

HISTORY OF AUTONOMIST AND SEPARATIST TENDENCIES AND PECULIARITIES OF THE SUBJECTIFICATION OF ETHNIC RUSSIANS IN CRIMEA ON THE EVE OF ITS ANNEXATION BY RUSSIA (1988–2013)

The article considers and systematises the history of autonomist and separatist tendencies and the peculiarities of the subjectification of ethnic Russians in Crimea in 1988–2013, i.e. on the eve of its annexation by Russia in 2014. It was stated that the specified problems in the specified period of time passed at least two stages of its development. Initially, i.e. in the late 1980s and 1990s, the development of autonomist and separatist tendencies in Crimea was marked by a drastically radical character, but later, i.e. at the beginning of the XXI century, it was transferred into centrism or at least left-wing centrism. It was also stated that the autonomy and separatism in Crimea at its first stage of development were different in their direction, in particular pro-Russian and Crimean Tatarian ones, mainly nationally determined, and later became more monolithic and oriented to the Russian Federation, albeit in pro-Russian and pro-Slavic senses. The author substantiated that despite the overflow of the Crimean autonomism and separatism in a moderate or latent course at the beginning of the XXI century, this issue was not removed and the Russian occupation authorities actively resorted to it in 2013–2014, in particular in the framework of the annexation of Crimea. This allowed arguing that the Crimean autonomy within Ukraine and the attempts of separatism have become a kind of political technology of accounting of the Crimean specificity.

Keywords: autonomy, autonomism, separatism, autonomist and separatist tendencies, ethnic Russians, annexation, Crimea, Ukraine, Russian Federation.

HISTORIA AUTONOMICZNYCH I SEPARATYSTYCZNYCH TENDENCJI I WŁAŚCIWOŚCI UCZESTNICTWA ROSJI ETNICZNYCH NA KRYMIE W PRZED WŁĄCZENIEM ROSJI (1988–2013)

Autor rozważa i systematyzuje historię dążenia do autonomii i tendencji separatystycznych oraz specyfikę upodmiotowienia etnicznych Rosjan na Krymie w latach 1988–2013, a więc w przededniu jego aneksji przez Rosję w 2014 r. Stwierdzono, że określone problemy występujące w określonym czasie w nie mniej niż dwóch etapach. Początkowo, tj. na przełomie lat osiemdziesiątych i dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku, rozwój tendencji autonomicznych i separatystycznych na Krymie przejawiał się w radykalny sposób, jednak z upływem czasu, tj. na początku XXI wieku, stawał się centrystyczny lub przynajmniej lewicowo-centrystyczny. Stwierdzono również, że autonomia i separatyzm na Krymie na pierwszym etapie rozwoju były

odmienne pod względem kierunków, w szczególności prorosyjski i tatarsko-krymski, głównie o charakterze narodowym, z czasem stały się bardziej monolityczne i zorientowane na Federację Rosyjską, aczkolwiek w rozumieniu prorosyjskim i proslowiańskim. Autor uzasadnia, że pomimo umiarkowanego i utajonego wpływu krymskiego autonomizmu i separatyzmu na początku XXI wieku, kwestia ta nie została usunięta, a rosyjskie władze okupacyjne aktywnie ją podejmowały w latach 2013–2014, w szczególności w ramach aneksji Krymu. Pozwoliło to argumentować zasadność autonomii Krymu Ukrainie, a tendencje separatystyczne stały się rodzajem politycznej technologii rozgrywania krymskiej specyfiki.

Słowa kluczowe: autonomia, autonomizm, separatyzm, tendencje autonomistyczne i separatystyczne, etniczni Rosjanie, aneksja, Krym, Ukraina, Federacja Rosyjska.

ІСТОРІЯ АВТОНОМІСТЬСЬКО-СЕПАРАТИСТЬСЬКИХ ТЕНДЕНЦІЙ І ОСОБЛИВОСТЕЙ СУБ'ЄКТИВАЦІЇ ЕТНІЧНИХ РОСІЯН У КРИМУ НАПЕРЕДОДНІ ЙОГО АНЕКСІЇ РОСІЄЮ (1988–2013)

У статті розглянуто та систематизовано історію автономістсько-сепаратистських тенденцій і особливостей суб'єктивізації етнічних росіян у Криму в 1988–2013 рр. напередодні його анексії Росією у 2014 р. Встановлено, що означена проблематика в означений період часу пройшла щонайменше два етапи свого розвитку. Спочатку, наприкінці 80-х – в 90-х рр. ХХ ст., розвиток автономістсько-сепаратистські тенденції у Криму окреслювався яскраво радикальним характером, однак згодом, на початку ХХІ ст., був переведений у русло централізму або принаймні лівого централізму. Також констатовано, що спершу автономізм і сепаратизм у Криму був різним за своїм спрямуванням, зокрема prorосійським і кримсько-татарським, головно національно детерміновано, а пізніше став більш монолітним і орієнтованим на Російську Федерацію, хоч і у prorосійському та прослов'янському розумінні. Обґрунтовано, що попри перетікання кримського автономізму і сепаратизму в помірковане або латентне русло на початку ХХІ ст. цієї проблематики не було знято і до неї активно вдалась російська окупаційна влада вже на стику 2013–2014 рр., зокрема в рамках анексії Криму. Це дозволило аргументувати, що кримська автономія у складі України та спроби її сепаратизації стали своєрідною політичною технологією обліку кримської специфіки.

Ключові слова: автономія, автономізм, сепаратизм, автономістсько-сепаратистські тенденції, етнічні росіяни, анексія, Крим, Україна, Російська Федерація.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the illegal proclamation of part of its territory in 2014 in accordance with international law have become an unprecedented phenomenon in the

recent political history of Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the sprouts of autonomy, separatism and subjectification of the Russian ethnic community in Crimea, and thus preparations for the annexation of the peninsula were visible throughout the “twilight” period of the USSR and post-Soviet development of Ukraine, part of which Crimea was and remains officially and according to norms of international law, i.e. at least during the period 1988-2013. They were mainly manifested in the socio-political form, and in particular in the design and development of autonomist-separatist organizations and trends, which were differently engaged in activities not only social, historical, cultural and human rights, but also politics and political rhetoric, and thus formed certain strategies for the attitude of a significant part of the Crimean population, mainly ethnic Russians, and sometimes official Crimean institutions, to state power in Ukraine. Accordingly, the autonomist-separatist subjectification and politicization of the Russian ethnic community in Crimea has become a kind of springboard, on the basis of which the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 proved simpler and more effective. In this context, the analysis of the history of autonomist-separatist tendencies and features of the subjectification of ethnic Russians in Crimea in the period 1988-2013, especially given that Russians in Crimea (mainly ethno cultural) constituted and constitute a relative majority of the population, and their organizations typically advocated rapprochement with Russia or secession from Ukraine, is of considerable research interest in the context of the current complication of the international situation and the deepening and militarization of the contradictions between Ukraine and Russia. This is extremely relevant against the background that the autonomist-separatist tendencies and peculiarities of subjectification of ethnic Russians in Crimea significantly contributed to the formation of appropriate ideological, ideological and political attitudes, which became the precondition and basis for the annexation of the peninsula in 2014.

The issue of autonomy and separatism in Crimea is due to a number of factors, both formal and factual. Thus, purely formally, in particular in accordance with the current Constitution of Ukraine of 1996, as well as the already invalid constitutions of the former USSR, Ukraine is positioned as a unitary state, which includes the Autonomous Republic of Crimea with its constitution, capital, symbols and formed legislative, executive and judicial branches of government¹. In view of this, hierarchical relations between public administration bodies (the center) and administrative-territorial units (periphery) have been nominally developed in Ukraine. Therefore, the normative power in the Crimea was determined and is determined mainly by the constitution and laws of Ukraine and could not exceed the regulatory restrictions imposed by the state bodies of the center².

However, in fact, the process of gaining the status of autonomy in Crimea has always been very long and controversial; intersecting with issues of interethnic relations in the region,

¹ Zakon Ukrainy “Pro zatverdzhennia Konstytutsii Avtonomnoi Respubliki Krym” vid 23 hrudnia 1998 roku # 350-XIV, *«Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy (VVR)»* 1999, nr 5–6, s. 43.

² Suski M., *On the Entrenchment of Autonomy. Autonomy: Applications and Implications*, Wyd. Kluwer Law International 1998, s. 154.

including the phenomenon of separatism, which against the background of subjectivity of ethnic Russians necessarily required separate consideration and separate political position. The fact is that the process of autonomy of Crimea unfolded mainly in the late 80's – early 90's of the 20th century and played a key role in the political development of the region at the present stage of its development. However, scholars have not yet reached a consensus on the nature and driving forces of this process, as well as in general on what led to the creation of an autonomous republic in Crimea – a random combination of political circumstances and factors or objective historical, political, national, geopolitical, economic factors, etc. In particular, in the research literature there are different opinions about the origin of the Crimean autonomy. According to some authors, the creation of an autonomous republic in Crimea (first within the USSR and later in Ukraine) was inspired by the union center (still within the USSR), which sought to prevent the withdrawal of union republics from the Soviet Union by raising the status of autonomies. Other authors link the emergence of an autonomous republic in Crimea with the activities of the Crimean political elite and the plans of its representatives to strengthen their positions in the region. Other researchers put the process of returning Crimean Tatars to the Crimea in the first place and insist on the fact that the possibility of Crimea gaining autonomous status became real thanks to the autonomist initiatives of the Crimean Tatar national movement. Finally, some scholars state that the process of re-establishing an autonomous republic in Crimea was based on an autonomous movement in which a large part of the peninsula's population actually took part, both ethnic Russians (mainly ethno politically) and ethnic Crimean Tatars (to a lesser extent) and in the ethno-national context).

The diversity of existing views testifies to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the process and history of autonomy, and later separatism in the Crimea. Therefore, we consider it appropriate to apply to its study the methodology of system analysis, which allows a comprehensive study of the process of reproduction of Crimean autonomy and separatism, mainly taking into account their existing structural elements and subsystems and without reducing these processes to any one subsystem or activity of one of the political actors etc. The expediency of using the systemic method to study the process of autonomy and separatism in the Crimea is determined by the fact that these processes unfolded in a large-scale systemic crisis, first in the Soviet Union and later in Ukraine. According to M. Bagrov, the project of building an autonomous republic in the Crimea was created and implemented under special circumstances – at the break of systems, in the collapse of the united and the formation of new independent states and the changed moods of the people³. Hence, the need to study and systematize the relationship of Crimean autonomy not only with the fact of the majority of the Crimean population in the representation of Russians, but with the disintegration of the political system of the USSR of the late Soviet period.

³ Bagrov N., Politiko-pravovye aspekty stanovlenija Avtonomnoj Respubliki Krym, "Kul'tura narodov Prichernomorja" 1998, nr 4, s. 246.

Thus, the initiation of these processes began in late 1988, and lasted until 1991 – this is the so-called period of reproduction of the autonomous republic in the Crimea. In order to evaluate it, you must first consider the category of autonomy. By the term “autonomization” we mean the process of autonomous organization of any territory, which is one of the components of a state. Therefore, the process of autonomy inevitably has a number of aspects: legal, political, ethnic, and institutional and others. However, in this context, we are interested in the political as well as the ethnic component, first of autonomy and later of separatism in Crimea. From the point of view of system analysis, the processes of autonomy and separatism in Crimea should be considered, on the one hand, as a number of interactions of political actors and institutions, which are in some way interconnected within the existing political system. On the other hand, the reproduction of Crimean autonomy and later Crimean separatism should be seen as a form of self-organization of the Crimean regional political system in response to challenges first associated with the crisis in the USSR and later with political processes in Ukraine. Therefore, carrying out a systematic analysis of the history and process of reproduction of Crimean autonomy and the definition of Crimean separatism, it is necessary not only to record its systemic characteristics, but also to take into account the inclusion of the process in a particular political system. Let's try to make a decomposition of the political system of the USSR of the late Soviet period, within the framework of which the reproduction and formation of the Crimean autonomy took place at the initial stage, and then to make a reference to the political system of modern Ukraine. In this case, we will take as a basis the structural scheme of the political regime, which is composed of such elements as: actors of the political process, institutions of political power, resources and strategies to achieve and / or retain political power, which characterize political institutions and actors.

Thus, the political system of the USSR at the last stage of its operation included three levels of government. On the first of them were the authorities of the union center, on the second – the authorities of the union republics and only on the third – the power structures of the autonomous republics, regions and so on. The organization of political power in the USSR was based on a system of councils – representative bodies of the parliamentary type. At the same time, there was a “vertical” subordination of regional councils to the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the Union Republic. Naturally, the functioning of this system was ensured on the basis of the “shadow” power of the committees of the Communist Party of the USSR, which actually managed the representative and executive bodies at all levels. The main political institutions involved in the process of reproduction of the autonomous republic in Crimea were: the Crimean regional committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, the Crimean regional council of people's deputies, the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the Uk.SSR. It is also necessary to distinguish three groups of political actors who put forward autonomous demands and tried to implement certain projects to raise the status of Crimea. The first two groups of political actors are representatives of the Crimean Tatar and Russian movements, on

the one hand, and activists of a number of socio-political organizations that emerged in Crimea on the wave of democratization and publicity, on the other. The third group of political actors includes the leadership of the regional committee of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian SSR and deputies from the Crimean regional council. Political actors at the level of the union and republican centers were also involved in the process of autonomy, but not directly, but indirectly – through the political institutions in which they participated. The basic conclusion is that autonomy in Crimea is not only a Russian but also a Crimean Tatar idea, and therefore they should be considered in a complex. Even more, because the root of Crimean autonomy in the late 80's of the 20th century just started with the Crimean Tatar bias⁴.

In 1988-1989, a new line of conduct of the central leadership of the USSR was outlined, aimed at resolving the issue of re-establishing an autonomous republic in the Crimea. It was during these years that the systemic crisis in the Soviet Union began to deepen, in particular, disintegration processes intensified, and the country's central leadership lost control over affairs in the field of interethnic relations. Trying to find a mechanism to respond to the challenges, Mikhail Gorbachev at the XIX All-Union Conference of the CPSU (June 1988) for the first time correlated the process of harmonizing interethnic relations in the Soviet Union with expanding the rights of union republics and raising the status of all kinds of autonomy. Therefore, two sets of factors influenced the decision on the need for autonomy of Crimea. These include the active ideas of the bearers of autonomous movements and objective systemic features of development.

The interaction of the Crimean Tatar movement with the power structures of the USSR political system at the level of the union center was "system-forming", i. e. one that influenced the decision to restore autonomy in Crimea and led to the transition of the Crimean regional political system to a qualitatively new level. But the process of re-establishing an autonomous republic in Crimea was ultimately determined by political actors as well as regional-level institutions. In this regard, the process of autonomy in Crimea should be seen as a formula for self-organization of the regional political system of Crimea in response to the challenges posed by the systemic crisis in the USSR and the return of Crimean Tatars to the peninsula. Only later (on the occasion of Ukraine's declaration of independence) it is expedient to supplement this process mainly with Russian / pro-Russian, including ethnic and political, elements.

In 1989, a number of socio-political organizations emerged in the Crimea that was in opposition to the CPSU. Democratic (or so-called "informal") organizations in Crimea combined opposition activities with the promotion of slogans, which in one way or another were reduced to the idea of increasing the autonomy of Crimea in the political and economic spheres. A number of democratic organizations in general proposed the idea of declaring Crimea an independent republic within the USSR. And such organizations as "Democratic Tavrida", "Ecology and Peace", "Memorial", "People's Front of Crimea" and "Democratic Union", have

⁴ Gubglo M., Chervonnaja S., *Krymskotatarskoe nacional'noe dvizhenie. T. 2. Dokumenty, materialy, bronika*, Wyd. Mysl 1992, s. 82.

included this requirement in their programs. This was evidence that the Soviet-born regional political system under the influence of perestroika in the Soviet Union began to respond to the challenges posed by the disintegration of the USSR and the ethnic autonomy plans of the Crimean Tatars, which inevitably included and revealed a Russian counter-element. In this context, the election platform of the public organization “Democratic Tavrida”, as well as the Crimean regional association “Ecology and World” is of considerable interest. The election platform of the “Democratic Tavrida” was entirely based on the idea of defining the status of Crimea as a union republic within the USSR – or the Soviet Socialist Republic of Tavrida. The program used the term “Tavrida people”, which was considered as the central subject of law and the bearer of sovereignty in the territory of the republic. In the platform of the association “Ecology and Peace” there were provisions on the need to “ensure the status of Crimea as a multinational union republic”, as well as the need for the idea of holding a Crimean referendum on its administrative and economic status and more. As a result, as early as 1990, the idea of raising the political status of Crimea appeared at the level of various subsystems of the regional political system of Crimea. During the pre-election campaign for local councils (in March 1990), about 80 percent of the platforms of candidates for deputies of the Crimean regional council were voiced to change the status of Crimea to increase it – from an autonomous region to a union republic.

In turn, the so-called “Russian separatism” in Crimea emerged in the fertile political climate of the early 1990s, during which a kaleidoscopic group of actors made various political demands. The potential for conflict in Crimea has existed since the first half of the 1990s, in part due to two important factors. First, due to the positioning of the Crimean Tatar minority, which has historical complaints of “ethnic cleansing” in Crimea and modern insults due to racial, socio-economic and political discrimination. Secondly, due to the then threat of abolishing the fragile balance on the peninsula, in particular the presence of a large Russian minority (in Crimea – the majority), which after the collapse of the Soviet Union were abroad in independent Ukraine⁵. This means that initially Crimean separatism was led not by Crimean Russians, but by Tatars and Communists, who were actually the most active in the political arena in the early 1990s. Instead, the so-called “Russian” (pro-Russian, from the Russians of Crimea) coalition as such was not formed until 1993.

It is also interesting that in the era of “Gorbachev’s reforms” (1985-1991) various political movements (including pro-Ukrainian, communist and pro-Russian) emerged in the Crimea, and then turned into political parties. These parties, demanding the restoration of Crimean autonomy, began to point to the special status of Crimea as early as 1989, and then began to demand a regional referendum on the status of the peninsula in the context of a nationwide referendum on Ukraine’s future on December 1, 1991⁶. First of all, we must talk about

⁵ Kuzio T., *Ukraine – Crimea – Russia: Triangle of Conflict*, Wyd. Ibidem – Verlag 2007, s. 109.

⁶ Tkachuk V., *The Crimea: Chronicle of separatism, 1992-1995*, Wyd. Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research 1996, s. 6.

the Communist Party of Crimea, which existed to mobilize public opinion in support of the Crimean identity and self-determination. The local elections in Crimea in March 1990 confirmed the position and strength of the Communist Party in the regional government, as well as sparked a debate on the status of autonomy. Therefore, we consider this stage to be an intensification of autonomist-separatist tendencies in Crimea⁷. And the first concrete step towards the establishment of autonomy was taken by the Soviet Crimean region in September 1990, when it adopted a statement addressed to the USSR and the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR on the need to annul the decision of 1945-1946 to change the autonomous status of the Soviet Socialist Republic into unit, hierarchically lower than the republic⁸. The movement, led by M. Bagrov, the speaker of the Crimean parliament, and his colleague L. Grach, who became the main figures responsible for promoting the debate on the region's autonomy, began to gain momentum. This became especially relevant after Ukraine declared its sovereignty (July 16, 1990). Therefore, the separatist movement of the early 1990s, in which Russian groups were represented as one of the "waves", must be seen in context and as a reaction, including, above all, to Ukrainian nationalism⁹.

It is quite interesting that the direction of the processes concerning the search for sovereignty of the Crimean region accelerated quite quickly, as the Verkhovna Rada of Crimea adopted a declaration on state and the legal status of the peninsula, which meant declaring the abolition of Crimean autonomy unconstitutional and provided that Crimeans had the right to restore their "statehood" in the form of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Deputies decided to hold a referendum (January 20, 1991) on the independence of the peninsula. At the same time, the referendum, in which 81.4% of voters took part, showed that 93.3% of the electorate voted in support of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. But most Crimean Tatars boycotted the vote, arguing that only they had the right to decide the fate of Crimea¹⁰. It is also interesting that the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, established in 1991, became the last Soviet Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as the first and last to be created on the basis of the right to self-determination¹¹. However, local parties that supported the sovereignty of Crimea tried to use the moment to give impetus to further development in this direction. This, in particular, manifested itself in the planning of the next referendum, which should be held on the issue of Crimea's independence in alliance with other states. The campaign for such a referendum was in full swing in early 1992, and within a few months the Republican Movement of Crimea, a pro-Russian party, had the opportunity to obtain more than the 180,000 signatures required by law to hold a referendum.

⁷ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 135.

⁸ Solchanyk R., The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine, "Europe-Asia Studies" 1994, vol 46, nr 1, s. 51.

⁹ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 20.

¹⁰ Solchanyk R., The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine, "Europe-Asia Studies" 1994, vol 46, nr 1, s. 51.

¹¹ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 138.

This created the conditions for a direct confrontation with Kyiv. However, shortly before the decision on the referendum, which was to be made at the session of the Crimean parliament, the President of Ukraine L. Kravchuk issued a harsh statement condemning the campaign for the referendum. He claimed that the referendum was organized by separatists who intended to destabilize the situation, sow discord among the peoples of Crimea and between Crimea and Ukraine, and worsen Ukrainian-Russian relations. But then neither the Ukrainian nor the Crimean authorities were ready to enter the game on the basis of compromise.

Accordingly, even though regional leaders in Crimea have focused on defending their separatist ambitions, the Ukrainian government has taken the first steps toward a federalist solution to tensions on the peninsula. It is noteworthy that the Ukrainian parliament adopted a draft law “On the delimitation of powers between Ukraine and the Republic of Crimea.” In a document agreed by both parties, Crimea was defined as an autonomous part of Ukraine with its acquisition of jurisdiction in “all matters within its competence.” However, the final version of the agreement was somewhat different and actually generated a lot of problems for Crimea. Therefore, the agreement was perceived by the Crimean authorities and Tatars as an act of betrayal. As a result, the Mejlis condemned the agreement on the division of powers between Ukraine and Crimea and stated that it was concluded without taking into account the views and wishes of the Crimean Tatar people¹².

This means that the agreement on the division of power made by official Kyiv at that time became a catalyst for the “calls” of Crimea for autonomy, because soon after its conclusion a more active section of autonomy and separatism began.

Political tensions escalated on May 5, 1992, when the Crimean Verkhovna Rada (or Crimean parliament), largely in agreement with the pro-Russian movement initiated by Yuri Meshkov, leader of the Crimean Republican Movement, passed the Crimean State Independence Act and a new constitution. It also adopted the decision to hold a referendum on independence (and unification with other states) on August 2, 1992. The new Crimean constitution was rather ambiguous, as it positioned itself with the republican status of Crimea and reaffirmed its place in Ukraine¹³. By adopting the Constitution and threatening a referendum on Crimea’s independence, M. Bagrov wanted to force Kyiv to make concessions and negotiations. And the Ukrainian parliament did intervene, as on May 13, 1992, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (Parliament of Ukraine) declared this law on the “new constitution” of Crimea as unconstitutional, and also suggested that the Verkhovna Rada of Crimea repeal it within two weeks. President L. Kravchuk and Crimean leader M. Bagrov reached a compromise, which provided that within two weeks the Crimean parliament would cancel its statement on the referendum – a demand it eventually complied with. Therefore, both sides agreed on the status of Crimea as a component of Ukraine, which will certainly have all the necessary political and legal opportunities to

¹² Tkachuk V., *The Crimea: Chronicle of separatism, 1992–1995*, Wyd. Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research 1996, s. 9.

¹³ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 146.

realize its unique potential, including the right to independent relations with other countries in social, cultural and economic spheres¹⁴. This declaration was adopted in the form of a law by the Crimean parliament, but there were preconditions for the further development of radical movements and even separatism in Crimea.

In the context of political frustration in Kyiv and general support for the separation of powers between the Ukrainian and Crimean governments, pro-Russian separatists on the peninsula have managed to come to power. Thus, the victory in the presidential election, which took place in the Crimea (such a position was envisaged at the time) in January 1993, was won by Yuri Meshkov, receiving 72.9 percent of the vote¹⁵. He ran in the elections in the ranks of the dominant and newly formed "Russian Bloc" and promised to give new life to the referendum on the status of Crimea. Meshkov's campaign turned more to the amorphous pro-Russian feelings of the ethnic Russian majority in Crimea, and also appealed to Russian-speaking Ukrainians in Crimea¹⁶. At the same time, it should be emphasized that Meshkov's election platform was not openly separatist or even unequivocally pro-Russian, although it was certainly anti-Ukrainian.

The fact is that his party has always been dichotomous on issues related, for example, to the future of Crimea, as one part of the political force advocated the status of an independent Crimea and the other its alliance with Russia. In addition, the election victory was partly due to the populist stance of pro-Russian politicians. The "Russian Bloc's" campaign was based on simple and comprehensive slogans that emphasized the obvious need to further develop Crimea's statehood, stabilize the economic crisis, raise living standards, protect the political and economic interests of Crimean citizens, and form an independent foreign policy.

However, Yu. Meshkov did not wait long to reveal his real political goals. Despite the lack of a clear program, the first steps after his election victory positioned him as a controversial politician and statesman to Kyiv and Ukraine. Crimea's newly elected president has begun planning a regional referendum, although he has said it will not be mandatory. He also appointed Saburov, a Russian citizen, as Crimea's deputy prime minister for economic affairs and called for a regional boycott of the 1994 Ukrainian parliamentary elections. In addition, Yuri Meshkov literally moved Crimea to a new time zone, changing the regional clock to Moscow time¹⁷. Nevertheless, the leader's idea to boycott the parliamentary elections in Ukraine failed because he could not influence decisions in Kyiv. Using a number of strategic mistakes made by Yu. Meshkov and manifestations of economic catastrophe in the region, Kyiv regained control over all power structures in Crimea. Therefore, the conclusion is that the prompt coming to power of Russian separatists in Crimea in response to dissatisfaction with the policies of Kyiv

¹⁴ Solchanyk R., *The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, "Europe-Asia Studies" 1994, vol 46, nr 1, s. 56.

¹⁵ Tkachuk V., *The Crimea: Chronicle of separatism, 1992-1995*, Wyd. Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research 1996, s. 73.

¹⁶ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 158.

¹⁷ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 161.

and Ukraine was met with a backlash. In addition, the population of Crimea understands that the “Russian Bloc” cannot improve the socio-economic situation on the peninsula and so on.

At the same time, the deployment of a Russian / pro-Russian separatist movement in Crimea was also inevitably linked to the openly foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The fact is that Russia’s participation in Crimean politics, in particular in matters of the independence of this formally Ukrainian region and administrative-territorial unit, has always been and remains the result of a residual feeling among some Russian politicians that Crimea is allegedly historical and inalienable part of Russia. In addition, it has always been extremely difficult for Russia to agree to Ukraine’s independence since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and therefore Russia’s position has often been accompanied by strong beliefs that Ukrainian independence is a temporary phenomenon. This perception was especially noticeable among Russian communists and radical nationalists. Thus, the then deputy of the State Duma of Russia, a representative of the Communist Party, and deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee on Geopolitics Yu. Nikiforenko in March 1998 offered a passionate explanation of the inevitability of reunification of Russia and Ukraine, in particular Agreement on Thus, the then deputy of the State Duma of Russia, a representative of the Communist Party, and deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee on Geopolitics Yu. Nikiforenko in March 1998 offered a passionate explanation of the inevitability of reunification of Russia and Ukraine, in particular Treaty of Friendship, stating that “We do not need only part of Ukraine. We need all of Ukraine”¹⁸.

In general, the inflammatory rhetoric of Russian parliamentarians, especially during their visits to Crimea, as well as statements in support of Crimean separatists from the extremist organizations “National Salvation Front” and “Pravda”, were aimed at creating pressure on Kyiv. Similarly, A. Sobchak, the then mayor of St. Petersburg and one of the leading members of the “Movement for Democratic Reforms”, argued that “Crimea never belonged to Ukraine and that there is no legal or moral basis for Ukraine to claim Crimea”¹⁹. This was complemented by the fact that even Russian public opinion agreed with this nationalist position. Thus, in a 1992 poll, 51 percent of Russian respondents to Russia believed that Russia and Ukraine should be reunited into a single and cohesive state, and only 31 percent insisted that they should remain separate states, although with open borders. Another 8 percent of Russians believed that the two countries should develop the same relations as with other countries, including the establishment of visa regime, border control, customs and more²⁰.

That is why the nationalist rhetoric formed in certain Russian political circles was accompanied by legislative resolutions and discussions on the subsequent understanding and resolution of the issue. Thus, in mid-January 1992, the Committee on International Affairs and Foreign

¹⁸ Bukkvoll T., Off the Cuff Politics: Explaining Russia’s Lack of a Ukraine Strategy, *“Europe-Asia Studies”* 2001, vol 53, nr 8, s. 1142.

¹⁹ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 15.

²⁰ Bukkvoll T., Off the Cuff Politics: Explaining Russia’s Lack of a Ukraine Strategy, *“Europe-Asia Studies”* 2001, vol 53, nr 8, s. 1143.

Economic Relations of the then Verkhovna Rada of the Russian Federation under the leadership of V. Lukin, one of the founders of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party "Apple", suggested for consideration by Russian lawmakers that the parliament of the Russian Federation declared the decision on transfer of Crimea to structure of the Ukrainian SSR from 1954 invalid²¹. Moreover, the Russian parliament passed a resolution by a majority of votes, after which two committees considered the constitutionality of the 1954 decision. And already during 1992-1993, the Russian parliament intensified its demands on Crimea and Sevastopol. The Russian parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs eventually condemned the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine, and this happened on January 23, 1992, which inevitably provoked a sharp protest from Ukraine²². Therefore, after this statement, Russian-Ukrainian relations gradually continued to deteriorate. Russia's vice president at the time, O. Ruts koy, visited Crimea in April 1992 and called for its secession from Ukraine, and a month later the Russian parliament passed a resolution declaring the transfer of Crimea to the USSR in 1954 illegal. Therefore, in general, the active calls of the Russian parliament for the independence of Crimea and / or its reunification with Russia appeared only after the moment when Yuri Meshkov, at the head of the Russian / pro-Russian coalition, came to power in Crimea.

At the same time, the then President of Russia Boris Yeltsin sought to distance himself more from parliamentary resolutions. In fact, members of Russia's political elite, which strongly supported the idea of Russian / pro-Russian separatism in Crimea, were critics of Yeltsin's government²³. Although the government itself took a moderate approach to the peninsula, it continued to argue, through Russia's ambassador to Ukraine, that Sevastopol, the capital of the Black Sea Fleet, should be leased to Russia. Boris Yeltsin, on the other hand, has repeatedly argued that the Crimean issue is an internal political issue in Ukraine, from which it is necessary to distance itself as soon as possible²⁴. However, the Kremlin's real policy contradicted the government's official position on the Crimean issue, as in May 1992 parliamentary delegations from Crimea and Kyiv reached an agreement on the division of power. At this stage, Boris Yeltsin sent at the head of the negotiating delegation to the Crimea none other than O. Ruts koy. In Sevastopol, O. Ruts koy reformulated Russia's claims to Crimea, arguing that "common sense" dictated that the peninsula should be part of Russia. Accordingly, due to political appointments, Yeltsin's claims of neutrality on this issue were effectively undermined by his new factual actions.

Thus, as early as 1993, it became a turning point in the direction of Russia's official foreign policy, from A. Kozyrev's pro-Western and so-called Atlantic orientation to the approach of a more nationalist "Russian supremacy," as a result of which support was offered to Crimean

²¹ Solchanyk R., The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine, *"Europe-Asia Studies"* 1994, vol 46, nr 1, s. 52.

²² Kuzio T., *Ukraine – Crimea – Russia: Triangle of Conflict*, Wyd. Ibidem – Verlag 2007, s. 15.

²³ Tuminez A., *Russian Nationalism since 1856: Ideology and the Making of Foreign Policy*, Wyd. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2000, s. 240.

²⁴ Solchanyk R., The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine, *"Europe-Asia Studies"* 1994, vol 46, nr 1, s. 53.

separatists. In mid-July 1993, the Russian parliament proposed instructions for drafting a law “On consolidating the federal status of the city of Sevastopol in the Russian Constitution,” an initiative supported by a significant number of members of parliament²⁵. This shift accelerated after the victory of the communist and right-wing nationalist parties in the elections to the Russian parliament (already the State Duma) in December 1993. And this was the reason for the formation of changed rhetoric of Russian politicians about Crimea. After that, it became clear that the issue of the Black Sea Fleet and the “Crimean issue” in Russian politics became inseparable. In essence, the upper echelons of Russia’s post-Soviet government sought to put pressure on Ukraine because of the threat of a civil conflict in Crimea and direct Russian military intervention, in particular to ensure its access to Sevastopol, – the headquarters of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. But despite this development, there was no escalation of hostilities in Crimea. In the early 1990s, Crimea was once on the brink of conflict, almost in line with developments in the Caucasus²⁶.

As in the state policy of the Caucasus Boiler countries, under L. Kravchuk’s presidency it was extremely difficult for the Ukrainian government to promote a single national political ideology that would promote integration and loyalty in the country²⁷. At that time, there were two peaks of political crisis in relations between Ukraine and Crimea. The first peak was in May 1992, when the peninsula proclaimed sovereignty and adopted a separatist constitution, and the second peak was during the presidency of Yuri Meshkov, the leader of the Russian nationalists. Moreover, Kyiv has shown that Ukrainian policy is “lame” in imposing its power on the more Russian-speaking eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, which have insisted on achieving their autonomy. At the same time, scholars claim that it was the “slow reaction of the government” to political events in Crimea that contributed to the absence of ethnic violence. In contrast to the Caucasus, there was a clear reluctance on the part of the Ukrainian authorities to use force to suppress the separatist movement in Crimea in the mid-1990s, and this contributed to or created the basis for a free resolution of the conflict.

Importantly, the fragility and instability of pro-Russian separatist coalitions on the peninsula undoubtedly contributed to Kyiv’s desire to regain control of Crimea. The manifestation of this was the fact that the separatist movement in Crimea in 1994-1995 collapsed due to a set of internal disputes, the lack of significant support from Russia and Ukrainian economic, political and military pressure²⁸. The pro-Russian bloc, previously supported by Russia, disintegrated in late 1994 as a result of a quarrel between the Verkhovna Rada of Crimea and the President of Crimea. The reason was that Russian nationalists were unable to cope with the economic crisis

²⁵ Kuzio T., *Ukraine – Crimea – Russia: Triangle of Conflict*, Wyd. Ibidem – Verlag 2007, s. 16.

²⁶ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 12.

²⁷ Bugajski J., *Ethnic Relations and Regional Problems in Independent Ukraine*, [w:] Wolchik S., Zviglyanich V. (eds.), *Ukraine. The Search for a National Identity*, Wyd. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc. 2000, s. 167.

²⁸ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 13.

in Russia itself, as well as to attract foreign investment²⁹. Therefore, from an analytical point of view, it should be emphasized that the pro-Russian bloc in Crimea has always been a compromise of two tendencies: one of them has always defended the sovereign, democratic Crimean state in alliance with Ukraine, Belarus and Russia within the CIS; the second, was more radical and called for the unification of Crimea with Russia. However, in this context, the second trend was too radical for the majority of Crimeans and did not receive support from Russia, in particular in contrast to Russia's covert support for Abkhaz and Transnistrian separatism. In addition, by the end of 1994, the failures of the Russian movement in the course of effective socio-economic policy discredited it in the eyes of voters³⁰. Russian nationalists were clearly at a disadvantage in at least two areas: first, Russia provided much less support than its rhetoric proclaimed; secondly, the Ukrainian authorities controlled the security forces stationed in the Crimea, albeit with the exception of the Black Sea Fleet, which proved to be an important deterrent. In general, it must be said that in the mid-1990s of the 20th century the separatism of pro-Russian movements in Crimea underwent a significant decline and even decline.

The persistent, albeit sometimes erroneous, and problematic institutionalization of the new Ukrainian state through elections, the development of the party system, and interaction between central and regional authorities also helped to contain the potential for conflict in the Crimean issue. Therefore, despite the turbulent period of development in 1991-1994, the policy was carried out within the framework of political institutions, and cases of violence, in addition to occasional street clashes, were avoided. After all, even quite radical Russian nationalists in Crimea worked within the framework of regional political institutions and organizations and competed in regional and sometimes even national elections. In particular, until October 1994, the "Russian Bloc" was part of three factions. In addition, some former "Russian Bloc" deputies and members of the Crimean Tatar faction have begun working together to reach an agreement with Kyiv. Accordingly, the conditional restructuring of ethno political relations partially overcame ethnic political polarization and shifted Crimean politics to the center. It also helped to strengthen Crimea's relations with the central government in Kyiv. The abolition of the post of President of Crimea by the President of Ukraine also undoubtedly played a significant role. More importantly, the political landscape of Crimea was reorganized through the adoption of the 1996 Ukrainian Constitution, which was designed to limit the effectiveness of local (regional) parties, as the principle of party registration at the national level (or in a number of regions of Ukraine) was introduced. Therefore, the ban on regional parties ensured that Crimean politics was tied to the center, although regional peculiarities persisted in the format of non-partisan organizations and electoral blocs that associated themselves with parties at the national level³¹. Therefore, the Crimean elections in 1998 finally confirmed the fact of the decline of pro-Russian

²⁹ Kuzio T., *Ukraine – Crimea – Russia: Triangle of Conflict*, Wyd. Ibidem – Verlag 2007, s. 163.

³⁰ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 172.

³¹ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 197.

separatism, as a result of which the idea of an alliance between Crimea and Russia was turned into calls for a Slavic union. This was outlined by the fact that the Crimean branch of the Communist Party of Ukraine took over the government of the Crimean Verkhovna Rada, as a result of which the separatist parties were removed from the governing process³². Finally, on October 21, 1998, the Crimean Verkhovna Rada adopted the fifth (since 1991) draft Constitution of Crimea. Unlike previous projects, there was no mention of the Crimean “statehood” and certain rights of citizens. In addition, the new draft constitution recognized Ukrainian as the state language in Crimea. The collapse of the Russian economy in early 1998 also undermined the belief that it could be an attractive alternative for Crimean voters, and this dealt a final blow to pro-Russian political groups on the peninsula, at least for a while³³.

However, despite the successful resolution of the institutional conflicts of the 1990s, Crimean pro-Russian separatism remained a potential threat, mainly due to Moscow’s continued policy of issuing Russian passports to Ukrainians in Crimea, and was appealed to sometimes with renewed vigor. It also passively weakened the position of the Russian movement in Crimea, as the Russian president’s policy was dominated by the concept of a civilian Russian nation, in which space for other Russians from the post-Soviet space was clearly secondary, if not superfluous (Parliament).

Attempts to intensify the pro-Russian movement in Crimea also failed due to the defeat of Communist leader G. Zyuganov in the 1996 presidential election, when Boris Yeltsin was re-elected as the head of the state. It also passively weakened the position of the Russian movement in Crimea, as the Russian president’s policy was dominated by the concept of a civilian Russian nation, in which space for other Russians from the post-Soviet space was clearly secondary, if not superfluous, (Even despite the official appeals of the President to the Federal Assembly – the upper house of the Russian parliament)³⁴. In addition, the Russian vector in relation to the Russian problem in Crimea was also directly affected by the attributes of the Crimean process: the short term of Meshkov’s presidency in Crimea showed official Moscow that its control would be a difficult task for the Russian authorities. There is no doubt that Meshkov’s policy caused a kind of uproar in Moscow³⁵. The addition was the signing of the so-called “Great Treaty” - two documents: the first – on the settlement of the status of the Black Sea Fleet, and the second – on “Cooperation and Partnership” (in 1997)³⁶. This, combined with the 1998 parliamentary elections, ended a period of “political turbulence” in the development of the Russian question in Crimea. The period (almost coinciding with the first stage of the formation of Russian identity under Boris Yeltsin) was finally closed on December 25,

³² D’Anieri P., Kravchuk R., Kuzio T., *Politics and Society in Ukraine*, Wyd. Westview Press 1999, s. 67.

³³ Sasse G., *The Crimea Question: identity, transition and conflict*, Wyd. Harvard University 2007, s. 199.

³⁴ Kuzio T., *Ukraine – Crimea – Russia: Triangle of Conflict*, Wyd. Ibidem – Verlag 2007, s. 33.

³⁵ Bukkvoll T., Off the Cuff Politics: Explaining Russia’s Lack of a Ukraine Strategy, *“Europe-Asia Studies”* 2001, vol 53, nr 8, s. 1145.

³⁶ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 18.

1998, when the Russian State Duma ratified, even with the support of the Russian Communists, the Ukrainian-Russian treaty, resulting in the final recognition of Crimea's membership in Ukraine from Russia³⁷. The fact is that Russia was concerned about its internal problems, and therefore could not effectively influence the resolution of the Russian issue in Ukraine in its favor. However, even so, the agreement stipulated that the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation would be in Sevastopol until 2017. At that time, the Russian authorities considered such a step to be the maximum possible. However, as experience shows, with the change of approaches to the Russian question and the promotion of the so-called "compatriot policy" in Russia in the second period of its post-Soviet development (Putin's era), tendencies to restore the presence of official Moscow in Crimea became noticeable. Within the analyzed period, the epic of this process was the signing in 2010 (during the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev) of an agreement between Ukraine and Russia to continue the deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea until 2047, which immanently slowed down the process of Ukraine's accession to NATO, which has traditionally been a priority of Ukraine's foreign policy. And this, in fact, along with the consequences of the "Revolution of Dignity" in Ukraine in 2013-2014, was the main political event that preceded the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014.

Although, in fact, the restoration and deployment of a kind of "second wave" – from the beginning of the new century – of pro-Russian separatism in the Crimea also had its own history and features. On the one hand, the question of separatism at the beginning of the 21st century in the Crimea it had almost no practical expression. But, on the other hand, since 2005, "political frictions" over the pro-Russian orientation of certain political circles in Crimea and other regions of Ukraine have resumed. This became apparent due to the question of the probability of Ukraine's accession to NATO, which, according to opinion polls, was opposed by 50 percent of respondents in 1996. Moreover, these were mainly respondents from the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, about whom purposeful agitation was carried out during the Soviet era on NATO's political course. In Crimea, 98 percent of citizens opposed the country's accession to the alliance in 2006 (and in Sevastopol in 2007 there were 99 percent)³⁸. The wave of discontent also peaked in 2006 and led to Ukraine's first-ever waiver of the Partnership for Peace program (training has been stable since 1997, in Crimea and Western Ukraine)³⁹. Mass protests began in Crimea in 2006, but were declared unofficial by the Ukrainian authorities. But already in 2010 the issue was moved to a latent phase, as the then President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich did not show clear positions on the future status of Ukraine, and even more opposed to Ukraine's accession to NATO, given the agreement to continue the deployment of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine until 2047.

³⁷ D'Anieri P., Kravchuk R., Kuzio T., *Politics and Society in Ukraine*, Wyd. Westview Press 1999, s. 67.

³⁸ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 44.

³⁹ Kuzio T., Russian Subversion in the Crimea, *Jane's Intelligence Digest* 03.11.2006, źródło: <https://www.gmfus.org/commentary/russian-subversion-crimea> [odczyt: 20.10.20].

However, it should be noted that this period of pro-Russian separatism in Crimea was regulated by Russia's adjusted position on the course of defending the "rights of compatriots" in the former Soviet republics. Therefore, Russian politicians did everything to destabilize the internal situation in Ukraine on the basis of financial and moral assistance to pro-Russian organizations in Crimea. Nominally, the resumption of separatism in Crimea was the result of the question of the pro-Western vector of government offices in Ukraine after the "Orange Revolution" in 2004. The issue was compounded by Russia's dissatisfaction with the eastern vector for NATO enlargement (not only in the case of Ukraine, but also in other Central and Eastern European countries). The fact is that Ukraine's accession to the military alliance would be perceived by Russia as a direct encroachment on its near abroad. Therefore, covert funding for various pro-Russian separatist organizations and political movements in Crimea began, which ultimately jeopardized the issue of rapprochement between Ukraine and NATO. Crimean officials and political parties and public organizations, youth movements, and Cossacks⁴⁰ were used as tools in Russian propaganda, the Russian Orthodox Church⁴¹, as well as educational institutions. In addition, Russian-language media have seized full control of Crimea's information space⁴².

In general, the situation that unfolded after 2005 differed significantly from the first stage of Russian / pro-Russian separatism in Crimea. The basic difference was the fact that at that time there was a more active position of Russia on this issue. The formation of Russian nationalism (in its second phase since the collapse of the Soviet Union), marked by the resurgence of imperial (post-imperial) rhetoric and the rise of youth nationalist groups such as "Nashi" and the "Eurasian Youth Movement", had a significant impact on the resumption of talks concerning updating of the status of Crimea. In addition, through the Federal Security Service and military intelligence, Russia has informed the agency of the location and plans for military exercises, as well as offered staff to increase attendance at rallies and demonstrations organized by pro-Russian NGOs⁴³. In particular, in June 2006, officers of the Federal Security Service of Russia were among the leading organizers of rallies in Crimea organized against the "Sea Breeze" military exercises. It was these demonstrations that were reflected in the media space of both Russian and Ukrainian origin. In this context, the activities of various Russian organizations that had branches in the Crimea became extremely active. Thus, the Crimean branch of the Pan-Slavic extremist organization "Eurasian Youth Union", as a structural unit of the "International Eurasian Movement" founded by O. Dugin, in Ukraine actively cooperated with the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine and the "Russian Bloc" and advocated ideas that were related to the "revival of the Great Russian Empire." Then the organization staged anti-NATO rallies with flags of

⁴⁰ Bogomolov A., Ukraine's Strategic Security on a Crossroads Between Democracy and Neutrality, *European Security Forum Working Paper* 2007, nr 24.

⁴¹ Volvach P., Stability in Crimea and in Ukraine in general depends on interreligious harmony, understanding and religious tolerance, *Crimean Tatar Issues* 2008, nr 1.

⁴² *Guide to Media in Ukraine's Crimea – May 2007: BBC Monitoring International Reports*, LexisNexis Academic, May 30, 2007.

⁴³ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 24

Russian nationalism and campaigned against the official recognition of Ukrainian insurgents from the UIA army⁴⁴. Moreover, in March 2007, the “Eurasian Youth Union” in Sevastopol demanded the withdrawal of the Ukrainian fleet from the Crimea, and in May 2007, activists called for the “deportation of Ukrainian politicians to African countries.” Another pro-Russian youth organization, “Breakthrough”, which was popular throughout Ukraine among the predominantly Russian-speaking population, created a stronghold against anti-Russian initiatives “developed by both the West and the United States in the former Soviet republics,” and therefore organized many relevant events. Thus, in January 2006, it openly called for the separation of Crimea from Ukraine.

In May 2006, “Breakthrough” (together with the “Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia” Popular Front) held a picket in Simferopol under the slogan “For the abolition of the Ukrainian language, because it is useless!” In March 2007, Proryv (together with the Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia National Front) took part in a protest against the “Ukrainization” of the media. In May 2007, “Breakthrough” launched a campaign “Russian flag in every window!” (Crimean residents were called by phone and asked to hang Russian flags on their windows and balconies). In February 2008, members of Breakthrough in Simferopol protested against dubbing of films into Ukrainian. In March 2007, “Breakthrough” (together with the Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia National Front) took part in a protest against the “Ukrainization” of the media. In May 2007, “Breakthrough” launched a campaign “Russian flag in every window!” (Crimean residents were called by phone and asked to hang Russian flags on their windows and balconies). In February 2008, members of Breakthrough in Simferopol protested against dubbing of films into Ukrainian.

In addition, there was a noticeable spread of parties and organizations created to promote religious and cultural issues. All of them supported the hope of forming a kind of Slavic union in one form or another. First, it was the Union of Orthodox Citizens of Crimea, an organization founded in 2001 to protect the Russian Orthodox Church in the “lands of the triad of Ukraine, Russia, and Crimea” According to the members of this union; Crimea is the cradle of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, members of this organization advocated that the Russian people have the same heritage and the same Orthodox faith. The “Russian Crimean Movement”, another organization founded in 2001 in Simferopol, officially advocated for the protection of the rights of the Russian population in Crimea or other people who identified themselves as Russians. It is interesting to note that such organizations have become widespread since Putin came to the presidency in Russia.

However, the most influential of the pro-Russian organizations in Crimea at the time was the “Russian Crimean Community”. It had 25 regional offices operating in all cities and regions in the Crimea and a membership of about 15 thousand people. The organization was founded in 1993, and was based on two once powerful pro-Russian organizations that were active in

⁴⁴ Bogomolov A., Ukraine’s Strategic Security on a Crossroads Between Democracy and Neutrality, *“European Security Forum Working Paper”* 2007, nr 24.

Crimea in the early 1990s, including the “Crimean Republican Movement” and the “Republican Party of Crimea”⁴⁵. The “Russian community of Crimea” has consistently opposed the Ukrainization of Crimea, using the pro-Russian relations of the Crimean people for political purposes. In addition, it focused on the idea of Ukraine’s integration with Russia. Since the mid-1990s, the organization has been funded by then-Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and his adviser, a member of the Russian Duma, K. Zatulin, as well as informally the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Russian Presidential Administration⁴⁶. Since 2000, the Russian community in Crimea has called itself an “organization of Russian compatriots” in order to receive additional financial support from Russia, in which “compatriots” have become a key priority of Putin’s foreign policy. Most members of the Russian Crimean Community were closely associated with the Russian Bloc, the Party of Regions of Ukraine, the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, and so on.

This helped the “Russian community of Crimea” to find seats for its members in various Crimean representative bodies, using party lists of various political forces. For example, thirteen of the 76 deputies of the Simferopol City Council in 2008 were members of the “Russian community of Crimea.” Later, in particular in 2008-2013, the “Russian community of Crimea” diversified its activities and created a network of its organizations. However, in general, this organization, the “Russian Youth Center of Crimea” and the “Russian Bloc”, were grouped into an indivisible organizational “umbrella”, where the main platform was the idea of Russian Orthodox culture, which was supposed to be the basis of Ukrainian culture and originated in Crimea. Therefore, the organization wanted to: regroup the Crimean people who identified themselves as Russians; to increase cultural cooperation with Russia, care for Russian consciousness and identity; to promote the Russian language, literature, culture. As a result, the group asserted itself as the bearer of political power in Crimea and stressed that it could withstand the expansionist tendencies of Ukrainian nationalism. In fact, this organization, as the largest pro-Russian of its kind, was only a speck in the political arena of Crimea. Nevertheless, back in 2007, the “Russian Community of Crimea” organized a conference for Russian compatriots in Yalta, which resulted in the creation of the “National Council of Russian Compatriots”. As an “umbrella organization” of Russian organizations in Ukraine, the National Council has brought together many organizations from the regions of Ukraine in an effort to transform into a party.

Another pro-Russian organization in Crimea at the time was the “Russian Bloc”. Nominally, it was a Ukrainian political party formed in 2002 as a result of a merger with the “Russian-Ukrainian Union”, which aimed to unite the Slavic peoples. Interestingly, although its leaders insisted that the party was not formed on the basis of nationalist ideals, its slogans called for Ukraine’s integration with Russia and Belarus in the form of a union of Slavic people in which

⁴⁵ Kapustin M., *Activity of Russian Public and Socio-political Organizations and Movements in the ARC*, [w:] Tychenko Y. (ed.), *Socio-Political Processes in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea: Major Trends*, Wyd. Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research 2008.

⁴⁶ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 26.

the Russian language was to have official status. The “Russian Bloc”, together with the “Russian Community of Crimea”, once staged a demonstration in front of the Crimean parliament in honor of the 1991 referendum. The process was accompanied by a crowd shouting: “Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarusians, together we can revive our sacred unity!” Ironically, one of the party’s platforms was the idea of removing nationalist ideology from state-building. Although, in contrast, the “Russian Bloc”, as a member of the government coalition in Crimea, did not officially express the idea of Crimean separatism. However, experts claim that the party was partially funded by former Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, in part as a result of allocations to the “Crimean Fund”⁴⁷. The party advocated the need to control the budgets of the regions by the regions themselves, insisted on the importance of implementing a program that ensured the achievement of the same level of socio-economic development in different regions of Ukraine. The bloc insisted that the autonomous status of Crimea in Ukraine should be maintained in order to comply with the peculiarities of the population of Crimea, much of which proved to be an undesirable part of Ukraine.

In addition, the “Russian bloc” was strongly opposed to Ukraine’s membership in NATO and viewed the Black Sea Fleet as the result of a joint struggle between Ukrainians and Russians, in particular as a symbol of stability in the Black Sea region.

In contrast, there were more radical pro-Russian organizations in Crimea, including the “Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia” Popular Front and the “Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia” National Front, which were established in 2005–2006. In October 2006, the “Popular Front” gathered in Evpatoria, demanding that the Crimean authorities hold a referendum on Crimea’s accession to Russia⁴⁸. In addition, the Front urged all pro-Russian Crimean forces to join forces to restore the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of May 6, 1992 and repeal the 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine. The radical nature of the methods used by this organization allowed the Security Service of Ukraine in 2008 to open a criminal case against the Popular Front, accusing the organization of threatening Ukraine’s territorial integrity⁴⁹. The front was banned and its leaders were accused of threatening Ukraine’s integrity. In contrast, the “Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia” National Front insisted that the Russian language become official in Ukraine and supported the idea that Crimea and Sevastopol should return to Russian jurisdiction. The goals of the National Front were also to strengthen Russia’s national identity and “fight against Russophobia” in Crimea. It is important that the National Front, together with other pro-Russian groups in Crimea, organized regular protests. The catalyst for such protests in the analyzed period of time was usually the results of the so-called “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine. For example, during a protest near the Sevastopol City Council on January 19, 2009, the National Front took part in accusations of alleged “unconstitutional”

⁴⁷ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 25.

⁴⁸ Kapustin M., *Activity of Russian Public and Socio-political Organizations and Movements in the ARC*, [w:] Tychenko Y. (ed.), *Socio-Political Processes in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea: Major Trends*, Wyd. Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research 2008.

⁴⁹ Hedeskog J., *Crimea after the Georgia Crisis*, Wyd. Swedish Defense Research Agency 2008, s. 26.

actions by then-President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and stated that recognizes Viktor Yanukovich as the legitimate winner of the 2004 elections. In addition, the claims were aimed at demanding the return of Sevastopol and Crimea to Russia and the introduction of dual Russian-Ukrainian citizenship. The Front also stated that the Constitution of Crimea did not respect the wishes of the population, who voted for the creation of an autonomous Crimean SSR in 1991, and therefore proclaimed the task of repealing the current constitution. This, according to experts, means that the goal of these and similar organizations was to create a radical background for more serious pro-Russian organizations in Crimea, which the Russian authorities took advantage of in 2014 during the annexation of Crimea.

In general, the activities of pro-Russian organizations in Crimea, as well as their development during 1988-2013, proved that the autonomist-separatist tendencies in Crimea at some point in time moved in the direction of centrism (or at least the center left), in particular in contrast to those slogans developed in the early 90's of the twentieth century, when autonomy had a bright radical character. Instead, from the beginning of the 21st century. It was necessary to show separatism in different expressions – pro-Russian and pro-Slavic, although even at the dawn of the Ukrainian state it was necessary to state only the factor of the Russian orientation of autonomist and separatist movements. In addition, in the second phase of its development, the Crimean Tatar vector for assessing autonomist and separatist tendencies in Crimea became much more limited and less radical. Nevertheless, it is quite obvious that even the overflow of Crimean autonomy and separatism into a moderate or latent course at the beginning of the XXI century did not remove this issue at all and was actively resorted to by the Russian occupation authorities at the turn of 2013-2014, in particular in the framework of the annexation of Crimea. All this means that the Crimean autonomy within Ukraine and attempts to separate it, including at various times tested by Russia, became a kind of political technology to take into account the Crimean specifics, which once allowed to maintain relative political stability in Crimea, but was not aimed at integrating the peninsula to Ukraine, because this issue, as practice has shown, could be addressed at any time more intensively and politically determined.

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