



Centre for
**Global
Cooperation
Research**

Report of the fourth Käte Hamburger Dialogue

Engaging Crimea: Prospect for Cooperation and Conflict

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*The panel of the fourth Käte Hamburger Dialogue, organized in cooperation with the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), consisted of **Olga Dukhnich**, Associate Professor at the Institute of Social and Political Psychology, National Academy of Pedagogical Science of Ukraine; **Elmira Muratova**, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Taurida National Vernadsky University in Simferopol, Crimea; and **Ivan Preobrazhenskiy**, PhD, Russian columnist and political analyst. Chaired by **David Carment**, Senior Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21) and Professor at The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Canada, an intensive discussion between the guests and the audience took place. Providing an outlook, Dr **Jörn Grävingholt**, Senior Researcher at DIE, wrapped up the event.*

In his introduction to the discussion, Prof. **Dirk Messner**, Co-Director of KHK / GCR21 and Director of DIE, pointed to the fact that the conflict in Crimea is of special interest because peace became an issue that has to be discussed again in Europe. From his point of view, the case is actually a clash of two different concepts of Global Governance. One is the idea of shared and pooled sovereignty, of order and the rule of law, the other being Global Governance in the sense of power and power relations, and in the sense of spheres of interest. It is these perspectives of Global Governance which are being confronted in Ukraine and Crimea and which had to be discussed.

Moderator David Carment opened the panel discussion with the notion that the conflict in Crimea is indeed a very new one. Actually, he claimed, one would not have thought of this talk some time ago because the tensions between Russia and Ukraine at that time were not materialized yet. Aware of this, he first asked the panellists to introduce themselves and talk about their more personal experiences in Crimea.



The panellists all made very different experiences in the last year. Olga Dukhnich left Crimea a year ago. She worked as a journalist and commentator for different media and wrote articles expressing pro-Ukrainian positions. In sight of the referendum and advised by several friends, she decided that it would not be secure in Crimea for her.

From her point of view, what is most problematic in Crimea is that public discourse in the real meaning of the word has completely vanished. People in Crimea are afraid to discuss political topics, even in situations among friends. The situation overall has worsened: **a culture of denunciations / a culture of occupation** has emerged. For example, she pointed out, there are now laws that



punish expressing the view that Crimea is part of Ukraine with prison of up to seven years and even directors of research institutes and the media support denunciations. Especially the ethnic minority of Crimean Tatars has been subject of discriminations, and they completely lost their voice.



Elmira Muratova pointed out that she and Dukhnich were former colleagues and emphasized that – while she stayed in Crimea – the question of leaving is still a very current one among Crimean scholars. She added to what Dukhnich said that even the participation in the organized workshop (which took place the day after the Käte Hamburger Dialogue) could be perceived as questioning the new Crimean authorities and could therefore be punished.

In her research, she analysed different discourses that are current in Crimea, of which she identified two. The first is the discourse of pro-Russian people who emphasize that the conflict is not something that started one year ago, but already existed for over 25 years. In this time, the Ukrainian government did little to normalize the relation between the mainland and the Crimean peninsula and thus was not able to establish common values. With these people, the idea of “coming home” became very popular. While she questioned the validity of last year’s referendum, she admitted that this discourse is very strong. And still today people support the annexation.

The other discourse is that of Crimean Tatars. Being a Crimean Tatar herself, she explained that people connect their tragedies, in sense of discrimination and political pressure, with their history – not with Russian history, although the two are strongly intertwined. Nowadays the Crimean Tatar community is struggling with different problems. As already mentioned, they suffer under Russian legislation: For example, only 2 out of 12 media stations got a broadcasting permission by the authorities, and those that received it are not very popular. Secondly, even according to official data, the majority of people leaving Crimea are Crimean Tatar. Thirdly, an increasing Islamist radicalization can be observed while in the same time Muslim institutions have to cooperate with the authorities.

Ivan Preobrazhenskiy began with explaining how his grandfather was taught that Crimea is Russian. He therefore sees Crimea as de facto Russian territory and regards himself as Russian, not as a Ukrainian citizen. He argued that Russian annexation of Crimea has always been a project of economic development. However, Crimea turned out to be a **second Chechen scenario** – not in the sense of war, but in the sense of development. It is now in a completely depressive situation, but he believed that the situation can improve in the future.



Moderator David Carment summarized that all the participants drew a rather dark scenario in their introductory remarks and in turn raised the question whether there could be any hope for a positive scenario of future development.

Confronted with this question, Olga Dukhnich strongly argued that there is no way Crimea could have a positive outlook of development. The first major problem in her opinion is that the territory is absolutely isolated from the world, including from Russia. In her argument, she suggested that the Putin administration did little to integrate Crimea into the Russian Federation, nor does it seem they will. On the other hand, Ukraine cannot take back Crimea without a war scenario, which of course is nothing to aim for. Only when Putin is out of power, there might be a positive scenario without a war. And even then, Crimea would still need a common control provided by an International organization like the United Nations or the European Union.

Elmira Muratova agreed with this position. She does not see any positive prospect. She emphasized that everything should be done to avoid a military conflict because Crimean Tatars would be the first victims of deprivations. While she advocated for a **diplomatic solution**, she also stressed the point that organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) already attempted certain diplomatic undertakings which were subsequently prohibited by Russia.

In contrast, Preobrazhenskiy believed that there still is an opportunity for a diplomatic solution. However, he turned the responsibility to the Ukrainian President to take an initiative. According to Preobrazhenskiy, the Russian president Vladimir Putin already started an engagement in Crimea. And reciprocity is now expected. The problem of Crimea, from a Russian perspective, is that it is now hostage of Russia's geopolitical strategy. There is a Russian economic concept for the region which aims to develop Crimea as a touristic, logistic and trade centre for the entire Black Sea region. For this plan to succeed, Russia anticipates the cooperative engagement from Ukrainian side. Thus, he believed, there will be no solution of the Crimean crisis in the next 25 years.

Now that it became clear that a positive outlook for Crimea is unlikely, moderator David Carment asked whether Ukraine could survive without Crimea.

Elmira Muratova believed that it surely is possible, but the Crimean conflict has become a crucial issue – and there is the common belief in Ukrainian discourse that its government will take certain actions. But, as she pointed out already, the only possible action would be a war.



Olga Dukhnych shared a slightly different perspective on the issue. While she agrees that it is a big challenge, it might also have a positive effect on Ukraine. Ukraine can use the issue to gain attention on the international floor and raise awareness for its diplomatic problems.



Much to the amusement of the audience, Ivan Preobrazhenskiy claimed that Ukraine has lived 20 years without Crimea already. He promptly elaborated that there has never been a strong connection – economically and politically – between Crimea and the rest of Ukraine and that the country was still frozen in the Soviet past. Instead, he argued, losing Crimea was actually a big relief for the country. It is, however, an emotional loss in the sense that the peninsula made Ukraine a large country: A state of certain significance.

The discussion then turned its focus toward aspirations of Russian president Putin and the implications derived for the broader picture.

Olga Dukhnych argued that the Russian policy is always a policy of strength and of power, and accepting Crimea as Russian territory is just one good example of this strategy. However, this also has implications for the Ukrainian public: For the first time in history, the crisis reveals the status of Ukraine as a political nation of which Crimea is a part, and which is part of Europe.

Ivan Preobrazhenskiy, in turn, argued quite differently. He asked: 'Why did Russia annex Crimea? To prevent a NATO's extension and to react on the US-activities in Euromaidan.' Now, while Russia is usually perceived as an aggressor, Preobrazhenskiy claimed that in fact Russia never really acted, but always reacted to the measures the West and especially US undertook. Therefore, discussing an intervention in the Baltic States is irrelevant as long as there is no increasing aggression from the West.

Elmira Muratova agreed to the point Ivan Preobrazhenskiy claimed insofar as she confirmed that the argument of Russia as reacting is also the position of the Russian discourse in Crimea, which she already outlined before.

Opening the discussion to the audience, further questions were raised regarding the **military dimension of the conflict** and what **role civil society** or NGOs can play in Crimea. Answering the first point, Ivan Preobrazhenskiy emphasized that, luckily, there has not been very much bloodshed. If Western states now perceived Crimea as a military subject, the next thing would be a war. Rather, he argued, negotiating is a potential next step. With regard to the role of civil society, Olga Dukhnych pointed out that Crimean Tatars had their own strong civil society which Russia tries to keep latent. Russians, on the other hand, only have what is called 'professional Russians' in Crimea, i.e. civil society



organizations which are being financed by the Kremlin and do not exist at a grassroots level.



Wrapping up the dialogue, Jörn Grävingholt emphasized that Crimea disappeared in the media perception and apparently, the conflict has been settled. But contrarily, it became clear during the panel discussion, the situation is very complicated. Grävingholt identified three issues that have to be settled in the conflict: **The humanitarian issue, the legal issue, and the political issue.**

From the humanitarian perspective, one could argue that people in Crimea lost their freedom, but they at least won their peace. While being very blunt, there still is some point to it. Obviously, there was a lot of dissatisfaction with Crimea being part of Ukraine. In the legal sense, the situation is relatively clear: it is hard to imagine a formal recognition of the status quo as it is. The true challenge, however, lies in the political sphere: 'We are in for the long run – there are no quick solutions expected', Grävingholt argued.

There are now three challenges, he claimed. In the short term, Grävingholt saw no opportunity for the West to engage. In the medium term, the West will have to find a constructive role. It needs to find engagement cooperatively; and it needs to cease playing power politics in order to gain credibility. In the long term, one needs to be aware that the very formalistic act of recognition may still hold some normative power.

Report written by Patrick Clasen