

Geçiş Dönemi Sürecinde Kırım'da Güç Yapılarının ve Politikaların Oluşturulması: 2014 – 2016

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Geliş tarihi: 02.06.2020
Kabul tarihi: 07.08.2020

Atf bilgisi:

IBAD Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi

Sayı: 8 Sayfa: 438-456

Yıl: 2020 Dönem: Güz

This article was checked by *Turnitin*.
Similarity Index 7%

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ÖZ

Mart 2014'te, Ukrayna'da siyasi krizin devam ettiği dönemde, Rus birlikleri Doğu Kırım üzerinden Ukrayna'ya girerek Kırım Özerk Cumhuriyeti'ni ilhak etti. Kırım'ın ilhakını takiben, kurumların ve yasal çerçevenin şekillendirildiği ve anakara Rusya'dan Kırım'a yeni kadroların gönderildiği geçiş dönemi görüldü. Yerel medya, siyasi partiler ile Ukrayna ve Kırım Tatar kuruluşları kapatıldı. Bu makale, Rusya'da Kırım için geçiş dönemi olarak ilan edilen 2014 ile 2016 yılları arasındaki dönem üzerinde yoğunlaşmıştır. Moskova'nın çözüm için özel çaba harcaması gereken en önemli sorunlar arasında kurumların ve yasal çerçevenin oluşturulması, yeni atamalar ve siyasi seçkinler, protestolarla ve basın özgürlüğüyle başa çıkma, seçimleri düzenleme ön plana çıkmaktadır. Bu makale, söz konusu dönemde Kremlin'in asıl amacının, askeri işgal ve ilhaktan sonra Kırım'ın Rusya Federasyonu'na hızla ve tam olarak dahil edilmesi olduğunu savunmaktadır. Moskova, Kırım'daki kurumların ve yasal zeminin oluşturulmasının hızlandırılmasını hedeflerken, tüm yerel profesyonellerin işten çıkarılmasının ardından Kırım'ı Rus seçkinler ile doldurdu. Aynı zamanda, Moskova sadece Rus olmayan etnik grupların insan hakları ve pozisyonlarını ihmal etmekte kalmadı, bunun yanı sıra muhalif seslerin ortaya çıkmasını önlemeye çalıştı. Yazar, Rusya Anayasası, Ukrayna Anayasası, 1998 ve 2014 Kırım Anayasaları, yeni Kırım'ı oluşturan temel resmi belgeler ve medya içeriği konularını da içeren geçiş dönemi ile ilgili mevzuatı veri toplama yöntemlerini kullanarak analiz etmektedir. Times New Roman 9 punto ve tek paragraf halinde yazılmalıdır. Makalenin giriş, gelişme ve sonuç bölümlerini içermelidir. En fazla 300 kelimedenden oluşmalıdır. Türkçe öz bir sayfayı aşmamalıdır. Özetle ara başlıklara, atıflara ve kaynakçaya yer verilmemelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İlhak, Kırım, Kırım Tatarları, Rusya, geçiş

Formation of the Power Structures and Policies in Crimea During the Transition Period: 2014 – 2016

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First received: 02.06.2020

Accepted: 07.08.2020

Citation:

IBAD Journal of Social Sciences

Issue: 8 **Pages:** 438-456

Year: 2020 **Session:** Fall

This article was checked by *Turnitin*.
Similarity Index 7%

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ABSTRACT

In March 2014, during political crisis in Ukraine, Russian troops invaded Ukraine through the Eastern Crimea and annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Annexation was followed by the transition period when new institutions and legislation was crafted and new cadres were sent to Crimea from the mainland Russia. Local media, political parties, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar organizations were shut down. This article concentrates on the period between 2014 and 2016 that was announced a transitional period for Crimea in Russia. The most important issues that required particular attention of Moscow were the formation of the institutions and legal framework, new appointments and political elites, coping with the protests and media freedom, conducting elections. This article argues that the main objective of Kremlin during the mentioned period was rapid and unobstructed inclusion of Crimea into the Russian Federation after the military invasion and annexation. While Moscow aimed at accelerated creation of the institutions and legislative base in Crimea, it filled Crimea with the Russian elites removing all local professionals. At the same time, Moscow not only neglected the issues of the human rights and position of non-Russian ethnic groups but also tried to prevent the emergence of the opposition voices. Author employs analysis of the legislation related to the transition period including analysis of the Constitutions of Russia, Ukraine, 1998 and 2014 Constitutions of Crimea, main official documents that molded new Crimea as well as the media content as data collection technique.

Keywords: Annexation, Crimea, Crimean Tatars, Russia, transition

INTRODUCTION

In January 1991, Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was restored in Crimea through the referendum. Soon after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was formed as a constituent entity of independent Ukraine. In 1992, Republic declared its independence that lasted till 1996 when the Constitution of Crimea was abolished. The biggest ethnic groups of Crimea were Russian, Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar.

In November 2013, Ukrainian President Yanukovych withdrew from the finalization of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union announcing the desire for closer relations with Russia-led Customs Union. Thousands of Ukrainians protested against this decision on *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square)¹ in Kyiv. Following the splash of the political crisis in Ukraine, Crimea appeared to be against the EuroMaidan movement. Oppositely, in Crimea, Russian speaking population who wanted closer relations with Russia and official status of the Russian language in Ukraine organized anti-Maidan. At the same time, Western-oriented Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians of Crimea stood against pro-Russian foreign policy of Ukraine. Russian Federation, under the slogan of the compatriots' protection, used the power vacuum in Ukraine that occurred after the fled of the President Yanukovych, and started annexation. First, military forces without insignia entered the peninsula through the eastern Crimean town of Kerch where the ferry boat station is located. They moved to the central part of the peninsula and soon seized the building of the parliament in capital city Simferopol as well as the local TV and radio channel. By means of the so called 'polite people'², peaceful and rapid annexation of Crimea was completed by the end of February. On March 14, 2014, 96.77% of Crimeans supported unification with the Russian Federation through the referendum. Referendum was recognized illegal according to the Ukrainian and international law. ("Malyshev: za vossoedinenie", 2014).

This article problematizes the transition period of 2014 – 2016 years in Crimea that followed annexation of the republic and its inclusion into the RF when the Russian Federation had to secure smooth and fast transition of the region to the Russian legislation. This article focuses on the formation of the power institutions and elites; new legislation; establishment of the political parties; and sheds the light on the challenges this process posed to the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian population of the region. Particularly, the author shows the attempts of the new Crimean government to cooperate with the Crimean Tatars and then to ban their activities. It is argued that the main objective of Kremlin during the mentioned period was rapid and unobstructed inclusion of Crimea into the Russian Federation. While Moscow aimed at accelerated creation of the institutions and legislative base in Crimea, it filled Crimea with the Russian elites removing all local professionals. Political parties that emerged in Crimea following the annexation were all-Russian political parties. All local parties, Ukrainian parties, as well as the ones that represent the Crimean Tatars seized to exist. At the same time, Moscow not only neglected the issues of the human rights and position and demands of the non-Russian ethnic groups but tried to prevent the emergence of the opposition voices. Thus, different tactics of cooperation and later 'divide-and-rule' tactics as well as violent measures were used against the Crimean Tatars.

Analysis of the legislation related to the transition period including analysis of the Constitutions of Russia, Ukraine, 1998 and 2014 Constitutions of Crimea, main official documents that molded new Crimea as well as the media content is utilized in the article as data collection technique. Particular focus was made on the cadre changes as well as regulations regarding media and different political and ethnic groups. Also, results of the 2014 Crimean parliamentary election and 2016 general election were studied. Study was limited to the period between February 2014 and December 2016 insofar as it is seen as a key period in terms of the inclusion of the region into the Russian Federation.

In order to integrate Crimea into the Russian Federation, three sets of tasks were to be accomplished, Mikhail Deliagin, director of the Institute for Problems of Globalization, maintained (2015). These

¹ Main square in Kyiv that gave the name to mass rallies – EuroMaidan.

² Or also 'little green men', refers to masked soldiers of the Russian Federation in unmarked green army uniforms that were responsible for the annexation of Crimea.

included, first of all, supplies of food, water and electricity to the region that had only ferry boat connection with the mainland Russia. Secondly, the legislation of the region was to be conformed to the Russian one. Finally, strategic goals of using Crimea economically and militarily were to be achieved. (Deliagin, 2015, p.12). By the end of 2016, as this study shows, previously mentioned tasks had not been accomplished yet. In his turn, Chatham House fellow professor Nikolai Petrov (2016), specified three issues characterizing the inclusion of the region into the Russian political and social system. Firstly, he noted that the transition period in Crimea revealed peculiarities of the Russian space. Furthermore, Crimean Spring was going to change not only the Russian Federation but also its policies. Moreover, relations between Simferopol and Moscow would evolve. (Petrov, 2016, p.75 - 76). Petrov pointed out the spheres that had become the focus of Kremlin's attention. He mentioned new cadres in Crimea; the establishment of the relations of the patrons and vassals between Crimea and other republics/ regions of Russia; securing judicial power; establishing the Ministry of the Crimean Affairs; re-registration of the political parties; solving the Crimean Tatar issue and reconfiguration of the elites. (Petrov, 2016). This article starts by discussing main institutions of power in Crimea followed by the analysis of the citizenship and legislation in Crimea. Then, new cadre appointments and political parties as well as 2014 regional election and 2016 Russian parliamentary election are discussed. Finally, concluding part sums up the main findings of the article.

LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

After the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the transition period was announced by Kremlin. ("Perehodnyj period po vhozhdeniju", 2014). On 31 March, 2014, by a special decree of the President Putin, Ministry of the Crimean Affairs (*Министерство по делам Крыма*) was established. Former vice-minister on economic development of the Russian Federation Oleg Savelyev was appointed as its Minister. (Decrees of the President, 2014).

Constitution of the Republic. On 11 April, 2014, new Constitution of the Crimean Republic was adopted. According to it, Crimea became the subject of the Russian Federation. (Article 1). Crimea lost its autonomous status that was established in 1991. The new post for Crimea, the Head of the Republic, was established. The Head of the Crimean Republic is the head of the executive branch of power and he is appointed by the parliament of the republic. (Article 61). Since April 2014, Sergei Aksyonov, leader of the Russian Unity (*Russkoye Yedinstvo*) party and member of the Russian Community of Crimea since 2008, is the Head of the Republic. ("Sergei Aksyonov Has Been Appointed", 2014). Aksyonov as well Sergei Tsekov, Crimean speaker in 1994 – 1995 and the Chairperson of the Russian Community of Crimea since 2003, were elected to the Crimean parliament of 2010 from the Russian Unity party. Both represent strong pro-Russian political force in Crimea that existed till 2014. However, Aksyonov, compared to Tsekov is much less experienced politician: till 2008 he was an entrepreneur. In February 2014, when Russian soldiers reached Crimean capital Simferopol, Aksyonov was elected a new Prime Minister of Crimea by 53% of the deputies. ("V parlamente Kryma naznachili", 2014). In this way, previous Crimean Prime Anatolij Mogilyov, who in February 2014 announced his loyalty to Ukrainian parliament, was replaced. When Aksyonov was appointed a Head of the Republic, this post remained vacant till October 2019.

According to 2014 Constitution of Crimea, the Head of the Republic has the right to appoint ministers, to suspend the legislation issued by the Supreme Council of Crimea as well as to dissolve it. (Article 64). The Head of the Republic can be removed from his post in case if his activity contradicts to the laws of the Russian Federation or if he/she loses the trust of the President of the Russian Federation. (Article 69). Official languages of the republic are Russian, Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar. (Article 10). Regarding the status of the latter, Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis³ Refat Chubarov, in his interview to the Ukrainian *5 Channel*, noted that there is no any provision in the new constitution that would secure the rights of the Crimean Tatars despite numerous promises of the government to solve this issue. ("Chubarov: Nova "Konstitucija", 2014). In fact, Chapter II of the Constitution, devoted to the rights and duties of the Crimeans, declares the equality of people regardless their religion and ethnic identity. (Article 13). Besides, Article 19 guarantees the right of the Crimeans to use their

³ Supreme representative and executive body of the Crimean Tatar people.

mother language or any other language for communication, education and arts. Finally, Article 22 prohibits any agitation or propaganda that aggravate race, ethnic or religious conflicts.

Natalya Belitser, in her 2000 article devoted to the Constitutional process in the Crimea, noted that instead of taking into consideration peculiarities of the region, Ukraine, in 1990s, tried to please pro-Russian majority there and eventually make Crimea a ‘Russian national autonomy within Ukraine’. (Belitser, 2000). In 2014 this majority led by the Party of Regions worked against Kyiv and was used by Russia that under the clause of the compatriots’ protection annexed Crimea. However, Kremlin learnt the lesson: designing the political system of the republic after the annexation it took into consideration the omission of Kyiv. Thus, through the extremist law Kremlin curbed the opposition among Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea and through the new cadre appointments removed potentially dangerous people. It is noteworthy that the new Constitution does not contain any quota for the Crimean Tatars despite the promises of the Russian leadership of the 20% quota for Mejlis. (“Krymskie tatory lishatsja kvoty”, 2014). On 18 May, 2014, Aksyonov rejected the idea of quota for Tatars, justifying this with the need of the official registration of Mejlis⁴, status of which was illegitimate, as well as the principle of the professional background of the deputies of the Crimean parliament, which is more important than their ethnic identity. (“Aksenov: priznanie kurultaja”, 2014).

Crimean Parliament (*Государственный Совет Республики Крым*) is the legislative body in Crimea. (Constitution of Crimea, 2014, Article 69). Through the new constitution it obtained the right to submit a bill to the Russian parliament, State Duma. (Constitution of Crimea, 2014, Article 75). Compared to Ukrainian Constitution that allowed 100 members of the Crimean parliament, after 2014, their number constituted only 75. (*Ibid.*). However, this provision entered into the force only after the September 2014 election to the parliament of the republic.

2010 Parliament of Crimea was on 80% controlled by the pro-Russian Party of Regions. (“Regions Party gets,” 2010). The first election of deputies of the State Council took place on 14 September, 2014. The party of the Russian President *United Russia* won 25 seats in single-member constituencies and 45 seats according to the party list out of 75 seats that constituted 93% in total. Liberal Democratic Party of the RF won the rest 5 seats according to the proportional system. (Electoral Commission of Crimea, 2014a). Since 2010, the post of the head of the State Council has been occupied by Vladimir Konstantinov (Party of Regions) who did not recognize new Ukrainian government in February 2014. Grigoriy Ioffe, who had occupied this post for a long time became the first deputy. Besides, Konstantin Bakharev, editor of the pro-Russian newspaper *Crimean Truth* (*Krymskaja Pravda*) was appointed as a deputy speaker. Finally, Sergey Tsekov, who was the speaker of the Crimean Parliament in 1994 - 1995, under the presidency of Meshkov, and who opposed to the political standpoint of the Crimean president Meshkov became the deputy speaker as well. Tsekov also received a membership in the upper house of the Russian parliament - the Federation Council. (“Gossoviet Kryma nadelj”, 2014). In this way, all loyal to Moscow elites occupied key positions in Crimean government.

As to the Crimean Tatars, the absence of quota as well as the prohibition for the Mejlis leaders to enter the territory of Crimea prevented them from participating in the elections. Another issue that will be discussed below is the citizenship legislation that made some of the Crimean Tatars illegal in Crimea. Therefore, the leaders called the Crimean Tatars to boycott the elections to the Crimean Parliament. (“Glava Medzhliisa prizval”, 2014). It is also important to note that the passport of Ukraine was allowed for use during the election. Besides, the use of the administrative positions by the pro-Russian political forces prevented opposition from the participation in the election. Twelve pro-Russian parties and blocks managed to register for the election. Needless to say that none of the parties that could possibly represent the Crimean Tatar or Ukrainian electorate entered the list of the candidates. (Electoral Commission of Crimea, 2014b).

On 28 July, 2016, President of the Russian Federation signed the document about the creation of the Southern Federal District on the basis of the Crimean and Southern Federal Districts. The aim was declared as the strengthening of the federal organs of power and raising the effectiveness of their work. Vladimir Ustinov, the former Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, became the head of the

⁴ Mejlis had not been officially registered.

Southern Federal District. (Decree “About the Southern”, 2016). Southern Federal District included Republics Adygea, Kalmykia and Crimea; Krasnodar *Kray*; Astrakhan, Volgograd and Rostov regions and Sevastopol. Paul Goble, the expert on the ethnic issues in Eurasia, argued that Crimean Federal District's was a special status of Crimea in the Russian Federation, a symbol of annexation that also secured direct links of the local elites to the Russian leadership. (Goble, 2016). He suggests that this transformation was also the way to rotate the elites in the republic, particularly to get rid of Oleg Belaventsev and Sergey Menyailo. Belaventsev, till July 2016, used to be the representative of Putin in Crimea and was sent to North Caucasian Federal district in July 2016. In his turn, Menyailo used to be a governor of Sevastopol and became the President's representative in Siberian Federal District. Both were so called ‘military criminals’ involved into corruption. Crimea, according to the new system, appeared to be under the control of the *siloviki*.⁵ Journalist Portnikov evaluating these changes suggested that Kremlin had finally decided to deprive Crimea of its 'sacred' status. Euphoria about achieving historical justice and regaining illegally transferred to Ukraine Crimea had started to go down. Besides, funding of Crimea became significant. Initial federal program for funding the region till 2020 envisaged \$13.6 billion. (Demydova, 2020, p.136). Very soon it became the matter of complaints of other regions in Russia (Goble, 2016) since the burden of the Crimean budget appeared to be the responsibility of taxpayers in Russia. Russian government had to postpone various projects in order to complete the inclusion of Crimea. (Askeroglu, 2015, p.15).

Particular attention should be paid to the issue of the citizenship insofar as the majority of the Crimeans appeared to possess two passports, Russian and Ukrainian.

CITIZENSHIP IN CRIMEA

As it is stated in the Law on citizenship adopted on March 21, Ukrainian citizens and persons without citizenship permanently residing on the territory of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol on the day of the adoption of the law were recognized as citizens of the Russian Federation, with the exception of persons who within one month declared their intention to retain their or their children's existing citizenship or to stay without any. (Federal Constitutional Law, 2014). Within this short term the declaration on preservation of one's own citizenship was brought by only 3427 residents of Crimea. (“V Krymu istek srok”, 2014). According to the human rights report prepared by Ukrainian activist Andrii Klymenko for Freedom House, Russian citizenship policy in Crimea contravened international law norms related to citizenship. Besides, numerous obstacles were recorded by the human rights activists. Thus, for instance, in Crimea, only four offices - in Sevastopol, Bakhchysaray, Simferopol and Bilohirsk - were established to accept the petitions of those willing to stay a Ukrainian citizen. Online applications (by mail or any governmental portal) were not accepted. (Klymenko, 2015, 7). There was no provision as to the submission of the declaration by the Crimeans temporarily living outside of Russia and Ukraine. Particularly, the embassies and consulates of Russia did not accept the application.⁶ Later, having calculated the number of such petitions, Crimean government limited the number of residence permits which would be issued in Crimea to 4500, a number that leaves no space for many Ukrainians and the Crimean Tatars to remain in their homeland legally. (“Krymchan, nesoglasnyh s anneksiej”, 2014). Besides, obtaining residence permit, according to the legislation, requires the exams on Russian language, history and the knowledge of the basics of the legislation of the RF that significantly complicates the process. (Federal law on Amendments, 2014).

Crimeans without residence permits were considered as foreigners; accordingly, they had the right to stay in Crimea for maximum 90 days per each 180-day period. (Decree of the Government, 2003). Those who belong to this category have to travel to Ukraine constantly. Besides, foreigners working in the Russian Federation must apply for the work permission, that expects the employer to pay around 10 000 rub for each foreigner, apart from the mentioned exams. (Office of the Federal Migration Service). These factors made people apply for Russian passports.

⁵ Officials who came into politics from the security, military, or similar services.

⁶ In 2014, the author applied to the Russian Embassy in Ankara in order to reject Russian citizenship. Officials not only demonstrated lack of knowledge on the political situation in Crimea, but also rejected the application.

In response to the March 2014 law on citizenship, Verkhovna Rada⁷ of Ukraine adopted a law that aimed at protection of its citizens on the 'temporarily occupied territory'. The document guaranteed the preservation of the Ukrainian citizenship for those Crimeans, who were imposed to accept the Russian one. (Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring the Rights", 2014). Besides, this law guarantees the pensions for the residents of Crimea if they do not obtain pensions from the Russian Federation. Electoral rights as well as the right to inherit property were also guaranteed. Moreover, Ukrainian government issued decree regulating the work of the migration service in Ukraine on the affairs of the Crimeans. It aims at simplifying passport-related procedures for Crimeans. Thus, according to Ukrainian legislation, Ukrainians can only apply for passport-related formalities to the migration service office at their place of residence, but the Crimean residents are now allowed to apply anywhere in mainland Ukraine. (Migration Service of Ukraine).

As a response, Russian Parliament, on 28 May, approved the amendments to the Federal Law of the RF "On Citizenship". The amendments require citizens of the Russian Federation who possess another citizenship or residence permit of the foreign country to declare this within 60 days after acquisition otherwise they would be charged administrative penalties of 500 up to 1000 rub. The law came into force on January, 2016. (Federal Law on Amendments to Articles 6, 2014). As human rights activists suggest, public servants in Crimea, such as judges, police officers, and government officials were demanded to deliver their Ukrainian passports. (Shevel, 2014). Furthermore, employees of the governmental organization, including hospitals and schools, were unofficially and strongly recommended to turn in their Ukrainian passports. (Klymenko, 2015, p.7).

As it was mentioned before, the validity of the Ukrainian passports in Crimea finished with the end of the transition period on 1 January, 2015. Therefore, after this date, Ukrainians were no longer able to obtain medical treatment in Crimea (because of the absence of insurance), register phone starter kits, buy property and receive education. (Klymenko, 2015, p.7). As Klymenko argued in his report, by granting Russian passports to the Crimeans, Russia tried to restrict their freedom of movement. Ukraine did not recognize Russian passports issued on the 'temporarily occupied territory,' (*Ibid.*) therefore, Crimeans were not be able to use them for travelling to Ukraine. Moreover, as EU representative in Russia Soren Liborius explained, Crimeans could only obtain Schengen visa in Ukraine. ("ES ne priznaet", 2014). Judicial system of Crimea appeared to be useless in the cases on citizenship. According to the expert on citizenship policies in the former Soviet republics Oxana Shevel, in January 2015, Crimean court denied the appeal of Oleksandr Kolchenko, who tried to preserve his Ukrainian citizenship. In April 2014, Kolchenko and Ukrainian activist and filmmaker Sentsov appealed to the European Court on Human Rights reporting violation of Article 8 of the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. (Shevel, 2015). Later, in May 2014, Sentsov was arrested and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment on charges of plotting terrorism acts. ("Ukrainian Filmmaker Remains", 2014).

Since March 2014, numerous documents regulating the public life in Crimea were adopted. They touched upon the activity of the public organizations, media, telecommunication and other spheres.

NEW LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS IN CRIMEA

First of all, Russian government secured itself from the protests and mass gatherings that were challenging Kremlin since 20011 – 2012 rallies. Even before the annexation, on 28 December, 2013, State Duma adopted a law that amended the Criminal Code of the RF. Public calls for actions aiming at violating the territorial integrity of Russia would be punished by administrative fee, public works or even imprisonment. The same actions in the Internet could be punished with imprisonment up to 5 years. (Federal Law of the Russian Federation, 2013). The document came into force on 9 May, 2014, and automatically made illegal protests and rallies in Crimea.

Crimean media outlets were forced to re-register and to comply with the Russian legislation. Consequently, Roskomnadzor used this chance to get rid of the independent media in Crimea. ("V Krymu ustanovljena rabota", 2015). Besides, in accordance with the regulations of the Federal Service on

⁷ Ukrainian parliament.

Mass Media, since 2011, internet outlets had to be registered. (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications). Since in Ukraine, such provisions did not exist, the Crimean Internet publications were affected severely. As Klymenko reported, new regulations forced independent media outlets and NGOs that opposed the annexation of Crimea to leave the peninsula for mainland Ukraine. These included Center for Investigative Journalism, Black Sea News, Crimean Events, the Black Sea TV and Radio Company, the Information Press Center, and the Taurus Institute of Regional Development. (Klymenko, 2015, 8). Since the beginning of the Russian invasion into Crimea, the broadcasting of the Ukrainian TV channels was stopped; (“Veshchaniye ukrainskikh telekanalov”, 2014) only Russian channels left.

One of the most significant steps in Russian legislation aimed at curbing opposition was the legislation on extremism. As soon as Crimea was included into the Russian Federation and the opposition voices of the Crimean Muslims started to grow, Russian government amended the criminal law, particularly its articles regarding the extremism. (Federal Law "On Amending Certain Legislative Acts", 2014). Extremism was now mentioned along with the terrorist actions. President of the RF coordinated the work on the contraction and elimination of any extremist activity. This law was complemented by the list of the extremist activities and was spread in the mass media. The list included a number of video, audio materials, texts, poetry etc., including the works of the Ukrainian authors. First created in 2002, it is being constantly updated and extended. (Federal List of Extremist Materials, 2015). Correspondingly, the issue of extremism received the attention of the Russian scholars. Thus, the faculty members of the Kazan' Judicial Institute (Tatarstan) Butkevich and Konoplyova, in their article, are justifying the measures of the Russian government regarding extremism in Crimea. (Butkevich & Konoplova, 2015, p.76 - 83). As the main threat to the region they call two groups of organizations. One of them is represented by organizations spreading Wahhabist ideas and religious extremist organizations. They include l'-Dzhamaa Al'-Islamija (*Islamic Community*); Al'-Ihvan al'-Muslimun (*Muslim Brothers*); Hizb ut-Tahrir al'-Islami; At Takfir wal'-Hidzra (*Excommunication and Exodus*); Takfir Dzhamaat; Islamic charity organizations; Muslim movement Nurdzhular. (Butkevich & Konoplova, 2015, p.77). Another group is represented by the 'neo-fascist and neo-Nazi' organizations such as *Svoboda, Pravyj sektor* (Right Sector) and its units *Tryzub* by the name of Stepan Bandera; *UNA-UNSO; Patriot Ukrainy; Karpats'ka Sich; Bratstvo* of Dmytro Korchynsky. (Butkevich & Konoplova, 2015, p.80). The authors argue that the activities of the radical organizations go back to the period before 2014 and see the legislation of the RF as necessary to impede "the involvement of the population, particularly youth into the work of these groups". (Butkevich & Konoplova, 2015, p.80). From this division one can conclude that by updating the law on extremism, Kremlin aimed at targeting main opposition groups in Ukraine – Crimean Tatars that will be included into the first category and Ukrainian nationalist organizations.

Additionally, on March 11, Crimean parliament prohibited the activity of the mentioned above Ukrainian nationalist organizations in Crimea. Later, Decree of the Head of the Crimean Republic on measures of counteraction to the ideology of terrorism in 2015 – 2018 was adopted. (2015). The latter document, among others, precluded the establishment of the Anti-Terrorist Commission in the Republic of Crimea as well as the anti-terrorist municipal commissions. The measures include the actions to distinguish the main actors; distributors of the terrorist, extremist ideology and related information; measures to protect the Internet space of Crimea from the terrorist and extremist materials; instructions on making explosive objects, incitement to commit terrorist acts; detection and blocking the Internet sites containing terrorist and extremist materials; development of training programs (training) state and municipal employees to work in the field of education of youth, countering the ideology of terrorism and extremism, etc. (*Ibid.*).

Along with the securitization of the Crimean Tatar activities, Kremlin tried to coopt them and deal with the loyal Crimean Tatars using the strategy ‘divide-and-rule’. (Wilson, 2017, p.39). Thus, organizations ‘Crimea’ (Kyrym) headed by the former deputy chairman of the Mejlis and now the deputy chairman of the Crimean parliament Remzi Ilyasov and ‘Our Crimea’ (Bizim Kyrym) headed by the former head of the Genichesk district administration in southern Ukraine Seytumer Nimetullayev. However, due to the pro-Western orientations of their leadership and high mobilization capacities these attempts failed. (Muratova, 2019, p.53). Strategy ‘divide-and-rule’ was more successful in dealing with the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Crimea (DUMK) that’s supported Mejlis. After the transfer of the Yevpatoriia mosque to the pro-Kremlin Taurida Muftiate, leadership of DUMK announced its readiness for the

dialogue with Moscow. (Wilson, 2017, p.40 - 41). Besides, pressure on cultural and educational institutions of the Crimean Tatars, financial manipulations, searches in the houses and organizations of the Crimean Tatars, threats, as well as kidnappings are recorded by the experts. (Aydın, 2014, p.87; Sarıkaya, 2017, p.93 – 94; Özçelik, 2018, p.73 - 74).

In April 2016, Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars was included into the above-mentioned list of the extremist organizations and was prohibited in Crimea. (“Sud priznal Medzhlis”, 2016). At the same time, numerous searches in the houses and mosques of the Crimean Tatars followed. Differentiating “Tatar Islam” from “foreign (radical) Islam,” Crimean Tatar leadership frequently protested the rise of radical Islamic activities in Crimea. (Buhari- Gülmez, 2018, p.215). Discussed above policies jeopardized interethnic relations in Crimea. (Nikolko, 2018, p.88). The position of the Crimean Tatars drew attention of Turkey where media concentrated on the issue of Mejlis and territorial integrity of Ukraine. (Seyidov, 2014, p.67). Ukraine, in its turn, predicted the conflict between Moscow and Crimean Tatars and taking into consideration the opposition of the latter to the annexation granted indigenous people status. In this way, Ukrainian government obtained an ally in its struggle against Moscow. (Yapıcı, 2018, p.314). Particularly, Crimean Tatar activist Şahin (2018, p.162) notes the collaboration between Ukrainian Embassy to Ankara and Association of the Crimean Tatars in Ankara as a part of the rapprochement between Crimean Tatars and Ukraine.

As to the Internet connection, soon after the Russian invasion, Internet connection via Ukrainian state provider was cut. Within few months after the occupation, Russian state-owned provider *Rostelekom* via its branch provided fiber optic cable through the Kerch Strait. (“Rostelekom” vzyal Krym, 2014). Private providers of the Internet in Crimea were required to register themselves according to the Russian legislation (“Nachalas' registratsiya rossiyskikh”, 2014) under which they must store information of users for six months and disable access to any site if so ordered by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB). (Klymenko, 2015, p.9). Telecommunication in the region also became the victim of the Russian policy-makers. The leading Ukrainian companies - mobile operators *MTS Ukraine*, *Kyivstar*, and *Astelit* stopped operation in Crimea in August 2014. (““Kiyevstar” prekratil predostavleniye uslug”, 2014).

NEW CADRES IN THE REGION

The new era in the development of the relations between Moscow and Crimea started with the cleansing and new cadre appointments. In order to secure unobstructed transition, provide stability and prevent mass rallies new cadres were called.

Within a year after the annexation, Russia has removed Crimean professionals from strategically important positions in the region. Major law enforcement officials, such as judges, prosecutors, investigators, police, and members of the security services, were steadily being replaced by personnel imported from different regions of Russia. (Klymenko, 2015, p.9). Thus, on March 21, Putin appointed Russian Navy Vice Admiral Oleg Belavtsev as his official representative to the new Crimean Federal District, (Petrov, 2016a, p.99) where he stayed till July 2016 when the Southern Federal District was established. Putin's top crisis manager and deputy Prime Minister between 2008 and 2020 Dmitry Kozak became government curator on the issues of Crimea and Sevastopol. Previously, Kozak occupied the position of the minister of regional development, and also was responsible for the Sochi Olympics. The post of chief federal inspector of Crimea was filled by the officer of the Federal Security Service of the RF. Andrei Shishkin was granted the post of the deputy commander of the Black Sea Fleet. (Petrov, 2016b, p.76). Chairman of the Ministry on Crimea's Affairs in 2014 - 2015, Oleg Savelyev, was called to the region from the position of the Deputy Minister of Economic Development in order facilitate Crimea's economic development and integration into the Russian Federation. Federal Security Service (FSB) for Crimea and Sevastopol was headed by the retired Victor Palagin. Palagin, former head of the FSB in Bashkortostan (2008–13), had proved himself effective at combating Islamic radicalism and calming national elites. (Petrov, 2016b, p.77). Under the risk of the growing opposition among the Crimean Muslims, this appointment was one of the most significant insofar as demonstrated Kremlin's fears in Crimea. In May, new Chairman of the Crimean energy producer *Chernomorneftegaz*, a subsidiary of Ukrainian state company *Naftogaz*, was appointed from the Krasnodar region. Sergei Komissarov stayed till October 2014 and was dismissed from the office due to the revealed gas condensate theft.

Particular attention should be paid to the law enforcement structures. On April 16, the port city of Feodosiia was assigned a new prosecutor from the Krasnoyarsk region of Russia. Vitaly Stepanov's appointment to Feodosiia coincided with the similar cadre change in another coastal town, Alushta. On April 25, 2014, a prosecutor from Orsk in the Orenburg region of Russia, Sergei Brodsky, was appointed to Alushta. (Klymenko, 2015, p.7). Also in May, Yevpatoriia in western Crimea got a prosecutor Aleksandr Moshegov from Russia's Sverdlovsk. He stayed on his post till 2019 and had to resign due to the neglect of the major facts in the law suits against Yevpatoriia city major Andrei Filonov. In the end of May, Crimea and Sevastopol traffic police forces received new management from the Russian Federation. Later, on July 28, three regions of Crimea were assigned new prosecutors from the Russian Federation. In August, 2014, seventy-three staff members of thirteen territorial bodies of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service arrive in Crimea for placements. (Klymenko, 2015, p.7).

One of the most scandalous appointments was the prosecutor general's change. On May 2, 2014, Natalia Poklonskaya was appointed a prosecutor general of Crimea. Born in 1980, she became a symbol of the series of the appointments in the region. Before Poklonskaya occupied the position of the prosecutor general, she had been working as a head of the department in Simferopol prosecutor office. Her cases have been mainly political and against those who were treated as extremists. Poklonskaya received four deputies, while only one of them was the local, and the rest came from Tomsk, Tula and Yaroslavl' cities of the RF. At the moment, Poklonskaya is a deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, party *United Russia*.

The Investigation Committee did not exist in Ukraine and was established in Crimea in 2014, as well as the Federal Drug Control Service of the RF. While the personnel of the former were mainly from St. Petersburg, the latter was composed of the locals. The post of head of the Investigation Committee was granted to Mikhail Nazarov, who used to work in the same organ in Republic Mordovia. (Petrov, 2016b, p.79). According to Petrov, 500 judges of the general courts had to apply for the Russian citizenship immediately. They also underwent the acceleration courses and were assisted by the Russian colleagues to transit to the Russian system. (Petrov, 2016b, p.81).

At the same time, Moscow decided to dismiss from the office few ministers of the Crimean government. First of them was the transport minister Anatoly Tsurkin (March 2015), that was preceded by the critique of the Kerch ferryboat system expressed by the Russian minister of transport Sokolov. ("Crimean Transport Minister Anatoly Tsurkin", 2015). He was followed by the dismissal of Elena Yurchenko, minister of tourism, in the middle of the season - June 2015. She was replaced by unexperienced Sergey Strelbitsky. (Abalkin, 2015). As the analyst Andrey Sambros notes, the criticism of the ineffective work of the Free Economic Zone of Crimea and Sevastopol led to the discharge of the economy minister Nikolay Korezhkin. (Sambros, 2015). Furthermore, due to the investigation on charge of the corruption, property and land minister Aleksandr Gorodetsky was fired on 26 June. Three days later, minister of industrial politics Andrey Skrynnik was replaced. Additionally, the head of the tax policy of Crimea Nikolay Kochanov was arrested. (Sambros, 2015). As Sambros argues, while some dismissals were initiated by the federal government in order to put an end to the corruption in the region, some of the cadre replacements were implemented by the Head of Crimea Sergei Aksyonov. Such policy was convenient for Moscow that was trying to escape the full responsibility for the development of the regional economy. For instance, Strelbitsky and new economy minister Valentin Demidov were more convenient figures for Aksyonov. But, in case with the transport ministry, new minister Andrey Bezsarov was seen as an attempt to solve the situation with the ferryboat transportation. Bezsarov was originally from Kerch and used to be a top-manager in St. Petersburg. The trials against Skrynnik and Kochanov are rather a warning to Aksyonov that corruption and power abuse may have consequences for his career. (Sambros, 2015).

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE ANNEXED CRIMEA

On 7 April, 2014, the Crimean department of the party *United Russia* was established. Members of the Pro-Russian *Party of Regions* that was registered in Ukraine and headed by former Ukrainian President Yanukovich entered United Russia. Crimean Speaker Konstantinov chaired new organization. ("V Krymu sozdano regional'noye", 2014). The presidium of the United Russia included two of Konstantinov's deputies (Konstantin Bakharev and Russian Bloc party member Andrei

Kozenko), Peter Zaporozhets, the head of the State Council Committee on industry, transportation, and energy, and Sergey Tsekov, a senator and former head of the Supreme Council of Crimea. (Petrov 2016b, p.84). People's Front for Russia, the Crimean branch of the Liberal Democratic Party, A Just Russia also held their assemblies in April. (Petrov 2016b, p.84 - 85). People's Front was chaired by Aksyonov, speaker Konstantinov and the deputy head of the Crimean Federation of the Greco-Roman wrestling Rustem Kazakov. (“Obshcherossiyskiy narodnyy front”, 2014). As to the LDPR, the regional branch was opened on 10 April, 2014. (“U LDPR poyavilos”, 2014). A Just Russia's first meeting in Crimea was held on 18 April, 2015. The post of the head was given to the local Aleksandr Terentyev, who used to work at the Altai regional branch of the party. (“Spravedlivaya Rossiya prishla”, 2014).

During the 2014 election to the Crimean parliament, 11 regional branches of the Russian parties were eligible to participate. (Lists of political parties, 2014). These were United Russia, Just Russia, Patriots of Russia, Communist Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Green Party, Great Fatherland Party, Union of Labour, Motherland Party and Born in the USSR Party. Later, Democratic Party of Russia was added to this list (The registered republican lists of candidates, 2014). These all represented all-Russian political parties. No local parties, as well as no Ukrainian or Crimean Tatar Party or organization were registered in Crimea for 2014 election.

As to the pro-Russian political parties in Crimea, such as Russian Unity and Russian Bloc Crimea they disappeared from the political stage of the region. First, since leader of Russian Unity Sergei Aksyonov was recognized as responsible for the annexation of Crimea, the party was banned in Ukraine, and it ceased to exist. Russian bloc that could not enter the Crimean parliament in 2010 was also banned in Ukraine. Yanukovich's Party of Regions ceased to exist as well. In 2010, six Crimean Tatars entered Crimean parliament through the *Rukh* party list. *Rukh* is one of the oldest political parties in Ukraine established in 1989. It is known as national-democratic party. After annexation of Crimea it also left the region. In this way, multi-partyism and pluralism disappeared in Crimea. Besides, only Russian parties were left. As it was mentioned above, members of the Party of Regions entered United Russia party. As of 31 December 2016, 31 parties were registered in the Republic. (Regional branches of political parties, 2016).

Election to the parliament of the Russian Federation, State Duma, on 18 September, 2016 was held under the conditions of the economic crisis, related to the loss of connections to Ukraine as well as sanctions imposed by the Western countries. (Demydova, 2020). During, that was held according to the mixed electoral system, in Crimea, the United Russia party won absolute majority in all districts. (“V Krymu podveli okonchatel'nyye”, 2016). The same trend was recorded in 2014. In 2014 election to the Crimean parliament, United Russia was supported by 70,18% of the voters. In 2016 State Duma election, support appeared to be 72,8% (Kuzmina, 2018, p.34). Party mostly relied on voters that had previously supported the Party of Regions in the 2012 Ukrainian national elections. (Szakonyi, 2017, p.5). LDPR, in 2014 and in 2016, appeared to be the second and obtained 8,49%, and 11,14% correspondingly. (Kuzmina, 2018, p.35). As Szakonyi points out, the success of the United Russia in 2016 election in Crimea relied heavily on President Putin. (Szakonyi, 2017, p.3) The euphoria about annexation contributed to his ratings significantly (Levada Centre, 2020). Systemic opposition parties from Russia failed to attract electorate. Nonsystemic opposition parties like PARNAS and Yabloko basically boycotted the campaign in Crimea. While their leaders were against annexation, parties faced serious difficulties competing Putin's party. (Szakonyi, 2017, p.3).

The turnout appeared to be very low - around 42% in Crimea, and 45% in Sevastopol. (Vitaliy Chervonenko, 2016). This can be explained by the regular blackouts in the region as well as by the boycott of the election among the Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatars boycotted the post-annexation local elections that Russians thought were a legitimization of the annexation. (Aydin, 2014, p.87). Six deputies entered the State Duma from Crimea. They were deputy prime minister Sheremet, deputy prime minister Ruslan Balbek and prosecutor general Poklonskaya (proportional system), deputy speaker Kozenko, the head of the parliamentary committee on the cultural affairs Savchenko, and deputy speaker Bakharev (single member constituency). (“Aksenov nazval imena”, 2016). Mikhail Sheremet is a local politician born in Crimean town of Dzhankoy who between 2010 and 2014 was a head of the Simferopol

city branch of the Russian Unity. Following declaration of independence, Sheremet joined people's militia in Crimea and later became the member of the Russian Unity party. According to its list, Sheremet entered Duma (Sheremet, Mihail Sergeevich). Ruslan Balbek is a pro-Russian Crimean Tatar politician who is in opposition to Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars. He was also elected to Duma as a United Russia party member (Balbek, Ruslan Ismailovich). Later, in 2019 he together with Poklonskaya had been included into the delegation that visited Turkey and met President Erdogan. That provoked serious criticisms about possibility that Turkey could recognize annexation of Crimea ("Ukraina vyrazila protest", 2019). Andrey Kozenko, member of the Russian Community of Crimea since 2001 and Russian Bloc since 2003, was known as a youth activist long before the annexation. Since 2010, he was a deputy prime minister of Crimea. Kozenko entered State Duma from the Simferopol constituency (Personal'nyy sayt Andreja Kozenko). Svetlana Savchenko, was elected to the Crimean parliament in 1994 from the Crimean President Yury Meshkov's Russia bloc. Later, she headed *Soyuz* (Union) party of Lev Mirimsky. Savchenko has a significant resume in the Committee on Culture of the Crimean Parliament (Savchenko, Svetlana Borisovna).

CONCLUSION

Following the political crisis in Ukraine in late 2013 – beginning of 2014, a power vacuum emerged in the country. Under the slogan of the protection of the Crimean Russophones, Russian troops without signs on their uniforms invaded the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Following the seizure of the local parliament and central broadcasting station by the 'polite people', Crimea's government announced its independence and, through the illegal referendum, secured its entrance into the Russian Federation. The period between 2014 and 2016 this article concentrates on is considered as transitional period insofar as the most important issues were to be addressed. As it was discussed in the article, the main objective of Kremlin during the period between 2014 and 2016 was rapid and unobstructed inclusion of Crimea into the Russian Federation. Success of this project would be a significant trump card in Russian domestic propaganda, first of all. Since the perception of Russia's foreign policy success is a tool for domestic mobilization. Crimea entered Russian Federation as a republic; and Sevastopol – as a city of the federal subordination. A new Constitution was adopted and corresponding power structures were formed. Crimea received the position of the head of republic. This unobstructed inclusion of the region was possible due to the presence of the pro-Russian majority in Crimea. Particularly, this is seen in the composition of the Crimean parliament before the annexation: 80% of the 100-seat legislature was controlled by the pro-Russian Party of Regions. Key figures, responsible for annexation, such as Aksyonov and Konstantinov, remained in their chairs. At the same time, no minorities, especially Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian were allowed in Crimea. As it was the case in the Eastern Ukrainian Donbas, Russian citizenship and passports became, first of all, a tool. On the one hand, Russian citizenship attracted many people who sought to live and work in the mainland Russia. On the other hand, in order to keep their jobs in Crimea, people had to accept Russian passports. The procedure omitted Crimeans outside of Russia that actually contradicted to the policy of compatriots' support. Russia and Ukraine entered the hybrid war on citizens through the numerous regulations and legislation.

As to the freedom of media, it was severely limited in Crimea after the annexation. However, it is noteworthy that in the issue of media, Crimea is not different from the rest of Russia. Rather, Crimea was brought to the authoritarian Russian standards and legislation after 2014. At the same time, Kremlin managed to securitize the disobedience of the Ukrainians and the Crimean Tatars. As to the latter, when Kremlin's attempts to create Pro-Russian political organizations of the Crimean Tatars failed, the law on extremism was used to ban Mejlis and Crimean Tatar leadership. They were put on the same level with Al-Qaeda in their activities by provision mentioning terrorist activities. This not only switched the issue of the protests against the annexation from the political to the security level, but also helped to get rid of the numerous organizations through their banning. The coordination center of the Crimean Tatars was removed from the Crimea that weakened their activities. Later, through the searches and arrests, Kremlin would threaten people even more.

In the cadre policies of Moscow in Crimea, one can trace the special attention given to the *siloviki* groups. The region was staffed with the representatives of the law enforcing agencies from the mainland Russia. Part of the appointments were made by Aksyonov himself and Kremlin was satisfied insofar as

the responsibility for possible omissions would be on the Crimean leadership. New cadres that came from the mainland Russia had often no knowledge about the regional peculiarities and often were involved into the scandals over the corruption. Political parties registered in Crimea in the mentioned period included only the regional branches of the all-Russian parties, such as United Russia, Just Russia, LDPR and others. Local parties, such as Russian Unity or Russian Bloc, as well as all-Ukrainian Party of Regions (Crimean branch) ceased to exist since they were registered according to Ukrainian legislation. Their members entered United Russia party mostly. Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars associated with the Mejlis did not obtain any representation in the Crimean parliament. Only, pro-Russian Tatars who supported annexation and entered Russian political parties received the representation. Also, six Crimean politicians were elected to the Russian State Duma.

By mid-2016, Crimea was deprived of its special status and included into the Southern Federal district. That signified the end of the transition period actually and the end of the special treatment for the region. The latter included new cadre policies, significant finances and rhetoric “Crimea Is Ours” (*Krym Nash*). It also became a very suitable occasion to get rid of the unfavorable appointees. In the following years, Moscow and Crimean government would address the issues of transportation (to be solved through the Kerch bridge); water; security in the Black Sea.

Bilgilendirme / Acknowledgement:

- 1- This article had been produced on the basis of the author’s PhD thesis titled “Internal and External Dimensions of the Crimean Crisis Before and After 2014” that was submitted to the Area Studies PhD Program, Social Sciences Institute of the Middle East Technical University in February 2017.
- 2- Thesis was written thanks to the financial support of the TUBITAK BİDEB 2215 program.
- 3- This article does not require permission of the ethics committee since no personal data was used.
- 4- The article has been completed according to the research and publishing ethics.

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