remains an elusive task. Insofar as they remain outside of their homeland and actively engaged with their global diaspora in ways that reflect mutual “empathy and co-responsibility,” I maintain that internally displaced Crimean Tatars do indeed exhibit a certain diasporic condition, though perhaps an asterisk is required to denote the unique position they hold.

## **Chapter Sixteen: The Case of Jamala**

The ninth and final characteristic that Cohen identifies as a “common feature” of diaspora is “the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism” (2008, 17). There is no need to rehash here the multitudinous ways in which Crimean IDPs have flourished creatively, nor the recent rise in pluralistic frameworks of Ukrainian identity, as I have addressed both of these issues in detail in previous chapters. However, as I draw my analysis to a close, returning to questions of creativity and plurality provides a fitting and opportune moment to discuss one of the most significant developments to occur in the course of my fieldwork, and indeed in the saga of internal displacement from Crimea itself: Crimean Tatar singer Jamala’s victory for Ukraine in the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest. While this was a hugely significant and symbolic event for all Crimean IDPs as much as it was for Ukraine as a whole, the story of Jamala and her winning song, “1944,” is one of immeasurable importance to Crimean Tatars, and is further indicative of their diasporic condition in mainland Ukraine specifically.

Born to a Crimean Tatar father and Armenian mother in Osh, Kyrgyz SSR, in 1983, Susana Dzhamaladinova moved with her family to mainland Ukraine as a young child before they finally managed to resettle in her father’s native Crimean village of Malorechenskoye in 1989 (Stewart 2016). Trained from a young age as a singer of jazz and classical music styles, Dzhamaladinova relocated to Kyiv and adopted the stage name Jamala—a Latinized spelling of the first half of her last name—sometime in the 2000s, and first gained international fame in 2009 when she tied for first place in the “New Wave” young musical performers’ competition held annually in the Latvian city of Jūrmala. Jamala’s victory helped launch her career in

Ukraine as both a singer and an actress; she first appeared in television programs and films in 2010 and releasing her first studio album in 2011, which saw her embracing a more pop-oriented sound. Also in 2011, Jamala first competed for the chance to represent Ukraine in the prestigious Eurovision Song Contest, a musical competition held annually since 1956 among the member states of the European Broadcasting Union. Jamala's original composition, "Smile," took third place in the Ukrainian national competition for a spot at the Grand Championship.<sup>57</sup>

Jamala had become a fixture in Ukrainian and European pop music circles by 2014, releasing many popular songs with lyrics both in Ukrainian and English, but the events of the Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea had a profound effect on her and her music. In autumn 2014 she collaborated with other popular Ukrainian artists on the track "*Lyven*" ["Downpour"], which was released on the one-year anniversary of the beginning of the Euromaidan to commemorate the lives lost during the demonstrations and the profound changes the country had undergone in the preceding year. On May 18, 2015—the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars—she also released the single, "*Shliakh dodomu*" ["The Way Home"], her first song to overtly address her Crimean Tatar identity, and one of her first to incorporate the Crimean Tatar language. Sung predominantly in Ukrainian, the song describes a difficult but vaguely mysterious journey home, occasionally punctuated by subtle phrases in Crimean Tatar, including "*Artıñni Unutma*," a translation of the song's title and main refrain. As Jamala explained in a Facebook post announcing its release, the song is a meditation on the meaning of home, homeland, and the struggle of her people to reclaim it—although there are no

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<sup>57</sup> Allegations of vote tampering in the 2011 Ukrainian national Eurovision final almost resulted in another round of voting for the top three finalists, but both Jamala and the second-place winner dropped out of the competition before it could be held.

direct references to Crimea or Crimean Tatars anywhere in the lyrics—and takes as its inspiration conversations with her father on these weighty issues:

Do you often speak with your parents about your roots? About where you are from? About your path and your purpose on this earth? We talked about this a lot in my family, about what a homeland is. Where is your home? Is home the place where you were born, or is it where your ancestors are buried? My dad and my grandma would tell me about the Crimean Tatars' difficult return to the homeland, and the song "*Shliakh dodomu*," ("*Artıñni Unutma*") is a continuation of this conversation with my father (in the song he appears as "*baba*," the word for father in Crimean Tatar). When I left my parent's home to go study, he always told me as I was departing, "*Artıñni Unutma*," which is what we say to those who are leaving home, so that they remember that they have a home, and to not stay away too long. And he would add, "*Özüñe baq*"—protect yourself and stay true to yourself. Our parents often say these words as they see us off, because they know that along our paths we will encounter disappointments, resentment, and many obstacles. This song is a confession. I dedicate it to all those who are searching for their way home! Home is the place where you are loved and where they wait for you, and this place isn't always designated by a stamp in a passport. (Jamala 2015)

Against the backdrop of the previous year's annexation of Crimea that had once again alienated many Crimean Tatars from their homeland—including Jamala herself, who has been unable to return since the occupation began—the song is pregnant with multiple layers of meaning and emotion, especially for Crimean Tatar IDPs.

### **Jamala's Journey to Eurovision with the Song "1944"**

But "*Shliakh dodomu*" was just the precursor to an even bolder and more defiant statement-in-song about the tragedy of the Crimean Tatar people, one that would bring international attention to Jamala, the plight of her people, and the ethnic politics of Ukraine itself. Jamala quietly premiered the song "1944" with a link on her Facebook page on February 5, 2016, the day before she would officially debut it in the first semifinal of Ukraine's national competition to choose its representative for that year's Eurovision Song Contest, to be held in



Stockholm in May. As with “*Shliakh dodomu*,” Jamala included a statement with the online premier of “1944”:

Last year I composed the song “1944,” and it is a meaningful composition for me. I was inspired to write it by the story of my great-grandmother, Nazyl-khan, about the tragedy that happened to my family and to all the Crimean Tatar people in 1944. I am speaking about the forced deportation. My great-grandmother lost one of her daughters at that time. The theme of this song is actually very close for many people in many different countries of the world. Many peoples have survived their own terrible tragedies—repressions, deportations, and genocides. And, unfortunately, people still haven’t learned about peaceful coexistence and tolerance. This is a very personal song for me, and I really hope that the message found within it will be heard by as many people as possible within our country, and beyond its borders. (Jamala 2016)

Most of the song’s lyrics are in English, as the song was intended for a wider audience and as a contender for Eurovision, where many artists opt to perform English-language songs in an attempt to increase their appeal to an international audience. However, in a very significant gesture, Jamala sings the chorus of “1944” in Crimean Tatar, likely ensuring that the endangered language would reach its largest audience in its centuries-long history. Moreover, the Crimean Tatar-language lyrics are deeply significant in and of themselves; the chorus of “1944” is borrowed directly from “*Ey güzel Qırım*” [“Oh Beautiful Crimea”], a Crimean Tatar folk song of uncertain origins that appeared during the time of their exile in Central Asia. Cherished by virtually all Crimean Tatars who either experienced or are descended from those who experienced the deportation, “*Ey güzel Qırım*” expresses the sadness and longing for the homeland that the Crimean Tatar people endured during their exile, and performances of the song are now ubiquitous at Crimean Tatar gathering and events. The combination of these lyrics with the rather pointed English-language verses creates a striking temporal juxtaposition between 1944 and 2014 that may be subtle or obscure to the uninformed listener, but which reads loud and clear for all Crimean Tatars:

When strangers are coming, they come to your house  
They kill you all and say, “we're not guilty, not guilty”  
Where is your mind? Humanity cries  
You think you are gods, but everyone dies  
Don't swallow my soul, our souls

*Yaşlığıma toyalmadım, men bu yerde yaşalmadım*  
[I could not enjoy my youth, I could not live in this place]  
*Yaşlığım toyalmadım, men bu yerde yaşalmadım*  
[I could not enjoy my youth, I could not live in this place]

We could build a future where people are free  
To live and love the happiest time (hard times)  
Where is your heart? Humanity rise  
You think you are gods, but everyone dies  
Don't swallow my soul, our souls

*Yaşlığım toyalmadım, men bu yerde yaşalmadım*  
[I could not enjoy my youth, I could not live in this place]  
*Yaşlığım toyalmadım, men bu yerde yaşalmadım*  
[I could not enjoy my youth, I could not live in this place]

Nowhere in the song is there direct mention of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars, the deportation, or the annexation, and yet all these things are laid bare within its subtext and the context in which the song was released. The homage to “*Ey güzel Qırım*” directly recalls the Crimean Tatars’ deportation—as does the song’s title, an unmistakable reference to the fateful year in which it took place—and the aching longing for a lost homeland that now resonates even more deeply with those Crimean Tatars who have been driven from Crimea once again. In the context of 1944, the unidentified second persons to whom Jamala sings (“where is your mind?”, “you think you are gods, but everyone dies”) immediately evoke Stalin and the Soviet officials who carried out the deportation, but in 2016 it was clear that these lines are also meant to address Putin and the Russian agents who orchestrated the annexation and occupation of Crimea, including the so-called “Little Green Men.” Furthermore, the “strangers” referenced in the song’s first line call to mind both the soldiers who rounded up all Crimean Tatars in the middle of the

night on May 18, 1944, and the Russian security agents who now regularly carry out arrests and home searches of the Crimean Tatar community. In both cases, these actions were/are justified through accusations of the Crimean Tatars' collective wrongdoing—treason and collaborationism in 1944, separatism and extremism after 2014—meant to relieve authorities of any culpability (“we're not guilty, not guilty”). Indeed, “1944” is rather brilliant in its subtle yet audacious layering of two separate but interrelated events, creating an explosive commentary on Russia’s ongoing oppression of the Crimean Tatars hidden in plain sight behind an ostensibly personal story about Jamala’s grandmother. This last point is crucial, as it helped shield Jamala and “1944” from accusations that the song violates Eurovision policies against politicized song lyrics and performances, although this did not stop Russian authorities from issuing complaints to this effect. As Mustafa Dzhemilev put it, “this song, ‘1944,’ is so conceptual, it comes from the soul. In the song there are no standard expressions about the arrival of aggressors, about their occupation, about the genocide. It speaks about grief in a purely humanistic way” (Interview 045, Mustafa Dzhemilev).

Jamala’s journey to and conquering of Eurovision was one of the most significant and invigorating developments for the community of Crimean Tatar IDPs since the occupation of Crimea had begun, and I was extremely fortunate to be in the field during this time and to watch it unfold alongside my Crimean Tatar research participants. In fact, by pure coincidence, I was in the company of Mustafa Dzhemilev in his Kyiv apartment to observe the beginning of this journey, as together we watched Jamala’s first performance of “1944” during the live broadcast of the first semifinal round of Ukraine’s national Eurovision competition. I was there with a small camera crew to film an interview between myself and Dzhemilev as part of a short film project about the annexation of Crimea sponsored by the Ukrainian Ministry of Information

Policy, in which I had agreed play the role of a fictitious foreign researcher. Serendipitously, we had scheduled the shoot for the same evening of the first Eurovision semifinal, and we arrived to find Dzhemilev in giddy anticipation of Jamala's performance.

As the crew set up, Dzhemilev paced nervously around the room, chain smoking—for which he is notorious—and eyeing the television as the other contenders performed their songs. Waiting for his opportunity to cast his vote for Jamala via text message, but worried that he would somehow flub the procedure, he anxiously called somebody to confirm that the strange 3-digit telephone number shown on the screen was indeed the number to which he would need to send his text. "This is very important for Crimean Tatars," he told me as Jamala's performance drew closer,

and god willing, she will do well at Eurovision, I hope that she will take first place. Of course, I have my own individual perspective on her, and not everybody will perceive her the way I do, and this is understandable. But regardless, the emotions are clear to the outside observer. First of all, even if she does not win, the world will know what she is singing about, which people she represents, where she comes from, and what is now happening in this land. She is doing a great service for Ukraine, she is glorifying Ukraine, and she will be given a lot of moral support. (Interview 045, Mustafa Dzhemilev)

We were ready to film before Jamala's turn to perform had come, but Dzhemilev insisted that we wait until she had finished. The room fell silent as she finally took the stage, and the rest of us watched—and filmed—Dzhemilev's reaction to Jamala's performance as much as we watched the television itself. Dzhemilev stood in silence as the story of his people's recurring struggle was broadcast live to millions of Ukrainians, and we watched as this normally stoic and determined man was overcome with emotions. I felt almost voyeuristic as I sat and watched him in this very vulnerable and emotional state, but I immediately understood how privileged I was to

share this rare and remarkable moment with such a towering and revered figure (Figure 44).<sup>58</sup> The experience made clear just how significant this song and Jamala’s Eurovision aspirations were to the cause of the Crimean Tatar people.

We did not know it at the time, but we were watching Jamala’s first step toward a Eurovision victory. She easily advanced to the final round of the national competition, earning first place from the judges and 49.22% of the televotes split between nine contenders. She narrowly won the final round, taking second place from the judges but garnering 37.77% of the televotes compared to 21.11% for the runner-up, rock group The Hardkiss, thus earning her the right to represent all of Ukraine at the grand Eurovision competition. Performing in the second semi-final round in Stockholm, Jamala came in second to Australian singer Dami Im—who marked her country’s Eurovision debut—with 287 combined points,<sup>59</sup> easily earning her a place in the final competition.



**Figure 44:** Still image of Mustafa Dzhemilev watching Jamala perform “1944,” taken from the short film, “Crimea. The Resistance.” (Source: [https://youtu.be/qo\\_lc3lBOXY](https://youtu.be/qo_lc3lBOXY))

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<sup>58</sup> Fortunately, this unscripted moment was eventually included in the short film, which can be viewed at the following link: [https://youtu.be/qo\\_lc3lBOXY](https://youtu.be/qo_lc3lBOXY). The moment in question begins at minute marker 18:51.

<sup>59</sup> Point totals reflect the combined scores awarded by both judges and televoters from each participating country, each of which assign ranked point totals from 1 through 8 plus 10 and 12 to their chosen performers, but they may not vote for the performer from their own country.

The final round was a nail-biter, as Jamala faced major competition from Australia and, fittingly, Russia, as Russian singer Sergei Lazarev had taken first place in the first semi-final round with his catchy but vacuous pop song, “You Are the Only One.” I watched the final competition from Lviv at a viewing party organized by *Krym SOS* volunteers, with several Crimean Tatars from the local IDP community also in attendance. Following the performances, we nervously watched the drawn-out final voting process, wherein representatives from each participating country appear in succession to announce the total points awarded to each country by their national juries, following which the Eurovision hosts announce how many total televotes each country received from least to most, shifting the overall rankings as they go. Worryingly, with 211 points, Jamala came in a distant second according to the judges’ votes, trailing Australia with 320 points but far ahead of Russia in fifth place with 130 points. As the televoting results rolled in, we watched anxiously as each country’s standing continued to rise and fall. In the final moments, it was announced that Australia had been awarded fourth place in the televote with 191 points, bringing their final score to 511. After the announcement of Poland’s surprise third-place televote victory, it became clear that either Ukraine or Russia would be taking first place, and the atmosphere at our viewing party grew tense. Our hearts skipped a beat as it was announced that Jamala had come in second in the televoting, earning an additional 323 points to bring her final score to 534, enough to edge out Australia. Russia had come out first in the televoting, but we sat on the edges of our seats waiting to see if Lazarev had earned enough to put him over the top. After much build up, the hosts announced that Russia had received 361 points from the televoters, which, combined with their 130 points from the judges, brought their final score to only 491, placing them in third place behind Australia and Ukraine. Reveling in the excitement and euphoria that shot through the room once Jamala’s victory was made apparent

was one of the most stirring moments of my time in the field, and provided a fitting conclusion to the experience of following Jamala’s Eurovision journey that had begun three months earlier in the apartment of Mustafa Dzhemilev (Figure 45).



**Figure 45:** *Jamala celebrates her victory with the song, “1944” at the Eurovision Song Contest in Stockholm, Sweden on May 14, 2016. (Photo source: <https://www.rferl.org/a/eurovision-jamala-overly-political-controversy/27739159.html>)*

Jamala returned from Stockholm to a hero’s welcome, bringing the Eurovision crown home to Ukraine for only the second time—Ukrainian pop singer Ruslana won the competition in 2004 with the song “Wild Dances”—and earning it the right to host the next year’s competition, which it did in Kyiv in May 2017. But while Ukrainians from all walks of life reveled in her victory, Jamala’s ascension to the winner’s circle was profoundly important for Crimean Tatars, and I spoke with many of them about their impressions during and after her Eurovision saga. Despite repeated efforts, I was unable to secure an interview with Jamala herself during this period, as her busy schedule was understandably prohibitive. Luckily, she agreed to an interview during my follow-up visit to Ukraine in summer 2017, meeting me at a

recently opened coffee shop in Kyiv co-owned by her newlywed husband. She offered an interesting take when I asked about her conception of homeland, claiming it to be simultaneously Crimea and Ukraine as a whole:

AC: What do you consider your homeland? Is it Crimea or Ukraine, what do you think?

J: Wait a minute, Crimea is Ukraine! Of course, I consider my homeland Crimea, Ukraine.

AC: Crimea within Ukraine?

J: Yes, of course, yes. (Interview 090, Jamala)

Accordingly, she had a strong negative reaction to the suggestion that Crimean Tatars may constitute a diaspora in mainland Ukraine, arguing that they are at home there and invoking the usual transnational criterion of diaspora:

AC: Do you think that with this relocation, that there is also a diaspora of Crimean Tatars in the mainland part of Ukraine? Is this also a diaspora here, or is it different...

J: Oh, I wouldn't want to think this. I don't want this to be a diaspora. How can it be? No way, in a sense, we are at home. No, no, I don't think so. We don't feel like a diaspora, no. We are a part of this country, of course. (Interview 090, Jamala)

Sensing that the suggestion upset her, I did not push the line of questioning any further. But despite her objections to this very notion, Jamala's Eurovision victory with "1944" and its meaning to the community of Crimean Tatar IDPs nevertheless reflect many of the themes and discourses that undergird their nascent diasporic condition.

### **The Significance of Jamala and "1944" to Crimean Tatar IDPs**

Even before Jamala had emerged victorious, the mere fact that one of their own had been selected to perform in Eurovision was enormously significant for Crimean Tatars, as it gave them a level of exposure that they had never quite achieved before. Furthermore, with "1944," Jamala was confronting millions of viewers across Europe and around the world with the story of



the Crimean Tatars' national tragedy and struggle, a far more significant and somber subject than the typical Eurovision fare that consists mostly of corny pop songs. Many of the Crimean Tatars I spoke with about Jamala were hopeful that she would bring more international attention to their plight through her Eurovision performance. "There are few Crimean Tatars," explained ATR director Ayder Muzhdabaev, "so we need to do something extraordinary in order to make ourselves known, and for the world to know about us and what is happening to us. Now, Jamala is doing something extraordinary." Muzhdabaev further noted that Eurovision is an important medium with which to broadcast this message despite the competition's reputation for kitsch and frivolity:

Let people laugh about it—and I laugh about it myself, because this is a competition for laypeople. But let the laypeople see a Crimean Tatar singer from Ukraine, let them read about why she is singing this song, and let them find out what is happening in Crimea now, and maybe some good will come of this.  
(Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

"If she makes it to Eurovision in Europe, the circle of people who will hear this song will grow, the global community and people all over the world will hear about our problems. This is very important," noted one focus group participant following Jamala's first national semi-final victory, to which another participant gleefully added, "It really just sounds so great: 'performing next is Jamala, from Crimea, Ukraine.' This is one step towards the deoccupation of Crimea. Maybe it's a small step, but as they say, it takes small steps to reach a big success" (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar men, 20s).

"Of course I am very proud, and of course I am very sensitive to the Crimean theme, and of course I cried when I listened to the song, because it's very personal for every Crimean Tatar," one interviewee commented shortly after Jamala won the national semi-final,

I mean, it's a really beautiful song, and she sings really beautifully, and I think it's very symbolic at the same time because she will probably represent Ukraine with

this song, but maybe if you don't know the context you would not understand what it's about. But of course, it's a message we should probably get through to the world as well, because even within academia the Crimean Tatar deportation is not recognized as a genocide, and people have their arguments, and it's the academic discourse that will change. (Interview 047, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Several interviewees repeated the sentiment that Jamala's words have deeply personal meaning, speaking to each of their families' histories as much as it does to Jamala's own; "for Crimean Tatars, Jamala's song, '1944,' is not a political song, for Crimean Tatars this is the story of every family, absolutely. I have the same story," noted *Krym SOS* co-founder Alim Aliyev, who also underscored that "for Crimean Tatars, there is honestly a lot of hope for starting to speak to Europe in their own language about who the Crimean Tatars are. Listen, there are 300,000 of us" (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev)!

That "1944" incorporates their indigenous language—with lines taken from a cherished folk song, no less—lends its performance at Eurovision even greater significance to the Crimean Tatars both in Crimea and in mainland Ukraine. "The fact that the chorus is in the Crimean Tatar language is just wonderful," one focus group participant noted in the days following Jamala's first performance of "1944" at the national semifinal, adding that "this is really significant for the Crimean Tatars living there [in Crimea] now, this gives them support, the fact that a member of our nation will perform at such a level and everybody will hear her" (Focus Group 002, Crimean Tatar man, 20s). On the eve of the Eurovision grand championship in Stockholm, one interviewee explained to me the personal connection that she had with the song "*Ey Güzel Qırım*," and what it will mean for the lyrics from this song to be performed before all of Europe and beyond:

The chorus of the song "1944," by the way, is from a Crimean Tatar folk song that was once forbidden when they lived in Uzbekistan—that's what my parents told me. Any kind of poetry or compositions with the word "Crimea" or any mention of this was forbidden. At events not connected to the government, for example at weddings, or at night when there was nobody around, people would sing and perform those songs together with longing and love for Crimea. This was

a kind of nostalgia for Crimea. I even remember the song I learned from my grandmother as a child, the song “*Ey Güzel Qırım*,” in the Crimean Tatar language, we used to sing it together when I was little. That Jamala borrowed lines from that song in her song for Eurovision ... it is just wonderful that she will represent our people and our culture. People will find out about us, these clips will have so many views on the internet, it will be so popular. It’s so great! (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar woman, 20s)

Jamala’s victory in Stockholm brought even greater jubilation to the Crimean Tatar community, but perhaps even more importantly, it generated a great sense of hope that they had reached a new turning point in their quest to build a strong global coalition in defense of their rights as an indigenous people of Europe in the face of Russian aggression. The symbolism in Jamala’s triumph over her Russian counterpart in the final moments of the Eurovision finale was not lost on the Crimean Tatars, either. “It seems to me that every Crimean Tatar family perceived this as a personal victory,” one interviewee gushed shortly after the Eurovision finale,

because we are just deliriously happy that she won. The morning after Jamala won, every Crimean Tatar had the thought that this is the first step towards victory. Even if it is just a musical contest, it is nevertheless symbolic that Ukraine beat Russia. Jamala broke through this frontline, and now everything will be different. (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Just days after Jamala’s victory, one interviewee explained that her faith in a better future for the Crimean Tatars had been restored, as now more people than ever before were aware of and sympathetic to their plight. “Jamala really turned everything on its head with what she presented,” the interviewee explained,

Not everybody knew about the Crimean Tatar language, but Jamala got through to everybody in Europe. She told the story of her family, how all of this happened. This is really a dark page from the history of our people, many people died in that period. (...) At that moment [when Jamala won], I just didn’t know what to say. I was just so happy that something really happened in the world—and it was no small event, it was really grandiose—that gave us the hope that we will be reborn, that we will have everything we need, but that we just need to wait. (Interview 078, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s)

Although she represented all of Ukraine at Eurovision, Jamala herself is well aware of just how important her Eurovision victory was to the Crimean Tatar community. She reflected on the significance of her achievement during our interview over a year later, focusing on the new exposure she had given to the Crimean Tatar language:

I think that it was a very important and particularly emotional moment. It was like a breath of freedom, of happiness, I don't know... My mother told me that they set off fireworks that night in Crimea, and the next morning everybody came to her from all over Crimea, grandmas brought baked goods and candy, and people generally just felt it on the level of... just, "wow, this topic has now been opened!" For the first time in our lives and probably for the last time, the Crimean Tatar language was heard at Eurovision. Do you remember this moment? Yes, a moment like this will probably never be repeated, right? A Crimean Tatar song won. There are some English verses in this song, but what really made the song popular, so to say, was the chorus, and the chorus was in Crimean Tatar. This was on such a high level... (Interview 090, Jamala)

### **The Politics and Discursive Power behind "1944"**

While there is great symbolic importance in broadcasting the story, culture, and language of the Crimean Tatars to a wide audience, many also grasped just how powerful Jamala and "1944" are as political tools within the context of the annexation of Crimea and the internal displacement of Crimean Tatars. In her statements and interviews leading up to Eurovision, Jamala was always careful to avoid talk of politics and to deny any hidden political message in "1944," repeatedly insisting that it is merely the story of her grandmother in order to ensure its compliance with Eurovision regulations against politicized content. But her audience, especially within the Crimean Tatar community, could easily read between the lines, and many were energized by the newfound political leverage that "1944" represented. "We shouldn't always treat art as just some form of entertainment, art is also a social medium that can deliver certain information and change the way people understand things," one interviewee commented

following Jamala's win in the national competition but before the grand championship had taken place, adding that

Jamala isn't just bringing an entertaining song [to Eurovision], but at the same time this song is worthy of being there because it is the right format, and Jamala is very talented at a high level. And when they say that it is forbidden to talk about Crimea, forbidden to talk about Ukraine's problems—no, unfortunately we have a war in our country and we shouldn't hide this, there is no need to conceal it so we can just talk more about peace. There is no peace, but we are not the aggressors, we are defending ourselves, and we have the right to talk about the problems in our country, and to talk about this within Europe. (Interview 054, Crimean Tatar man, 30s)

As Ayder Muzhdabaev explained to me the day after Jamala had clinched her spot representing Ukraine in Eurovision, the true power of “1944” lies in the fact that it helps articulate how the annexation and recent displacement of Crimean Tatars fits within a larger historical context, drawing clear parallels between 1944 and the current moment for anybody who is paying attention. He pointed to the incorporation of lyrics from “*Ey Güzel Qırım*” as a clear indication of “1944's” layered meaning, as this underscores that Crimean Tatars are once again being deprived of their homeland:

It is really gratifying for Crimean Tatars to hear the chorus of this song sung in the Crimean Tatar language, which has never before been heard in Europe, which is being broadcast for the first time on such a platform. This chorus is taken from a well-known song, “*Ey Güzel Qırım*,” which Crimean Tatars know and sing. This is the most important folk song about our homeland and about our longing, and this is also superimposed onto the current situation. (...) This song is about a tragedy, about the 1944 deportation, but all Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians understand that the situation has again returned to oppression and discrimination. Many Crimean Tatars were *de facto* deported from Crimea after the annexation, so this song has become relevant. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk similarly argued that “1944” is clearly about more than just the events of that eponymous year, but viewed its message as more of a warning that the situation in Crimea could once again reach the tragic scale of 1944, as the systematic oppression of Crimean Tatars there continues to worsen:

Of course, this song is about a different event, but the song is also about the fact that this really is completely possible again in the near future in Crimea, because you well know the type of repression happening there now and the kinds of conditions that the indigenous people of Crimea have been driven to. (...) And the message with which she is performing is also important—the story of the tragedy of 1944, and the warning that such a tragedy is possible in our own time if the global community keeps closing its eyes to the repression of the Crimean Tatars. This song is not about the fact that Crimea is ours, this song is really about the fact that there are problems with the destruction of the rights of indigenous peoples in Crimea, and we can never close our eyes to this. (Interview 057, Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk)

Despite Jamala’s own preemptive denials of any political undertones, “1944” must be read as a comment on recent events as much as it is on the past, and as a warning that the occupation of Crimea and oppression of Crimean Tatars may yet presage darker developments. Set against the backdrop of the internal displacement and exclusion of some Crimean Tatars from Crimea—including Jamala herself—“1944” further speaks to the larger historical trend of displacement and diasporization of Crimean Tatars; once again, there are some who may not be able to “enjoy their youth,” as the song’s chorus reminds, because they cannot live in Crimea.

### **Reverberations in the Global Crimean Tatar Diaspora**

Interviewees also pointed out that Jamala’s participation and victory in Eurovision has created new opportunities for the expression of unity and solidarity across the global Crimean Tatar diaspora. With diaspora communities located in several European countries that regularly participate in Eurovision, Crimean Tatars well beyond Crimea or Ukraine were similarly enthused that a member of their ethnic nation would perform before all of Europe while singing in their native language, even if most could no longer speak it. Even before she had secured her victory in the national competition, some Crimean Tatars were beginning to think strategically about how their diasporic kin and other sympathetic peoples could help put Jamala over the top

when it came time for all of Europe to vote. Nobody with a Ukrainian telephone number would be able to vote for her, as Eurovision prohibits voting for one's own country, but the presence of Crimean Tatars in other European countries could be a secret weapon despite their relatively small numbers, reasoned *Mejlis* member Eskender Bariev:

There is quite a large diaspora in Turkey, so this is one of the countries that might give her top points. (...) Also, maybe Romania, because there is also a large diaspora there. Lithuania too perhaps, because if you pay attention you know we also have a diaspora there, and there are good relationships with the Crimean Tatars. Also, Poland, and maybe Azerbaijan, if you look closely. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

Neither Turkey nor Romania ended up performing in Eurovision that year, and thus two of the largest Crimean Tatar diaspora communities were unable to cast their votes for Jamala.

Televoters from Poland indeed did award Jamala the maximum 12 points in the final vote, while televoters in both Lithuania and Azerbaijan—with its Turkic population viewed as a strong ally—awarded her the second highest score of 10, though it is highly dubious that the very small Crimean Tatar diaspora communities in these countries played a decisive role. Ironically, because all the telephone numbers there are now registered as Russian, Crimean Tatars in Crimea did have the fortunate opportunity to vote for Jamala, perhaps contributing to the surprise development that Russian televoters awarded 10 points to Ukraine in the Eurovision final.<sup>60</sup>

But even if Crimean Tatar diasporans in Europe did not contribute significantly to Jamala's Eurovision victory, it generated a great deal of pride within the global Crimean Tatar population according to QHA founder and *Mejlis* member Gayana Yuksel, who maintains close connections with the diaspora in Turkey. "Jamala's victory is such a huge point of pride, it's so prestigious. It is a big deal," she gleefully explained in our interview a few weeks later. "Even though Turkey did not participate, other countries did," she noted, "and this still shows how a

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<sup>60</sup> Russia's judges, on the other hand, awarded zero points to Jamala.

Crimean Tatar can be victorious. Taken together, all of this shows growth in our national consciousness, it is the intensification [*obostrenie*] of our identity” (Interview 082, Gayana Yuksel). Jamala herself corroborated that her Eurovision victory was of great importance to Crimean Tatars around the world, referring to it as an event that afforded all Crimean Tatars—and those who empathize with their cause—the rare opportunity to revel in the enormous success and fame of one of their own. “People wrote to me from all over the world—Crimean Tatars and other people who know about repression, about deportation, about persecution and all of this, all different kinds of people. There were a lot of letters,” she told me before recalling one particularly meaningful encounter in the weeks following Eurovision:

I had a completely unique experience: I flew to London, where I was going to give a performance, and in the check-in line I met a [Crimean Tatar] girl who hugged me and said, “my name is Elvira, I live in Los Angeles. We moved when I was little, but do you understand that you sang about my grandmother?” Can you imagine?! So, it was at this scale, I can call it a kind of global joy among Crimean Tatars, first of all, and among all people who understand what I am singing about. (...) So, I think that first of all, this was a moment of joy and unity. Maybe it was just for a moment, but it united all Crimean Tatars, it was a moment of victory for all of them. (Interview 090, Jamala)

It appears that Jamala may have helped reinvigorate Crimean Tatars’ diasporic solidarity with her historic victory. Furthermore, given the lyrical content of “1944” and her own positionality as a Crimean Tatar living outside the Crimean homeland, Jamala has also helped to further inscribe and situate Crimean Tatar IDPs within a larger diasporic order.

### **A Victory for Ukraine and for Discourses of Multicultural Ukrainian Nationalism**

Just as it speaks to the diasporic condition of Crimean Tatar IDPs, Jamala’s rise to Eurovision champion is also indicative of the new role that Crimean Tatars have come to play in discourses of Ukrainian national identity since 2014. Ukraine had withdrawn from the 2015



Eurovision competition due to financial constraints related to the war in the Donbas region, and while it had competed in 2014, the country's entrant had been selected during the national competition in the midst of the Euromaidan in December 2013. Thus, Jamala was the first performer selected to represent Ukraine in Eurovision since the conclusion of the Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea, and the fact that Ukrainians selected a Crimean Tatar with a song that speaks specifically to their own national tragedy is hugely symbolic of how Ukraine has come to elevate and embrace the Crimean Tatars in recent years. In this regard, for Crimean Tatars Jamala's selection by televoters from across Ukraine was a victory on par with her win in the grand competition. More generally, the selection of a non-Slavic ethnic minority with a song incorporating ethnic motifs underscores the recent ascension of multicultural discourses of Ukrainian nationalism—something for which Jamala is a strong advocate, regularly referring to herself as a “Ukrainian of Crimean Tatar origin” [*“Ukrainka krymskotatarskogo proiskhozhdeniia”*]. In our interview, Jamala pointed to American discourses of multicultural nationalism as a model that Ukraine should seek to emulate, and to which Crimean Tatars already ascribe:

It seems to me that America is so strong due to the fact that all these networks of different nationalities exist there, but everybody is united by the fact that they are Americans. This is amazing! It is home for all of them, it's not important where they are from—from Pakistan, from Iran, it doesn't matter—it's like they are all at home and they will protect their home. We don't have enough of this in Ukraine. There does exist a certain... well, it's not quite “nationalism,” but there is still something that... well, we need more time. (...) Maybe I'm speaking too abstractly about this—but I want to believe that we are moving closer to a day when everybody in Ukraine feels that it is their home regardless of their ethnicity, because the Crimean Tatars already started to do this long ago. Ukraine just wasn't always able to value this. (Interview 090, Jamala)

Accordingly, Eskender Bariev told me that Jamala's impending performance in Eurovision could help Europe and the wider world understand Ukraine in these very terms:

This is a chance for Ukraine to show Europe and the entire world—because Eurovision is watched by people all over the world—that Ukraine can be different, that there are not only [ethnic] Ukrainians here, but also Ukrainians of Crimean Tatar origin; that Ukraine has different cultures, that Ukraine has different talented performers. In this way, the whole world may see Ukraine in a somewhat different way. (Interview 048, Eskender Bariev)

But of all Ukraine’s ethnic and indigenous minorities, the Crimean Tatars have certainly achieved a new place of preeminence in the country’s national consciousness, and many Crimean Tatar IDPs saw this reflected in Jamala’s selection for Eurovision. “I think that all Crimean Tatars are proud of Jamala,” said Ayder Muzhdabaev the day after her victory in the national competition, “and I don’t think that any Ukrainians are ashamed or made uncomfortable that a Crimean Tatar is going to represent them—they specifically wanted this, they are happy. Jamala is a Ukrainian singer of Crimean Tatar origin, as she says, and Ukrainians understand this” (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev). Muzhdabaev also suggested that Ukrainians’ empathy for the Crimean Tatars and a desire to broadcast their story were instrumental in Jamala’s selection:

The fact that the topic of Crimea is so painful in Ukraine now, and that Ukrainians really empathize with the Crimean Tatars, have certainly played a role [in Jamala’s selection for Eurovision], and of course a lot of Ukrainians who voted for Jamala want all of Europe to know about the new tragedy of the Crimean Tatars via the other tragedy that this song is about. (Interview 052, Ayder Muzhdabaev)

Others commented that Jamala’s selection for Eurovision sends a crucial message to the Crimean Tatars remaining in Crimea that Ukrainians truly do support them and have not forgotten about their plight. “Naturally, the support of Ukraine is very important in these conditions,” noted Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk in reference to the situation in Crimea, “because our citizens are still located there, and we should somehow be concerned for them and give them our attention. We can do this precisely through such means and with such gestures as voting for Jamala to represent Ukraine in this international competition with a Crimean Tatar angle” (Interview 057,

Sevgil Musaieva-Borovyk). Alim Aliyev similarly mentioned the ecstatic reaction in Crimea to Jamala's selection, and argued that it had reaffirmed the Ukrainian people's solidarity with the Crimean Tatars even as the Ukrainian government does little to assist them:

Jamala's victory in the final qualifying round for Ukraine was just a surge of positive energy and emotion in Crimea, I don't remember any such surge there for the past two years. But again, this was something the Crimean Tatars did and not the government. The people supported [Jamala], and this is a big indicator that Ukrainians support [Crimean Tatars]. I remember how everybody wrote on Facebook and other social media, "thank you, brothers, for supporting Jamala," and so forth. (Interview 072, Alim Aliyev)

Interviewees also spoke of how Jamala's selection to represent Ukraine in Eurovision had reinforced and reinvigorated their sense of Ukrainian civic identity, along with their Crimean Tatar national identity embedded within it. Jamala was proof that Crimean Tatars are capable of achieving great things and representing Ukraine in a positive light, and one young Crimean Tatar couple commented that her selection helped to further elevate their own status and visibility within the Ukrainian populace:

M: This is a positive indicator that Ukraine finally sees us. We lived here for 23 years before the annexation and there was never anything like this.

W: It's more like everybody was aware of us, but nobody had a deep knowledge of the fact that there were such bright performers like Jamala. It isn't just that she can represent Ukraine as a Crimean Tatar, it's that maybe she will be an international star because she has such a great voice, she is so bold and interesting. You can say we [Crimean Tatars] are the same way, seeing Jamala and that she is a Crimean Tatar, it means that this is how our people are. Who else can demonstrate this in such a way? (Interview 075, Crimean Tatar man and woman, 20s)

Perhaps the most profound remark I heard regarding the personal impacts of Jamala's victory in the Ukrainian national competition came from one Crimean Tatar man in Lviv, who stated that the support his fellow citizens had shown Jamala—and, by extension, the Crimean Tatar people—had stirred within him a great sense of pride and gratitude, helping raise his sense of Ukrainian identity to new heights:

When Jamala was selected for Eurovision, for probably two days Ukrainians were congratulating me, they said that this is a victory for all of us. My Crimean Tatar-ness and Ukrainian-ness are built on small things like this, and that's how all Crimean Tatars feel. When I called on everybody on Facebook to vote for Jamala, all of them became Crimean Tatars in some little way, because they all felt this pain that she delivered [in her performance]. At that critical moment, after the jury had made their assessment and everything came down to [the votes of] the people, and I saw how much she won by, I became a bit more Ukrainian. The colors blue and yellow became very important for me, I had never quite felt this before. The combination of these colors now has an endearing association for me. (Interview 055, Crimean Tatar man, 40s)

Thus, even before it was known that she would win the entire competition, the mere fact that Jamala was competing as the chosen representative from Ukraine was a huge symbolic victory for Crimean Tatars, and a watershed moment in their recent journey from overlooked national minority to intrinsic and vital component of the Ukrainian civic nation in the eyes of their fellow citizens.

## **Conclusions**

Jamala's success has impacted discourses of Crimean Tatar identity in a multitude of ways, resonating throughout regional, national, European, and global/diasporic scalar registers. On the one hand, this has helped the Crimean Tatars strengthen and build further upon the multiscale and international network of support and solidarity that they have come to rely on in this face of renewed Russian aggression; as Jamala explained to me,

We are a people of small numbers, the Crimean Tatars, we could also be on the verge of extinction now, because the deportation ... I won't even hesitate to use the word genocide, because a lot of people died, 200,000 according to the official data, but we can only speculate. (...) The Crimean Tatar people could be on the verge of extinction again if it weren't for these connections, this network that we try to maintain as best as we can. (Interview 090, Jamala)

On the other hand, the way Jamala has further inscribed and amplified Crimean Tatar-ness within Ukraine and beyond its borders has helped crystalize the diasporic condition of Crimean

Tatar IDPs. “1944,” in its lyrical content and with its homage to “*Ey Güzel Qırım*,” now belongs to the cannon of Crimean Tatar musical compositions that directly address the forced or compelled displacement of their people from Crimea, and which express longing for the homeland from which the Crimean Tatars have been repeatedly separated. Written and performed within the context of the Crimean annexation and the internal displacement it triggered, the song masterfully links the events of 1944 and 2014 and implicates them both in the dispersal—i.e., diasporization—of the Crimean Tatars from their original homeland. The way Jamala and her Eurovision performance become a cause célèbre within the European Crimean Tatar diaspora further underscores the perception that those Crimean Tatars now displaced to mainland Ukraine and excluded from occupied Crimea—including Jamala herself—have, in a sense, joined this diasporic order despite their unique conditions.

But the mere fact that Jamala was selected by her fellow citizens to represent all of Ukraine in Eurovision—and with a song that is deeply Crimean Tatar in content and form, no less—also speaks to the tremendous strides that the Crimean Tatars have made in recent years toward acceptance as equal members of the Ukrainian civic nation. Jamala’s selection symbolically declared to an international audience that Crimean Tatar-ness is Ukrainian-ness, that Crimean Tatars are at home in Ukraine and contribute to the creative (re)production of Ukrainian-ness even if their regional homeland has been forcibly wrenched away. Hence, for Crimean Tatar IDPs, the schismatic tension between territorial belonging and exclusion, between senses of being both *in place* and *out of place*, is potently manifest in Jamala’s Eurovision saga; it reveals how the estranged homeland continually tugs on their collective psyche despite the profound sense of belonging and acceptance they have found in their places of relocation. Herein lies the crux of their diasporic condition, and although she may disagree, Jamala helps

demonstrate how this condition may indeed prevail regardless of the fact that homeland and host land may lie within the same nation-state.

## **Chapter Seventeen: Conclusion**

2014 was a monumental year for Ukraine. After a remarkable three months of continual demonstration in defiance of a corrupt and regressive political regime, the Euromaidan demonstrations came to a tragically violent climax that toppled the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich and declared definitively that Ukrainians view themselves and their country's trajectory as European. The hugely symbolic victory signaled an unprecedented break with Russia and Ukraine's own post-Soviet legacy, triggering a bold reactionary response from the Kremlin in an attempt to keep Ukraine subjugated under Russian geopolitical hegemony and to stymie its European aspirations. Russia's two-fronted assault on Ukraine began just days after the conclusion of the Euromaidan with the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula, culminating only three weeks later with the fraudulent annexation of this Ukrainian territory in defiance of international law and global condemnation. The assault continued in the following months as covert Russian forces working with local groups in the eastern Ukrainian region of the Donbas orchestrated separatist movements that seized control of parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and created violent "frozen conflicts" that now fester along Ukraine's eastern border. It is often said that a "New Ukraine" emerged in 2014 that is hopeful, forward-looking, and decidedly pro-European, but it is nevertheless hampered by the loss of territory, the trauma of war, and the ever-looming threat of a powerfully hostile and revanchist neighbor.

One of the major consequences of Russia's aggression and an unfortunate reality of the "New Ukraine" is the crisis of internal displacement; sparked by events in both Crimea and the Donbas, around 1.5 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes to other regions of the country. The vast majority of Ukraine's IDPs have been driven from the Donbas, where a

deadly military confrontation between Ukrainian state and paramilitary forces on one side and Russian-backed separatist groups on the other has resulted in over 10,000 deaths and directly imperiled the lives of millions more. The situation in Crimea is quite different; although the region was forcefully annexed, it was not plunged into a violent conflict like that of the Donbas, and Crimeans have therefore not faced the same imminent threats of death and destruction. But although accurate estimates of their numbers are unavailable, some tens of thousands of Crimeans have nonetheless fled from the Russian-occupied region to resettle in the Ukrainian mainland, with the cities of Kyiv and Lviv as their primary destinations.

It would be inaccurate or misleading to say that their displacement is wholly “voluntary,” but Crimean IDPs have certainly exercised greater agency in the process of relocating to mainland Ukraine compared to their Donbas counterparts. Some Crimeans—particularly prominent pro-Ukrainian activists and conservative Muslims suspected of “extremism”—were indeed compelled to retreat hastily from occupied Crimea under threat of political or religious persecution, and in these cases the urgent need for relocation may resemble a more “forced” model of displacement. But as my survey and interviews with Crimean IDPs reveal, many were compelled to relocate to mainland Ukraine by a variety of economic, emotional, psychological, ideological, and pragmatic considerations, nearly all of which are undergirded by a fundamental disapproval of Russia and its annexation, and a deliberate choice to remain citizens of Ukraine. Crimean IDPs are a diverse group, consisting of ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, Crimean Tatars, and many small minorities, but the point that they are all proud Ukrainian citizens and supporters of the Ukrainian state is implicit in their very presence in the mainland.

With its ethnic Russian majority and a deeply enshrined place in narratives of Russian national identity, Crimea’s status as a “pro-Russian” region was already accepted well before the



Kremlin wrenched the peninsula away from Ukraine through a sham referendum, and the perception of Crimea's inherent Russian-ness and that of its people has only hardened since the annexation. But Crimea's IDPs tell a different story of a proud and vibrant Ukrainian-ness that has grown and developed within the region at least since Ukrainian independence, modestly coexisting alongside Crimea's boisterous Russian identities and frequently overlooked by observers fixated on the region's latent irredentist potential. My interviews with Crimean IDPs expose the diverse ways Ukrainian identities have been inherited, discovered, nurtured, embraced, or invented within Crimea despite the region's prevailing Russian-ness, and these identities are a driving force behind processes of internal displacement from Crimea to mainland Ukraine. Arriving in a "New Ukraine" after the annexation, Crimean IDPs have become both important emblems and active producers of post-Maidan discourses of Ukrainian civic identity rooted in multiculturalism and pro-European political ideologies. As a staunchly pro-Ukrainian indigenous people, Crimean Tatar IDPs have been embraced and celebrated as exceptionally emblematic of this new Ukrainian civic identity. For most Crimean IDPs, the very act of relocating to the mainland represents a proclamation of belonging to the Ukrainian state, and a (re)assertion of the underlying Ukrainian-ness of both Crimea and Crimeans regardless of ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic background.

But while Crimean IDPs are assertive of their Ukrainian-ness, most also continue to identify strongly with Crimea itself and perceive their Crimean origins as a marker of difference within mainland Ukraine. As I have previously uncovered (Charron 2012, 2016), Crimean regionalism is a powerful component of identity for many who hail from the region, and a sense of belonging to Crimea remains deeply influential in how Crimean IDPs identify both personally and collectively. I distinguish between two separate but overlapping ways that IDPs may identify

with Crimea: Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness. Crimean-ness is a broad and inclusive form of Crimean identity rooted in a strong sense of place attachment and emotional connection to Crimea and its physical environs—often tied to the mountains and the sea—that generally characterizes the way Slavs and other non-indigenous peoples identify as Crimean. Crimean Tatar-ness, on the other hand, is an identity exclusive to the community of Crimean Tatars, representing a much deeper sense of indigenous and inter-generational belonging to Crimea that is part and parcel to Crimean Tatar ethno-national identity. Personal experiences and emotional connections may contribute to a generic Crimean-ness among individual Crimean Tatars in ways that reflect the regional identities of Crimean Slavs, but Crimean Tatar-ness represents a much more robust, collective form of belonging to Crimea that may not be experienced or claimed by individuals outside of the Crimean Tatar national community. Both Crimean-ness and Crimean Tatar-ness have proven resilient frameworks of identity among the internally displaced even as their Ukrainian-ness has grown increasingly salient and their relationships with Crimea itself have become fraught with bitterness in the wake of the annexation.

For Crimean IDPs, the question of territorial belonging—of what constitutes their home(land) and whether they remain within it—has been destabilized as a result of the annexation and their own displacement. Before 2014, identifying as both Crimean (Tatar) and Ukrainian was more or less simple to conceptualize through a framework of “nested identity” (Herb and Kaplan 1999); Crimea is a part of Ukraine, so to be from Crimea is to be from Ukraine, and there is no inherent contradiction in valuing or drawing personal and collective meaning from both of these scalar components of one’s hierarchical territorial emplacement. But this hierarchy has been unsettled for Crimean IDPs following their internal displacement, removing them from the region to which many feel a profound sense of belonging, but keeping

them within the state to which they also feel a deep sense of loyalty and belonging that has only grown in recent years. Many Crimean IDPs therefore experience a scalar disjunction in their sense of territorial belonging, existing simultaneously *in place* as proud Ukrainian citizens and *out of place* as devoted Crimeans or Crimean Tatars. One interviewee described this disjunction as “a two-sided feeling” when I asked her whether she felt at home in Kyiv; “[t]his is my country, this is the capital of my state, because by no means did I ever imagined that Crimea is not a part of Ukraine. I don’t feel that I am away from home, but at the same time, this is not my home” (Interview 083, Crimean Tatar woman, 30s).

As a people whose collective ethno-national identities are inextricably intertwined with the Crimean Peninsula and an unshakable sense of belonging to it, the pain and discomfort of displacement is particularly acute for Crimean Tatar IDPs who nevertheless wear their belonging to the Ukrainian state as a badge of honor. *Mejlis* chairperson Refat Chubarov described to me this schismatic feeling of simultaneous displacement and emplacement experienced by Crimean Tatar IDPs, and explained why he believed it is more intense than the experience for Slavic Crimean IDPs:

We live in our own country, but if I may be honest, we feel it very intensely that we are not living on our own land. For us, it turns out that living on our own land and living in our country are different feelings to a certain extent. I’ve thought about this myself, and I see an explanation in the fact that we struggled to return to Crimea for a long time—more than 45 years, almost 50—and therefore for us the feeling of our native land is dominant. For some other displaced person, let’s say an Ivanenko or a Petrenko [i.e., an ethnic Ukrainian] who lived in Crimea and left after the occupation began, he could feel just the same living in Crimea or in Zhytomyr. But for us, there is a feeling that we are living outside our homeland, and this feeling is very strong; *in our country, but outside our homeland*.  
(Interview 037, Refat Chubarov)

But while the Crimean Tatars’ enduring connection to Crimea is more profound, many Slavic Crimean IDPs nevertheless feel a similar schismatic discord in their senses of territorial

belonging. As one ethnic Russian interviewee explained, the feeling of being both insider and outsider in mainland Ukraine can be reinforced through interactions with other Ukrainians:

I think the problem is that you are never really at home anywhere. You're not at home in Crimea because you just cannot relate to all those things happening there; and you are not really at home here, because it just isn't your home, and you always remember that no matter how much you try to tell yourself, "this is your new home, this is your new life, this is what it's going to be." I mean, I never face any discrimination or anything from the people here. From the state, maybe, but not from the people. But still, you say you are from Crimea, and you see something in their eyes, and then there's this concern in their voice, it's like, "well, how are things in Crimea? What is it like? How are your parents?" And you're like, hmmm. So, it's like the fact that I'm from Crimea kind of defines me now, which I don't really like, to be honest. But it can be a good thing, because it unites you with other people from Crimea, that's what gives you an identity. But whether or not it's an identity that I would like to have ... that's a big question. (Interview 005, ethnic Russian woman, 20s)

My core argument is that these experiences—of being simultaneously *displaced* and *emplaced*, of feeling at once dual senses of territorial belonging and dispossession—produce a condition that is fundamentally *diasporic*. Employing diaspora as a framework for understanding identities among internally displaced peoples from Crimean may be unconventional, as the basic prerequisite of *transnational*, inter-state migration that underlies nearly all definitions of diaspora is clearly absent in the case of Crimean IDPs. But it is this very transnational convention that I aim to unsettle; adhering to a strict regime of transnationalism to categorize or distinguish between types of migrants according to whether or not they have crossed an international border only serves to reify the nation-state as a space of inherent homogeneity contrasted against an essential other-ness beyond its borders—one problematic component of the “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994).

In framing Crimean IDPs as a diasporic community, I situate this study within a growing body of research and literature reconceiving diaspora as a condition produced through the stretching, fracturing, obfuscation, and (re)construction of socio-spatial identities that may occur

among migrants regardless of whether or not their journeys take them beyond their state of origin. I echo the call of Mavroudi and Christou (2015, 5) to approach diaspora as a product of “[t]he juxtaposition between inclusion and exclusion, between here and there,” and to “[pay] attention to how those in diaspora negotiate identities, nations, boundaries, politics, communities, spaces and places in relation to one another and host/homeland contexts without privileging any of these.” Following the work of Oakes and Schein (2006), Freitag and von Oppen (2010b), and Brickell and Datta (2016), I propose that a fruitful way to dismantle diaspora’s transnational precondition is to recast it as a *translocal* phenomenon rather than a *transnational* one—shifting focus from the nation-state to the various localities embedded within routes and experiences of migration and how they may influence disjointed senses of territorial belonging without deference to normative categories of internal or international migration.

When reconceived as a product of translocalism, diaspora is revealed to be an appropriate and instructive framework for theorizing how internally displaced peoples from Crimea negotiate and (re)construct socio-spatial identities. Indeed, looking beyond the presumption of transnational migration, Crimean IDPs exhibit and embody many of the same characteristics that Cohen (2008) identifies as indicative of a diasporic condition. Crimean IDPs—particularly Crimean Tatars—fit comfortably within the “ideal type” of a victim diaspora as defined by Cohen, although aspects of “labor” and “deterritorialized” diasporas may also be present. Some members of the Crimean IDP community have adopted or accepted the label of a “diaspora,” including approximately one third of survey respondents, and Cohen argues that the emic application of this label should strengthen claims of any particular group’s diasporality. The “time dimension”—or the propensity for a nominally diasporic group to remain cohesive and collectively linked to a place of origin across successive generations—is the most difficult of

these diasporic criteria to impose upon Crimean IDPs given their short period of displacement. However, signs indicate that Crimean Tatar-ness in particular is likely to endure and continue to undergird a diasporic condition for as long as Crimean Tatars remain internally displaced from Crimea, while Crimean-ness is less likely to endure as a salient form of identity, suggesting weaker long-term prospects for the diasporality of Slavic Crimean IDPs.

Crimean IDPs also embody many of the social and political “common features” of diaspora that Cohen outlines. Resettling in Kyiv, Lviv, and many other cities and towns around Ukraine, Crimean IDPs may be said to be “dispersed” to more than one location if, following the same translocal imperative, external nation-states are not privileged as necessary sites of dispersion. Crimean IDPs frequently conceive of Crimea as their homeland, and maintain collective “memories and myths” about this homeland, although their content and meanings differ significantly between Crimean Tatars and Slavic Crimeans. A majority of Crimean IDPs also ascribe to a “return movement,” as most anticipate one day returning to Crimea on the precondition that it first be deoccupied and returned to Ukraine. In the meantime, virtually all Crimean IDPs maintain “vicarious relationships” with Crimea through intermittent visits and ongoing social engagement with friends and family who stayed behind, although these relationships are often fraught with discord and ideological tensions. Most Crimean IDPs also maintain “a collective commitment to [Crimea’s] maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity” (Cohen 2008, 17), as best exemplified in the debate over Crimea’s hypothetical political status after reintegration with Ukraine, which centers around the controversial proposal to create a Crimean Tatar national autonomous region.

Crimean IDPs are not ethnically cohesive as per Cohen’s sixth “common feature,” but solidaristic bonds nevertheless do exist across their various ethnic communities; however,

Crimean Tatar IDPs demonstrate a stronger and more enduring bond compared to Slavic Crimeans, as this bond is rooted in their distinctive culture and ethno-national identity. Although they have mostly been welcomed and supported by their fellow Ukrainians, Crimean IDPs may be said to have a rather contentious and “troubled” relationship with the Ukrainian government due to discriminatory policies that restrict their voting rights and access to basic banking services in ways that target Crimeans specifically. While a trans-ethnic, global Crimean diaspora does not exist, Crimean Tatar IDPs certainly do share “a sense of empathy and co-responsibility” (2008, 17) with members of the Crimean Tatar diaspora located outside of Ukraine, although they maintain a place of political preeminence within this global diasporic order. Finally, examples abound of Crimean IDPs’ “possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism” (2008, 17), and again Crimean Tatars come out far ahead; Crimean Tatar IDPs have a rich and distinctive ethnic culture from which to draw in the production and performance of Crimean Tatar-ness in both traditional and progressive forms, while the absence of distinctive cultural elements of Crimean-ness make this much more difficult for Slavic Crimean IDPs. Crimean Tatar singer Jamala’s Eurovision victory with the song “1944” is perhaps the greatest example of Crimean Tatar IDPs’ important new contributions to the creative production of pluralistic art and culture in modern Ukraine, and an emblem of Crimean Tatar IDPs’ emerging diasporic condition.

Comparing experiences associated with their displacement against these sets of criteria helps situate Crimean IDPs within a diasporic framework of analysis, but I also follow the example of scholars who caution that diaspora should not function merely as a label to be applied to or embodied by a particular migrant community (see Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1994; Butler 2001; Mavroudi and Christou 2015). Theorizing diaspora as a discourse and a process offers a more

critical approach, as it rejects the essentialist notion that groups or individuals can simply *be* diasporic as a passive state of existence, and alerts us to how diaspora must be continually (re)produced in discursive and performative ways. In other words, diaspora is something people *do* rather than something they *are*, it is something that *happens* and not something that merely *exists*. Diaspora happens precisely when and where migrant individuals and groups experience dissonance between senses of territorial belonging and exclusion, when awareness of being simultaneously *displaced* from a point of origin and *emplaced* elsewhere becomes salient to the collective processes of identity construction among migrant groups. As the case of Crimean IDPs demonstrates, diaspora may happen whether or not migrants resettle across international borders.

Approaching diaspora as discourse and process also alerts us to how a diasporic condition may be contingent upon certain social and political conditions, how it may materialize or dissipate within particular contexts or after a certain amount of time, and how it may emerge as salient to the experiences of some and not to others within a single migrant cohort. As Brah (1996), Anthias (1998), and Soysal (2000) have argued, the presumption of ethnic homogeneity within diasporic assemblages is far too restrictive and essentialist, ignoring the breadth and diversity of identities—ethnic or otherwise—that may coexist and intersect within a group of migrants who share a common place of origin. Crimean IDPs serve as an instructive example of how diaspora may incorporate a multiplicity of ethnic identities; a schismatic sense of territorial belonging indeed characterizes the experiences of ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, Crimean Tatars, and other minorities from Crimea alike, and creates opportunities for solidaristic diasporic bonds to be forged across these ethnic boundaries—namely between Crimean Tatars and Slavic Crimeans—in instances when mutual aspects of Crimean-ness act as a centripetal forces.



As the Russian occupation of Crimea soon enters its fifth year and most Crimean IDPs resolve to stay away until the peninsula returns to Ukrainian control, time will only tell how long they will remain internally displaced and for how long their Crimea identities will contribute to the production of a diasporic condition. In one potentially prescient observation, Olga Skripnik of the organization *Al'menda* described to me two “vectors” of Crimean IDPs that may presage the long-term durability of a diasporic condition for some and not for others, and she argues that this divide cuts across ethnic categories:

All in all, there are two vectors. There are Crimean IDPs who left Crimea and want to integrate as quickly as possible in Kyiv, in Lviv, in whichever city, and to forget all of this and just start a new life. In principle they are not drawn to any kind of activism or sociality, they start to interact only within their local communities. For example, let's say I relocated to Lviv, found a new job, and I focus my attention on my new society, I try to integrate into it, my children will go to school, and now I'm interested only in this new city. These people lose their connections with Crimeans, they become simply residents of Kyiv, of Lviv. They no longer associate themselves with Crimea, they don't plan on going back there, and look for opportunities to continue living in the mainland. This is one category of people. The second category of people are those who instead want to preserve their Crimean identity, and so they gravitate toward various organizations that associate themselves with Crimeans. (...) These people try to preserve their identity and attach themselves to specifically Crimean communities, they join various groups on social media or go to different organizations, they participate in different thematic events, they go to demonstrations for Crimean political prisoners. So, here we have, in essence, two distinct categories: those who disavow all connections to Crimea, and those who preserve these connections. And those people who generally associate with Crimean organizations and preserve their Crimean identity are the people who really want to return to Crimea in the future, and these are not only Crimean Tatars. If the occupation ends, of course we want to return. (Interview 033, Olga Skripnik)

While she does not employ a diasporic framework here herself, these two “vectors” may be easily mapped onto a divide between those Crimean IDPs who demonstrate a long-term propensity for diaspora and those who don't.

While I agree with Skripnik that it is not only Crimean Tatar IDPs who proactively maintain and nurture their Crimean identities, I argue that Crimean Tatars generally do exhibit a

far greater potential to remain diasporic in the long-term compared to Slavic Crimeans. Crimean Tatar-ness is a much more deeply-rooted and collective sense of belonging to Crimea compared to generic Crimean-ness, and it is much more likely to act as a salient marker of individual and collective identity after several years of displacement and through successive generations born outside of Crimea. Crimean Tatars have already proven during their decades of exile in Central Asia just how tenaciously they are prepared to cling to Crimea and to their own ethno-national identity, and how their sense of belonging to Crimea is inter-generational regardless of displacement. Moreover, Crimean Tatar-ness incorporates distinctive ethno-cultural, religious, and linguistic elements that are likely to provide a stable foundation for collective identity long after the relatively thin sense of place attachment at the core of Crimean-ness has lost its salience for Slavic Crimeans. In general terms, Crimean Tatar-ness is the far more stable and durable way of claiming belonging to Crimea, and it will likely prove a more resilient social and emotional tether to the home(land) left behind—and therefore an engenderer of diasporality—as Crimeans’ internal displacement drags on. In the words of one ethnic Russian interviewee, “[t]here is probably no such formation of a [single] Crimean diaspora. There are certain scattered groups of people and a large community of Crimean Tatars, because they are always together” (Interview 064, ethnic Russian man, 40s). Thus, while ethnic homogeneity is not required for diasporic consciousness or solidarities to form within a community of migrants, collectivity rooted in a particular ethnic identity—i.e., Crimean Tatar-ness—may nevertheless prove a more enduring basis for the continuing production of a diasporic condition in this case.

Rethorizing diaspora in this way contributes to a more critical understanding of ethnic, national, regional, and migrant identities by de-centering the nation-state and nuancing the relationships between state, region, and ethnicity. However, situating a group of internal

migrants within a diasporic framework of analysis may also bring negative geopolitical and rhetorical repercussions, as I discovered in the course of my fieldwork. I did not anticipate how influential the presumption of international migration would be in shaping many of my research participants' understanding of diaspora, nor that this understanding would provoke strong negative reactions to the suggestion that Crimean IDPs may constitute a diaspora. If we adhere to the idea that a diaspora may only appear beyond the borders of the nation-state from which a migrant group originates, then referring to a Crimean diaspora implies that Crimeans crossed an international border when they arrived in mainland Ukraine, which then implies that Crimea is *not* Ukraine and, given its state of occupation, therefore a part of Russia by default—a notion that is completely anathema and insulting to virtually every IDP from Crimea. Under a strictly transnational paradigm, to label Crimean IDPs a diaspora is to undermine the very “internal” component of their displacement and to marginalize them—and Crimea itself—as somehow not entirely Ukrainian, thereby undoing their diligent efforts to reassert their own Ukrainian-ness and reaffirm Crimea’s rightful place within the Ukrainian state.

I have grappled with this delicate issue throughout the course of researching and writing this dissertation. I am troubled by the thought that my work could be twisted or misrepresented to somehow bolster Russian claims to Crimea or undermine the social and political struggles of Crimean IDPs, as I care deeply for their plight. I worry that my efforts to nuance and problematize transnational theories of diaspora in the case of Crimean IDPs may be misinterpreted as a wholesale endorsement of their status as a diaspora in ways that conform to the very definition I aim to unsettle.

Ultimately, despite the possible risks involved, I believe the task of further de-centering the nation-state in how we understand and theorize socio-spatial identities is worthwhile, and this

work will contribute to a more robust body of literature concerning migration, territory, and identity both in Ukraine and beyond. A translocal theory of diaspora indeed has applications wherever migration results in schismatic senses of territorial belonging, but an entrenched belief in diaspora's inherent transnationalism may steel some against this notion, especially where it may be seen to undermine their rhetorical stance as in the case of some Crimean IDPs. I must reiterate, however, that my goal is to disrupt the transnational criterion of diaspora and not to impose an unwelcome or harmful label upon my research participants, and I believe I have made the distinction clear throughout this dissertation. Moreover, I do not believe that the rhetorical risks of drawing Crimean IDPs into discourses of diaspora would arise in other cases where diaspora may also be germane to the identities of internal migrants; the conditions of annexation, occupation, and internal displacement are indeed unique to this particular cases study, and I can think of few other current examples where patterns of internal migration would be similarly accompanied by a dispute over the geopolitical status of migrants' home region.

As a final note, I suggest that embracing a translocal paradigm of diaspora may actually bolster rather than undermine Crimean IDPs' efforts to reaffirm that Crimea and Crimeans are part of Ukraine. Situating Crimean IDPs within discourses and practices of diaspora helps demonstrate that Crimean and Ukrainian identities may be complimentary and mutually constitutive rather than contradictory or mutually exclusive. Crimean IDPs' diasporic condition speaks to the enduring relevance of Crimea to discourses of Ukrainian national identity, and helps ensure that the matter of the region's deoccupation will not fade from Ukraine's political agenda. The loss of this diasporic condition would signal that Crimean identities have dissipated and lost their salience for IDPs, which would only hasten acceptance of the permeant loss of Crimea among the general Ukrainian public. In this regard, diaspora may serve as a vital

metaphor for the resilient social, cultural, and political bonds between Crimea and mainland Ukraine that have gone overlooked and underappreciated in the wake of Russia's annexation.

The flame of a Ukrainian Crimea continues to burn in the hearts and minds of Crimean IDPs, and the perseverance of their diasporic condition will prove a crucial sign that the flame has not been extinguished.

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## **Appendix A: Initial Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews** (English translations in bold, original Russian italicized and bracketed)

### **QUESTIONS FOR IDPs:**

**When, and under what circumstances, did you leave Crimea?**

*[Когда и по каким обстоятельствам Вы уехали из Крыма?]*

**What kind of work did you do in Crimea?**

*[Чем была ваша работа / что вы делали в Крыму?]*

**Why did you choose to move specifically to Kyiv (or Lviv, etc.)?**

*[Почему вы решили именно в Киев/во Львове переселять?]*

**Did your family stay in Crimea, or have they also relocated?**

*[Остаются ли в Крыму Ваша семья, или они тоже переселяли?]*

**What do you currently do here in Kyiv (or Lviv, etc.)?**

*[Что вы теперь здесь в Киеве/во Львове делаете?]*

**What were your social or economic priorities when you arrived in Kyiv/Lviv? Have they been fulfilled, or not?**

*[Какими были ваши общественные или экономические приоритеты при переселении в Киев/во Львове? Они удовлетворены, или нет?]*

**Do you frequently meet or communicate with other people from Crimea in Kyiv/Lviv? Do you have many Crimean friends here? Are they generally Ukrainians, Russians, Crimean Tatars, or from various groups?**

*[Вы часто встречаетесь или общаетесь в Киеве/во Львове с другими людьми из Крыма? У вас здесь много крымских друзей? Они вообще украинские, русские, крымские татары, или из разных групп?]*

**How would you characterize your experiences as a Crimean IDP in Kyiv/Lviv? Do you feel like an outsider here?**

*[Как вы охарактеризуете ваши опыты как крымский переселенец в Киеве/во Львове? Чувствуете себя здесь как посторонний человек?]*

**How do you understand the idea of “homeland?” Has this understanding changed after the annexation of Crimea or after your relocation?**

*[Как вы для себя понимаете идею «родины»? Изменилось ли это понятие после аннексии Крыма и после вашей переселения?]*

**What kind of difficulties have you had with relocating to Kyiv/Lviv? (Finding work, finding a place to live, changing your registration, etc.)**

*[Какие у вас были трудности переселения в Киев/Львов? (найти работу, найти место проживания, местная регистрация, и т.д.)]*

**What does it mean for you to be Crimea in contemporary Ukraine?**

*[Для вас, что значит быть крымским/крымской в современной Украине?]*

**Do you want to live in Kyiv/Lviv permanently, or do you plan to return to Crimea sometime? Under what conditions would you return?**

*[Вы хотите постоянно остаться в Киеве/во Львове, или планируете когда-нибудь вернуть в Крым? При каких обстоятельствах вы были бы вернуть?]*

**In your opinion, what should the political status of Crimea be after it is returned to Ukraine?**

*[По Вашему мнению, чем должен быть политическим статусом Крыма после его возвращения в состав Украины?]*

**How do you understand the word “diaspora,” and do you consider Crimeans or Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine a diaspora?**

*[Как Вы понимаете слово «диаспора», и считаете ли вы, что крымчане/крымские татар в материковой части Украины составляют диаспору?]*

#### **QUESTIONS FOR CRIMEAN TATAR LEADERS:**

**How do you understand the role of Crimean Tatars—and especially Crimean Tatar IDPs—in contemporary Ukraine?**

*[Как вы видите роль крымских татар — и особенно крымскотатарских переселенцев — в современной Украине?]*

**How would you characterize the relationship between Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainians now in contemporary Ukraine—after the Euromaidan, after the annexation of Crimea, etc. How has it changed?**

*[Как вы охарактеризуете отношение между крымскими татарами и украинскими сейчас в современной Украине, после Евромайдана, после аннексии Крыма, и т.д.? Как оно изменилось?]*

**Are there difficulties for Crimean Tatars to adapt or integrate here in Kyiv/Lviv, or in mainland Ukraine in general?**

*[Есть ли трудности для крымских татар адаптировать или интегрировать здесь в Киеве/во Львове, или в материке Украины вообще?]*

**What kind of relationship do Crimean Tatar IDPs maintain with the Crimean homeland?**

*[Какое отношение сохраняют крымскотатарские переселенцы с крымской родиной?]*

**It seems that many Crimean IDPs are from a younger generation, they were born either just before returning to Crimea, or in Crimea itself after the return. Do you think that their relationship with Crimea differs from older generations of Crimean Tatars?**

*[Мне кажется, что многие из крымскотатарских переселенцев из молодого поколения, родились или сразу до возвращения в Крым, или в самом Крыму после возвращения. Думаете ли вы, что для них отношение к Крыму отличается от старших поколений крымских татар?]*

**How would you characterize life for Crimean Tatars now living in occupied Crimea?**

*[Как вы охарактеризуете жизнь для крымских татар, живущих сейчас в оккупированном Крыму?]*

**Do you see any continuity between the Soviet deportation of the Crimean Tatars and the Russian annexation of Crimea?**

*[Видите ли вы какую-нибудь непрерывность между советской депортацией крымских татар и российской аннексией Крыма?]*

**Do you think that there exists a “diaspora” of Crimeans or specifically Crimean Tatars within Ukraine? Do you see Crimean Tatar IDPs as part of the larger global Crimean Tatar diaspora?**

*[Думаете ли вы, что существует в Украине “диаспора” крымчан или, именно, крымских татар? Видите ли вы крымскотатарских переселенцев как частью большой всемирной крымскотатарской диаспоры?]*

**How do you understand your own role in the community of Crimean Tatars, and how has it changed since the annexation of Crimea?**

*[Как вы понимаете свою роль в сообществе крымских татар, и как она изменилась после аннексии Крыма?]*

#### **QUESTIONS FOR ORGANIZATION FOUNDERS, POLITICIANS, OR ACTIVISTS:**

**What does your organization do?**



*[Что делает ваша организация?]*

**What are the needs of Crimean IDPs? How do needs or difficulties vary among different ethnic or regional groups from Crimea? How do they differ from IDPs from the Donbas?**

*[Какие потребности есть у крымских переселенцев? Как потребности или трудности различаются среди других национальных или религиозных групп из Крыма? Как они различаются от переселенцев из Донбасса?]*

**In what instances does the Ukrainian government assist IDPs, and are there any special considerations for IDPs from Crimea specifically?**

*[В каких случаях украинское государство помогает переселенцам, а есть особые предупредительности для переселенцев особенно из Крыма?]*

**From your perspective, has a general sense of identity or solidarity formed among Crimean IDPs, or have there appeared various social or national communities of Crimean IDPs in Ukraine?**

*[С вашей точки зрения, формируется общее чувство идентичности или солидарности среди крымских переселенцев, или появляются в Украине разные социальные или национальные общины переселенцев из Крыма?]*

**What role does your organization play in building social connections between Crimean IDPs?**

*[Какая роль играет ваша организация в строительстве общественных связи среди крымских переселенцев?]*

**The idea of “diaspora” is of interest to me, and whether Crimean IDPs constitute a diaspora. In your opinion, how do Crimean IDPs understand the idea of “diaspora,” and what would it mean for them to be members of a diaspora here?**

*[Мне очень интересно идея “диаспоры,” и то, что крымские переселенцы составляют диаспору. По вашему мнению, как понимают крымские переселенцы идею “диаспоры,” и для них что значит быть здесь членами диаспоры?]*

**Does your organization actively preserve IDPs’ connections to Crimea—socially, emotionally, or psychologically?**

*[Ваша организация активно сохраняет для переселенцев связи с Крымом — или общественные, или эмоциональные, или психические?]*

## **Appendix B: Questionnaire Used in Online Survey** (English translations in bold, original Russian italicized and bracketed)

### **TITLE:**

**Survey for Crimeans Living on the Territory of Mainland Ukraine**

*[Опрос для крымчан, проживающих на территории материковой Украины]*

### **EXPLANATION:**

**The purpose of this survey is to uncover the opinions and personal experiences of Crimeans living on the mainland part of Ukraine, including those who came before and after the annexation of Crimea. The survey is conducted by Austin Charron, a graduate student in the Geography Department at the University of Kansas (USA), who is researching the topic of identity among IDPs from Crimea after the Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and your answers are completely anonymous. Please fill out the questionnaire only once. Thank you for your answers!**

*[Цель данного опроса—это выяснить мнения и личный опыт крымчан, проживающих на материковой части Украины, включая тех, которые переехали до и после аннексии Крыма. Опрос проводится Остином Чарроном, аспирантом факультета географии в Университете Канзаса (США), исследующим тему идентичности переселенцев из Крыма после Евромайдана и аннексии Крыма. Ваше участие в опросе добровольно, а ответы полностью анонимны. Пожалуйста, заполните анкету только один раз. Благодарю за ответы!]*

### **QUESTIONS:**

**Your Gender** *[Ваш пол]*

**Your Age** *[Ваш возраст]*

**Your Ethnic Affiliation** *[Ваша этническая принадлежность]*

**Russian** *[Русская]*

**Ukrainian** *[Украинская]*

**Crimean Tatar** *[Крымскотатарская]*

**Other** *[Другая]*

**Your Religious Affiliation** *[Ваше вероисповедание]*

**Orthodox Christian** *[Православное]*

**Greek Catholic/Uniate** *[Грекокатолическое]*

**Islam** *[Исламское]*

**Jewish** *[Еврейское]*

**I am not a religious person** *[Я не религиозный человек]*

**Other** *[Другое]*

**Your Level of Education** *[Ваш уровень образования]*

**Incomplete Secondary** *[Неполное среднее]*

**Secondary** *[Среднее]*

**Bachelor's Equivalent** *[Базовое высшее (бакалавр или специалист)]*

**Graduate Equivalent** *[Высшее (специалист, магистр, аспирант, кандидат наук, или доктор наук)]*

**Other** *[Другое]*

**Your Profession** *[Ваша профессия]*

**Your former town of residence in Crimea** *[Ваш бывший город проживания в Крыму]*

**Your current town of residence** *[Ваш нынешний город проживания]*

**Why did you choose this town?** [Почему Вы выбрали этот город?]

**Approximately when did You leave Crimea?** [Приблизительно, когда Вы покинули Крым?]

**With whom did you relocate?** [С кем Вы переселились?]

**I relocated alone** [Я один/одна переселился(ась)]

**With my spouse** [с супругом/супругой]

**With my child(ren)** [с ребенком/детьми]

**With my parents** [с родителям(и)]

**With other family members** [с другими членами семьи]

**With friends** [с друзьями]

**Other** [Другое]

**Why did you decide to leave Crimea? (Select all appropriate options)**

[Почему вы решили покинуть Крым? (выберите все подходящие варианты)]

**Political, ethnic, or religious persecution in Crimea**

[Политическое, этническое, или религиозное преследование в Крыму]

**Personal opposition to the occupation**

[Личная оппозиция оккупации]

**Concern for personal safety**

[Беспокойство о личной безопасности]

**To study in a Ukrainian university**

[Чтобы учиться в украинском университете]

**A lack of economic opportunities in Crimea**

[Отсутствие экономических возможностей в Крыму]

**To continue or open my own business**

[Продолжение или открытие собственного бизнеса]

**I left Crimea before the occupation**

[Я до оккупации переселился(ась) из Крыма]

**Other**

[Другое]

**Have you returned to Crimea since you relocated? (Y/N)**

[Возвращались ли Вы в Крым после вашего переселения?]

**If yes, how many times?** [Если да, сколько раз?]

1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / More than 5 [Более 5]

**Do your loved ones in Crimea support your decision to leave? (Y/N)**

[Поддерживают ли ваши близкие в Крыму Ваше решение переехать?]

**If you wish, please explain.** [Если желаете, объясните.]

**Do you plan to return permanently to Crimea?**

[Планируете ли Вы вернуться в Крым?]

**Yes, I am already preparing to return.**

[Да, я уже готовлюсь к возвращению]

**Yes, when Crimea returns to Ukraine**

[Да, когда Крым вернется в состав Украины]

**No, I plan to stay here or move again, but not to Crimea**

[Нет, планирую здесь остаться, или переехать, но не в Крым]

**Difficult to Answer**

[Трудно ответить]

**Other**

[Другое]

**Did you participate in the Euromaidan? (Y/N)**

[Участвовали ли Вы в Евромайдане?]

**Have you encountered any problems with work or housing since you relocated? (Y/N)**

[Сталкивались ли Вы с проблемами в сфере работы или жилья после вашего переселения?]

**If you wish, please explain.** [Если желаете, объясните.]

**Have you encountered any discrimination due to the fact that you are from Crimea? (Y/N)**

[Сталкивались ли Вы с дискриминацией из-за того, что Вы из Крыма?]

**If you wish, please explain.** [Если желаете, объясните.]

**Are you registered as an Internally Displaced Person? (Y/N)**

[Зарегистрированы ли Вы в качестве внутренне перемещенного лица?]

**Do you receive any government assistance for Internally Displaced Persons? (Y/N)**

[Принимаете ли Вы государственную помощь для внутренне перемещенных лиц?]

**Do you receive humanitarian aid from any of the following organizations?**

[Получаете ли Вы гуманитарную помощь от любых из перечисленных ниже организаций?]

**Crimean SOS** [Крым SOS]

**East SOS** [Восток SOS]

**Crimean Diaspora** [Крымская Диаспора]

**The Center for Civic Awareness “Al’men da”** [Центр гражданского просвещения «Альменда»]

**The International Fund “Renaissance”** [Международный фонд «Відродження»]

**I do not receive humanitarian aid** [Я не получаю гуманитарную помощь]

**Other** [Другое]

**Do you think the Ukrainian government has done sufficient work on the problems of Crimean IDPs? (Y/N)**

[Думаете ли Вы, что государство Украины достаточно работает над проблемой крымских переселенцев?]

**If you wish, please explain.** [Если желаете, объясните.]

**Do you support the following actions or events? (Indicate Y/N if you support it)**

[Поддерживаете ли Вы перечисленные ниже акции или события? (выберите, если поддерживаете)]

**The Ukrainian government’s decision to recognize Crimean Tatars as indigenous people of Crimea**

[Решение украинского государства признать крымских татар как коренной народы Крыма]

**The Ukrainian government’s decision to recognize the Crimean Tatar deportation as a genocide**

[Решение украинского государства признать депортацию крымских татар как геноцид]

**The economic blockade of Crimea in 2015**

[Торговая блокада Крыма 2015-го года]

**The energy blockade of Crimea in 2015**

[Энергоблокада Крыма 2015-го года]

**International sanctions against Russia because of the annexation of Crimea**

[Международные санкции против России из-за оккупации Крыма]

**International sanctions against Crimea**

[Международные санкции против Крыма]

**The renaming of place names in Crimea in the name of de-communization in Ukraine**

[Переименование населённых пункт в Крыму, во имя декоммунизации в Украине]

**The creation of a Crimean Tatar national territorial autonomy in the Ukrainian constitution**

[Создание крымскотатарской национально-территориальной автономии в конституции Украины]

**The Russian government’s decision to declare the Mejlis an extremist organization**

[Решение российского государства объявить Меджлис крымскотатарского народа экстремистской организацией]

**From where do you get your news about Ukraine and Crimea?**

[Откуда Вы получаете новости о Украине и Крыму?]

**Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty** [Радио Свобода]

**Crimea.Realities** [Крым.Реалии]

**ATR**

**15 Minutes** [15 Минут]

**QHA Crimean News Agency** [QHA (Агентство Крымские Новости)]

**Ukrainian Truth** [Украинская Правда]

**Free Crimea**

**Avdet** [Авдет]

**Events of Crimea** [События Крыма]

**Public News** [Громадське]

**UNIAN** [УНИАН]

**Espresso TV** [Еспресо ТВ]

**Other** [Другое]

**How important is being a citizen of Ukraine for your self-identity? (scale of 1-5)**

[Насколько важно для Вашего самоопределения то, что Вы гражданин/гражданка Украины?]

**How important is being from Crimea for your self-identity? (scale of 1-5)**

[Насколько важно для Вашего самоопределения то, что Вы из Крыма?]

**How important is living in Europe for your self-identity? (scale of 1-5)**

[Насколько важно для Вашего самоопределения то, что Вы живете в Европе?]

**How important is your ethnic affiliation for your self-identity? (scale of 1-5)**

[Насколько важна для Вашего самоопределения Ваша этническая принадлежность?]

**How important is your religious affiliation for your self-identity? (scale of 1-5)**

[Насколько важно для Вашего самоопределения Ваше вероисповедание?]

**Do you consider yourself a member of a diaspora of Crimeans (or Crimean Tatars?) (Y/N)**

[Считаете ли себя членом диаспоры крымчан (или крымских татар)?]

**If you wish, please explain.** [Если желаете, объясните.]

**When do you think Crimea will return to Ukraine?** [По Вашему мнению, когда вернется Крым в Украину?]

**In less than one year** [Менее года]

**In a few years (1-5 years)** [Через несколько лет (1-5 лет)]

**In the distant future (more than 5 years)** [В далеком будущем (более 5 лет)]

**Crimea will never return to Ukraine** [Крым никогда не вернется в Украину]

**Other** [Другое]