

## The analysis of the Crimean Tatars since 2014 Crimean hybrid conflict

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### Abstract

*The occupation of Crimea determined the Crimean Tatars to react with obvious and clear-cut response: condemning the Russian aggression against the Ukrainian territorial integrity. This paper aims to analyze the post-2014 Crimean hybrid conflict situation of the Crimean Tatars, by investigating how the Crimean Tatars conditions have evolved under the Russian invasion forces for the last five years. In order to understand the post-2014 situation, the paper also focuses and examines the forced deportation (Sürgün or the Soviet Genocide), as well as Turkey's foreign policy reactions toward this regional conflict. Civil disobedience and nonviolent strategy of the Crimean Tatars have been used to pressure the Russian public opinion and political elites regarding the unlawful and unfair act toward the Ukrainian and Crimean sovereignty. In addition, the Crimean Tatars have voiced their concerns and demands in the international political arenas. Overall, the paper focuses on the repercussions of the Crimean crisis from political, psycho-social and international perspectives.*

**Keywords:** Crimea, Crimean Occupation, Crimean Tatars, Turkey, Soviet Genocide (Sürgün)

### Introduction

There are chilling and strange coincidences between Russian-involved conflicts and Olympics. Specifically, when an Olympics event was held in the world, Russia was being labelled as the usual suspect on a certain regional conflict. For instance, when the extravagant opening ceremony of the 29<sup>th</sup> Summer Olympic Games on August 8, 2008 started with the burning of the Olympic Torch in Beijing, the Georgian-Russian conflict has also started. Putin, who was the Prime Minister of Russia at that time, went to Beijing to attend the Olympics opening ceremony. At the same day, Medvedev, the President of Russia, was on vacation. Russia has previously behaved in an aggressive manner towards its neighbours in the region. In order to define this new Russia image, some researchers have used the term “neighborhood bully” in post-Soviet space (Hedlund, 2011, 3; Krickovic and Bratersky, 2016; Slobodchikoff, 2014, xii, 117, 154; Olcott, 2010, 7) for Russia as benevolent hegemon or

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regional security provider who tormented the neighbourhood kids (Nagorno-Karabakhs, Georgia, Transnistria, etc.).

The time conflict was initiated on the early hours of August 8<sup>th</sup>, when all Georgian troops began shelling and bombarding the city of Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia (Svyatets, 2016). As a result, the 2008 Six-Day War between Georgia and Russia has started. After Russia's massive military reaction, the six-day war came to an end when Russia decided to recognize the independence of two separatist regions of Georgia, namely South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The second incident with similar patterns happened during 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi; when at the closing ceremony of the Olympics Games in February 2014, came an order from Moscow to occupy Crimea, the territory of Ukraine along with the city of Sevastopol. However, unlike the 2008 Georgian-Russian War, the Crimean occupation was different as it was almost achieved without any armed conflict, by introducing the so-called "hybrid war strategy" (Ozcelik, 2016).

On 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2014, Putin has ordered the unlawful, illegal and unilateral invasion of *Yeşil Ada*, the narrative description of Crimean Peninsula which literally means the Green Peninsula. The Crimean Tatars were the one and only force to confront and fight back on the Black Wednesday. Moreover, it was for the first time in international politics of the contemporary history since Hitler's occupation of *Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland region*, when an aggressor state (Russia) invaded another sovereign state territory (Crimea, Ukraine). On that day, the leader of the Russian Unity Party, Sergey Aksanyov, and his followers congregated in front of the Crimean Parliament building, chanting slogans: "Russia!" "Russia!" supporting President Vladimir Putin and waving and brandishing his posters and the Russian flags (Prentice, 2014). The Russian demonstrators and pro-Russian parliamentarians were confronted by approximately 12,000 Crimean Tatars who particularly aimed to block the Crimean Parliament President Vladimir Konstantinov and other Russian backed parliamentarians that intended to burst in the building and voted to unify Crimea to Russia. While all Russians in front of the Crimean Parliament chanted "Glory to Russia", the Crimean Tatars have been calling their crowd to "Calm Down" (*Cemaat Tokta*) (NTV, 2014). On that day, the Crimean Tatars were able to stop the Russian protesters to enter the Parliament. However, mysterious 50 unmarked and masked Russian soldiers so-called "Little Green Men" burst into the Crimean Parliament building in the following night. In the next morning, with the support of 100 police, many Russia supporters gathered in front of the Crimean Parliament building. As a result, the Crimean Tatars was lost their homeland "overnight from relatively democratic pro-Western state of Ukraine to Putin's authoritarian state of Russia" (Williams, 2001).

Following to the Russian armed forces occupation of Crimea, the next move was the annexation of Crimea that was achieved by the referendum that was declared to be held on March 17, 2014. Officially, the results of the referendum reported as follows: The attendance of the polling was 85 % (Walter, 2014). Astonishingly, out of 97 % of the Crimean population voted in favor of Crimean accession to Russia (Huffingtonpost, 2014). The Supreme Council of Crimea announced that Crimea was obtained its independence from Ukraine as a result of the referendum. The Russian President Putin signed “Executive Order” at the same day that recognized Crimea as a territory of the Russian Federation. The following day in the Kremlin, a treaty was signed that finalized the integration of Crimea into the Russian territory (Meyers and Baker, 2014). Instead of obtaining independent statehood of Crimea, all these undemocratic process only integrated Crimea into Russia.

The main objective of the paper is to make narrative analysis the post-2014 situation of the Crimean Tatars since the 2014 Crimean Hybrid Conflict. It hopes to present the Crimean Tatars narratives in comparison to the Russian narratives of the cleansing Crimea from the so-called terrorists and hard-liners. The main Russian narratives can be seen from the main Russian media and government institutions. The Crimean Tatar narratives data have been collected from the news resources. The research question is how the Crimean Tatars’ chosen trauma (Sürgün or the Soviet Genocide) has given shape to their nonviolent strategy of the Russian occupation of Crimea after 2014. The narratives of the forced deportation (Sürgün) of the Crimean Tatars have been told and re-told during the exile years and behind. The experience of deportation has produced the psychological DNAs for the Crimean Tatars that have transferred from generations to generations with body of memories and recollections. The power of memory and memories of power of the forced deportation (Sürgün or Soviet Genocide) has been deep-rooted and protracted nature of the Crimean Tatar National Movement (CTNM). The memory, history and sentiment has generated a reciprocal process among charismatic leader (Mustafa Cemiloglu), political platform and the diasporas. In the Crimean Hybrid Conflict, it is possible to distinguish three different narratives by analysing content analysis of “speech acts” of elites and policy documents. It is possible to differ three narratives. First, the Russian-supported Crimean regional government has used “neo-Stalinist frame” to de-humanize the Crimean Tatars and normalize the violence against minorities in Crimea. Second, the Crimean Tatars has emphasized “indigenous people frame” (*korennoi narod*) both in the pre and post-occupation and annexation period in Crimea. Third, following the Euromaidan protests, Ukraine has moved towards a “multiculturalist frame” in which the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) has recognized both indigenous and official national minority of status of the Crimean Tatars in March 2014 (Aydin and Sahin, 2019, 40).

This research aims to focus on the concept of chosen trauma and psycho-historical roots and consequences of the Crimean Hybrid Conflict in 2014 (Oğretir-Ozcelik, 2017). Its objective is to present how the Soviet Genocide (*Sürgün*) has affected the formation of the Crimean Tatar identity and it has been affecting the Crimean Tatar responses to the Russian occupation of Crimea as the Second *Sürgün*. The chosen trauma - the *Soviet Genocide* of the forced deportation (*Sürgün*) - has played a significant role to shape the Crimean Tatar national identity. This study argues that factors like psychological chosen traumas, national cohesion, inter-religious disputes between ethnic groups, and international support may provide the needed insight to understand why a minority group such as the Crimean Tatars may choose nonviolence (Öğretir and Özçelik, 2017). It hopes to outline that the Crimean Tatars forced deportation or the Soviet Genocide (*Sürgün*) as social group identity maker have inspired the Crimean Tatar national movement. Furthermore, the paper examines the Crimean Hybrid Conflict from international, psycho-social and political perspectives. In the following part, Turkey's foreign policy actions are evaluated in this regional conflict with the specific emphasis on the Crimean Tatars. In conclusion, the paper assumes that if the conflicting parties want to reach win-win and constructive solutions to the Crimean Hybrid Conflict, there should be a regional peace policy with a multi-level and multi-disciplinary focus as well as the implementation of multi-track diplomacy.

## 1. The Soviet Genocide: *Sürgün*

It has been argued that ethnic conflicts in multi-national states are generally a reflection of intense issues regarding economic, social, security and identity. The conflict analysis and resolution discipline emphasize the satisfaction of basic human needs. If two basic human needs – identity and security – are not satisfied for the conflicting ethnic groups, the deep-rooted and protracted violent conflicts are inevitable in international relations (Öğretir and Özçelik, 2008). The identity needs of the Crimean Tatars are rooted in the forced deportation of them on 18th May 1944 by Stalin. The incident known as *Sürgün* or the *Soviet Genocide* is labelled as chosen trauma. The term “chosen trauma” by Volkan (1997) refers to the shared image of an event that cause a large group (i.e. ethnic group) to feel helpless, victimized, and humiliated by another group. It is a process that large group remembers the memory of a persecutory event and attributes it an extraordinary amount of historical and emotional significance. The “chosen trauma” paradigm provides an excellent psychological framework to analyse the phenomenon of conflict such as the Crimean Hybrid Conflict in 2014. Intentionally, no ethnic group wants to be victimized. Instead, it can “choose” to psychologize and

mythologize the event. As a result, the shared image of traumatic event becomes a significant large group marker for their identity. According to Volkan (2001), traumatized groups may develop two kinds of leadership: reparative and destructive types. The reparative type employs the chosen trauma event to unite the group and amalgamate its identity without damaging another group. Such chosen traumas for ethnic groups are another important source of the ethnic group identity creation, maintenance, and re-identification.

The national aspirations of the Crimean Tatars are closely linked to the territory of Crimea because of their historical, linguistic and religious ties. The national identity of the Crimean Tatars cannot be separated from their actions of the national movements. Within the Crimean Tatar context, the understanding of the current situation is necessitated with the emphasis on the historical setting and the roots of the developments of the national consciousness after the forced deportation, namely *Sürgün*. The national awakening, survival and identity of the Crimean Tatars is intertwined with the deep-rooted effects of the *Sürgün*, the *Soviet Genocide* which was coined by Williams in his book title (Williams, 2015). As a new narrative, the *Sürgün* may be connoted as the *Soviet Genocide*.

The Crimean Tatars are a Turkic and Muslim group and officially recognized as the indigenous people (*korennoi narod*) of the Crimean Peninsula. On 18 May 1944, Stalin forcibly deported en masse Crimean Tatars into Siberia and Central Asia. The event was labeled as the “*Sürgün*”, namely forced deportation. In new narrative of the chosen trauma, it is called as the *Soviet Genocide* of the Crimean Tatars. Since that time, they have carried out nonviolent and peaceful struggle in cooperation with the Soviet dissidents such as Andrey Sakharov and Petro Grigorenko. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, they have returned to their homeland or *Yeşil Ada* (Green Island). According to the only reliable Ukrainian census in 2001, the population of the Crimean Tatars was 243,433 out of the total of 2,033,700. It was equal to 12,1 percent of the Crimean population and it was 6,4 times higher than the 1989 census (Ukrcensus, 2003). It should be mentioned that the Crimean Tatars claimed indigenous status for Crimea and their collective rights to be recognized under the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 of 27 June 1989 Concerning Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (OHCHR 1989). The Ukrainian Parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*) was recognized the Crimean Tatars as indigenous people on March 2014. The resolution stated that the self-determination right of the Crimean Tatars is guaranteed within Ukraine and Mejlis was recognized as only and single highest representative and executive body of the Crimean Tatars (Yapıcı, 2018, 314).

The fundamental source of the Crimean Tatar resistance, therefore, was the policy of assimilation by the Soviet Communist Party that has denied the existence of any distinct cultural

identities and required conformity to the authoritarian government. It was accompanied by issues of economic inequality, prejudice, and persecution through constant surveillance of daily activities, unlawful imprisonment, and torture during the forced deportation (*Sürgün*) years under the Soviet rule. The Soviet and Russian governments have had an intense interest in the Crimea region since the 1700s. The Crimean Peninsula is still very important geopolitically and geostrategically not only for Russia but also for all countries in the Black Sea region (Kireççi and Tezcan, 2016).

All Crimean Tatars felt—and still feel—a strong sense of belonging to this distinct national community because they all bonded a common chosen trauma. The Crimean Tatars are all suffered from the forced deportation (*Sürgün*). The political nature of this identity has been significantly strengthened over the course of Soviet Communist rule. The Soviet authorities have attempted to diminish the effect of the Crimean Tatar identity by continuing to demonize and dehumanize the Crimean Tatars in Central Asia. The counter pressure of the Soviet authorities resulted in the assertion of the Crimean Tatar nationhood through acts of civil disobedience, nonviolent struggle and protest against the central government and its various mechanisms of social control with nonviolent tools and strategies.

## **2. The Situation of the Crimean Tatars After Crimean Occupation**

The reaction of the Crimean Tatars nation, civil society, and politicians toward the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea is obvious and clear cut. The Russian aggression toward the Ukrainian territorial integrity has been condemned by them. They have not recognized the decision of annexation of Crimea by the Russian Parliament (*Duma*). Civil disobedience tactics and nonviolent strategy to pressure the Russian public opinion and political elites have been used by the Crimean Tatars as well as to get support of international public opinion about unlawful and unjust act. Moreover, the Crimean Tatars have voiced their concerns and demands in the international political arenas, especially the post-Soviet countries, Western capitals, international organizations, and Turkey where a large number of the Crimean Tatar diaspora has settled down since the end of 18th century (Williams, 2015).

The Russian Parliament (*Duma*) took the decision to annex the Crimea and it has not been recognized by the Crimean Tatars. Civil disobedience tactics and nonviolent strategy have been used to make a pressure the Russian public opinion and political elites about the unlawful and unfair act toward the Ukrainian and Crimean sovereignty. Moreover, the Crimean Tatars have voiced their concerns and demands in the international political arenas, especially the different post-Soviet

countries, Western capitals, international organizations, and Turkey where a large number of the Crimean Tatar diaspora has settled down since the end of 18th century. It should be underlined that the Crimean Tatars have been used and will use only civil disobedience and nonviolent methods to reach their conflict resolution objectives. This paper also investigates how the Crimean Tatars conditions have changed under the Russian occupation forces for the last five years.

The sources of the Crimean Tatars frustration after the Russian occupation of Crimea have three main areas: political, international, and psycho-social. The indigenous people of Crimea, Crimean Tatars, were returned their exile after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They have found that Russians occupied their houses, the Crimean Tatars city names were changed, and the majority population of Crimea has become ethnic Russian settlers. Unlike 1994 Crimean Crisis, the new conditions of the Crimean Tatars “homeland” have witnessed transformations in social, economic, cultural, political, international and psychological domains. It is important to analyse the Crimean Tatars in different dimensions because the Crimean Hybrid Conflict in 2014 has made the Crimean Tatars “invisible” and “neglected”. They have become a part of “regional hegemonic struggle” and their political, cultural, and educational institutions have been disentangled. They have been facing new challenges and re-definitions about their national identity, self-determination discourse and the forced deportation (Sürgün) narratives. The analysis of different dimensions aim to show us “changes in Crimean Tatars discourses about Self, Other, and national self-determination”. (Buhari-Gülmez, 2018, 204). The main discourse about self-determination emphasizes universalist approach in which Mejlis and Mustafa Cemiloglu leadership as well as the Crimean Tatars diaspora leadership seek internal self-determination of Crimean Tatars within Ukraine. This section examines the situation of the Crimean Tatars in three dimensions in order to shed light on how it has been affecting to shape the Crimean Tatar National Movement (CTNM) and diaspora political discourse in post-2014 Crimean Hybrid Conflict as well as the Crimean Tatars’ identity and forced deportation (Sürgün) narratives.

## **2.1. Political Dimension**

One of the primary Russian allegations to occupy Crimea was the violation of human rights of Russians who have been in Crimea since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations have found no evidence of pressure and discrimination against Russians since the spring of 2014. On the contrary, they reported human rights violations in Crimea against Ukrainians and particularly the

Crimean Tatars. The Russian occupation authorities have carried out unlawful searches at the Ukrainian-language radio and television stations and the Tatar-language television station (ATR). Similarly, same authorities have forcefully entered into Ukrainian Jewish (because there are Karaim Tatars who belong to the Jewish faith), and the Islamic religious and civic buildings such as the Crimean Tatars National Assembly (the *Qırımatar Milli Meclisi*). Also, Islamic religious cemeteries have been targeted by Russian extremists and vandals. The Crimean Tatars believed that their homeland, Crimea, has been transformed a place from hard to live to harder to live. After the Russian invasion, Crimea has become place for racist and xenophobic activities against the Crimean Tatars (OSCE, 2015). After the Russian occupation, the Crimean Tatars relations with the local Russian authorities have been tense. One example was the Crimean political leader Sergei Aksyonov who moved from the Transdnestr region of Moldova to Crimea in 1989. He was the leader of the neo-fascist *Russkoe Yedynstvo* (Russian Unity formerly called *Avanguard*) (Kuzio, 2015: 271). After he became an acting head of the Crimean Republic, he prohibited the mass rallies in Crimea when the Crimean Tatars came together for the commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Crimean Tatar deportation (Markedonov, 2016). He was the one of the Russian politicians who declared the Crimean Tatars' self-governing body, the *Qırımatar Milli Meclisi*, did not exist and threatened anyone in Crimea who encourages ethnic hatred to be expelled (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty RFE/RL, 2014).

Following to the illegal seizure and annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, the President Putin as the leader of the Russian Federation has given a speech at the Russian Parliament Federation Assembly (*Duma*). Before that speech, Putin has made a phone call to the Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Cemilev-Kırımoğlu. After that, he had face-to-face meeting the Crimean Tatar representatives in Sochi and presented following promises to the Crimean Tatars:

- The Russian politicians embark on one-year and five-year plans in order to help the rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatars,
- The Crimean Tatar *qurultay* and other *qurultay*'s institutions such as the *Qırımatar Milli Meclisi* should be recognized.
- The Crimean Tatars' land, property, economic and legal problems should be resolved.
- To restore and protect the cultural rights of the Crimean Tatars.
- The education institutions in the Crimean Tatar language should be improved.
- The Crimean Tatar place and geographical names should be restored and used.
- The Crimean Tatar language press and mass media institutions should be supported (World Freedom Foundation, 2015).



The condition of the Crimean Tatars has deeply deteriorated in many ways since the occupation of Crimea in 2014. First, there has been an extraordinary increase on many unsolved crimes and unidentified murder, especially kidnapping of the Crimean Tatars activists. The most important kidnapping occurred to Mr. Ervin Ibragimov who is the Crimean Tatars activist and the member of the Crimean Tatars World Congress Board of Directors. The Amnesty International and other human rights organizations condemned the kidnapping of Mr. Ibragimov by masked uniformed men. Second, the Crimean Tatars national representation organs – *qurultay* and the Crimean Tatars National Assembly (the *Qırımatar Milli Meclisi*) – activities have been suspended “to prevent anti-Russian acts and to oppose the Russian Federal laws” on 13 April 2016. Then, the Crimea’s Supreme Court totally banned the *Qırımatar Milli Meclisi* “due to its extremist activities” on 26 April 2016 (Guardian, 2016). Third, two important Crimean Tatars national leaders, Mustafa Cemilev-Kırımçoğlu and Refat Chubarov, both of whom are the members of the Ukrainian Parliament (*VerkhovnaRada*) have been prohibited to make legal entrance to Crimea on 22 April 2014 for the next five years (until 2019). In reaction of such prohibition against two leaders, the Turkish Foreign Ministry has harshly condemned all Russian activities against the Crimean Tatars.

## 2.2. International Dimension

The Crimean Crisis in 2014 could be categorized as “frozen conflict” or “contested states”. Interestingly, other frozen conflicts such as Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and even Kosovo have been related to the Russian foreign policy strategy (Özçelik 2016a). The occupation of Crimea has shown that the world has witnessed giving birth into a new frozen conflict with important consequences for international security and peace. Such frozen conflict could be a chosen strategy by Putin’s Russia to test the West’s international role. It has become an important reality for the international relations of the United States and EU. The role of EU in the international recognition of Kosovo is an interesting topic to understand the Crimean Crisis. The occupation of Crimea has once again demonstrated that Russia can use its military forces against its neighbours to pursue her foreign policy ambitions with its hardline nationalist approach.

The reactions of the world towards the occupation and annexation of Crimea have been using mostly sticks not carrots. The international community has chosen to punish Russia mostly with international political and economic sanctions. Two most important countries of Europe, France and Germany, have portrayed relatively less sharp responses to Russia’s aggression than the Eastern European countries (the Baltic Republics, Romania, Poland, and Bulgaria and) (Özçelik 2016b).

Despite Germany has had dependency on Russian gas and continued strong economic relations, the Chancellor Merkel has become a leader to support strong sanctions against Russia (Özçelik 2016c). However, the Chancellor stressed that the territorial integrity of Ukraine can be achieved without including Crimea. Only after international pressures, France had to cancel two Mistral types warships deal that Russia has already made the payment in order to modernize the Black Sea Fleet. For example, the US President Barack Obama have put pressure on Paris to “press the pause button” on the warship deal with Russia (France24, 2016).

On the other point of view, many far-right European parties (Austria’s and the Netherlands’s Freedom Party, United Kingdom’s UKIP, France’s National Front, Greece’s Golden Dawn, and Bulgaria’s *Ataka* Party) and some leftist party (Spain *Podemos* and Greece’s *Syriza*) have silenced to support to Russian aggressive acts against Ukraine and Crimea due to Kremlin has sent them funding to carry out Putin’s hybrid war strategy or II. (SECOND) Cold War strategy (Telegraph, 2016). Regarding the reactions and response of the international community, it is necessary to underline that some states have recognized the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russia. The seven states that recognized Crimea as a part of the Russian Federation are as follows: Syria, North Korea, Nauru, Cuba, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. Additionally, other non-state entities such as South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Abkhazia have supported the Russian claims about Crimea and Sevastopol (Attia, 2014).

It is crucial to analyse the Chinese response to Russian intervention to Ukraine in 2014. It was the most challenging issue that has tested two important world powers’ friendly and gentle relations. China was against Russia’s recognition of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia because of the principles of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity that is one of the most important pillars of the Chinese foreign policy. Although Russia and China characterize their relationship as strategic partnership, China’s reaction to Russian invasion of Crimea has been quite diplomatic that she stays neutral. The statement of the Chinese foreign ministry underlined the political resolution of the Ukraine crisis and urged all conflicting parties to use restrain and avoid escalatory moves (Kreutz, 2015). From the Chinese point of view, the Crimean occupation can be seen as a serious threat to its state unity and national security considering that Russia’s actions encourage separatism and become a precedent for future international crises. On the other hand, the Ukrainian crisis was a complex issue from Chinese point of view since Beijing consider the Maidan Revolution as “a Western-led conspiracy” (Kaczmarek, 2015). As a result, the Chinese policy-makers have avoided choosing either the Western or Russian positions for the Crimean crisis (Özçelik 2016d). In the UN Security Council,

Beijing generally used the abstain votes in order to neither condemn nor support Russia's actions (Tiezzi, 2014).

The type of Russian behaviour in Crimea and Ukraine can be described as total aggressiveness and lack of cooperation that was similar to the Russia-Georgia crisis of 2008. In the middle term, the economic sanctions and the small military escalatory moves may cause flawed results. After the Russian-Georgian ceasefire negotiations, the EU began cooperation talks with Russia and the United States pushed the reset button for the relations with Russia in 2009. Since the 9/11, Russia has become the West's closest allies on War of Terror. In the name of cooperation against the threat of Islamic extremism, Russia and the West put aside their differences and accept Putin's hardline nationalist aspirations (Ozcelik and Karagul 2015).

## **2.2. Psycho-Social Dimension**

The main grievance of the Crimean Tatars is the historical injustice and the Soviet Genocide or *Sürgün* that is the deportation of the Crimean Tatars on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1944. As a chosen trauma, the deportation narratives of the Crimean Tatars have produced a body of memories and recollections that has been instrumental for survival of the Crimean Tatars community and identity. The *Sürgün* has been an emotional connection for the past and identity construction for today and future. During their exile, the Crimean Tatars have sustained a strong feeling of community and a belief that Crimea is their historical homeland (Williams, 2002, 323-347). Under the leadership of Mustafa Cemiloglu, they have maintained moderate practical nonviolent national struggle. The Crimean Tatars have always followed moderate conflict resolution positions that aim to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions and compromise among conflicting parties namely the Russians, Ukrainians and the Crimean Tatars (Bukkvoll, 1997, 58).

The Crimean Tatars have used civil disobedience tactics and nonviolent strategy in order to restore their fundamental rights, return their homeland, and to be accepted as indigenous people of Crimea since the post-World War II period. For example, when Mikhail Gorbachev was in power, a group of the Crimean Tatars has done courageous and unexpected defiance and protest acts against the Soviet oppression and repression at the heart of Moscow in the Red Square and the Kremlin on 23-24 July 1987 (Bohdan and Swobada, 1990). The Crimean Tatars have again used the "Sharpian nonviolent strategies" with peaceful demonstrations when the occupation of Crimea began on March 2014. Intimidation tactics have been used by the Russian occupation authorities such as imposing 23,000 Dollars fine who attend any protest activities against the Russian Crimean authorities (QHA

2014). The broadcasting license of the Crimean Tatars language TV station (ATR) have been revoked. As a result, it has moved its studios to Kyiv (Goncharenko, 2016). The Russian Crimean security forces have attacked many Crimean Tatars' homes and businesses (Coffey, 2015). The Human Rights Watch and other international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have presented their reports stating that the Crimean Tatars mosques and religious schools (*medrese*) have been illegally searched by the Russian security forces. They also seized many religious books including the Muslims' holy book of the Qur'an (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Also, the Crimean Tatars have been forced to accept the Russian citizenship and to apply for the Russian passport during the "passportization process". Approximately 25,000 out of 300,000 Crimean Tatars have moved from the Peninsula after one year of the occupation. They considered this forced migration as the second forced deportation (*İkinci Sürgün*) (Paul, 2015).

### 3. Turkish Foreign Policy and the Crimean Tatars

Up until the shooting down the Russian plane near the Turkish-Syrian border in 2015, the Turkish foreign policy about the Crimea and Ukrainian Crisis has been defined as the "middle road approach". Turkey has two clear positions: First, she declares that the seizure and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula is not recognized by Turkey. Second, the territorial integrity of Ukraine was supported by Turkey. Also, Turkey has voted in favour of the decision territorial integrity of Ukraine and supported the United Nations General Assembly decision on 27 March 2014. The Turkish foreign policy makers stated several times that Turkey does not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation through illegitimate and illegal "referendum" held in Crimea on March 2014. Also, Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity are strongly supported by Turkey (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2016). However, Turkey's stance about Crimea can be viewed from realist paradigm in international relations. The regional *realpolitik* is a significant deterministic factor for Turkey's foreign policy toward Crimea and Crimean Tatars.

After Russian aggressive and provocative actions, Turkey has urged the diplomatic explanation of the Crimean Tatars situation. Turkey established a committee as a fact-finding mission to review situation in Crimea. The committee prepared a report titled as "the Situation of the Crimean Tatars after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation" (Anadolu Agent, 2015). In the report, it is mentioned that the basic human rights of the Crimean Tatars were violated by the Russian Federation during and after the occupation of Crimea in post-2014 era. Particularly, language and education rights, , right of property, freedom of speech and free press, right of dwelling, and right to fair trial

were violated and the Crimean Tatars were forced to change their citizenship to the Russian citizenship and their passport to the Russian passport (QHA 2015b).

The *Qırımatar Milli Meclisi* demanded that Turkey should participate in the Western sanctions against Russia after the occupation of Crimea. Furthermore, the Crimean Tatars representatives strongly voiced their opinion about the reconsideration of the Montreux Convention and implementation of *Küçük Kaynarca* Treaty and other bilateral and multilateral agreement. They called for the Straits should close to the Russian warship and navy. In addition, the *Qırımatar Milli Meclisi* urged the Turkish authority to dispatch Turkey's ships and navy to the Black Sea. However, Turkey rejected these demands because it violated international maritime law and specifically the Montreux Convention. Because of the absence of NATO decision, Ankara rejected the deployment of the Turkish navy in the Black Sea. After the conflict was spilled over to the Eastern Ukraine, both USA and NATO have dispatched their navy and ships for the reconnaissance missions to the Black Sea. It was claimed that these deployments were mostly preventive measures for the Russian expansionist and irredentist moves (Ozcelik and Karagul 2015).

In 2015, Putin visited Erivan, the Armenian capital, to attend the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1915 Incident / the so-called Armenian Genocide. After that Turkey's middle road approach has begun to change. Turkish authorities have decided to give full support the Second World Crimean Tatar Congress that was held in Ankara between 1-2 August 2015. From 12 different countries, 184 Crimean Tatar civil society organizations have sent 480 delegates to unite all the Crimean Tatars under the same objective, framework, and perspective. In the Congress, it was declared that although it was futile and has given no result the dialogue initiative with the Russian and Crimean authorities, the Crimean Tatar national movement should have continued its nonviolent characteristics. As a result, all Tatars believed the continuous dialogue with Crimean and Russian authorities. They also voted and accepted the decision to give a full support to the territorial integrity of Ukraine in all international political environment and platforms. They also strongly reiterated their condemnation of the illegal Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea. Also, they underlined that Turkey may initiate more constructive moves and play more cooperative role to find the peaceful solution for the Crimean conflict (Yılmaz, 2015).

Turkey's response against the occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula can be analysed within the realist and neo-realist paradigms. Turkey has refused to recognize the unlawful annexation of Crimea by Russia and supported the territorial integrity and full sovereignty of Ukraine since the 2014 Crimea Conflict. It was stated that the Ukraine Crisis may reached more peaceful solution within the framework of diplomatic solution and international rules and law as well as

respecting interests and rights of the Crimean Tatars (TC Disisleri Bakanligi, July 2016). Turkey has shown its moral support to the Crimean Tatars. They invited their national leader Mustafa Cemilev-Kırımoglu to receive from the President Abdullah Gül the “Republic Medal” almost two months later of the annexation of Crimea (Anadolu Ajansı, 2014). Another interesting support initiative was to organize a press conference with the ex-Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and to treat the Crimean Tatar national leader Mustafa Cemilev-Kırımoglu in a state level protocol (TC Disisleri Bakanligi March, 2014). The third positive response from Turkey was that the first time in Turkish political history, three main parties (AK Party, CHP, and MHP) mentioned the Crimean Tatars in their election declarations (AKP, 2015; QHA 2015c; QHA, 2015d).

The Turkish foreign policy initiatives toward the Crimean Tatars may be seen as positive steps. Nevertheless, Turkey has mostly followed a balanced policy about the Crimean Hybrid Conflict because of her sensitivity and dependence on Russian trade, tourism, energy, and economy. For example, Turkey has refused to take part in the Western-led economic and political sanctions against Russia. Many states such as Norway, Japan, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, and Australia have implemented bilateral sanctions against Russia (European Parliament, 2015). Moreover, Turkey has elevated her relations to Russia into new level during this period. Russia withdrew from previous energy pipeline agreements in order to bypass Ukraine. Instead, both Turkey and Russia have come to an agreement to propose an alternative pipeline project so called the “Turkish Stream” in order to Turkey become main transfer route for Russian gas, and oil into the Western market. Moreover, Russia has been awarded to the Akkuyu nuclear plant tender. In a good will gesture, Russia has given six percent sale to Turkey on gas trade. In addition, Turkey has used this window of opportunity to increase its trade and economic relations with Russia. Turkish businesspeople have signed 12,5 billion dollars investment agreement with Russia in Crimea. Also, the Crimean Turkish Businessmen Council was established in August 2015 (Hurriyet). In short, the Turkish-Russian relations have been very friendly and cooperative up until the 2015 Russian Sukhoi Su-24 shootdown within the Turkish airspace near the Turkish-Syrian border by the Turkish fighter pilots. In the post-rapprochement process, the relations between Turkey and Russia have been evolved semi-strategic partnership.

The Turkish main foreign policy toward Crimea and the Crimean Tatars has been “balanced realist constructivism” that combines realist power and geo-political/geo-economical/ geo-strategic ingredients with the constructivist identity, values, international norms and regimes and decision-making processes. Realist moves were described above. Turkey has supported the resolution of crisis within international law and diplomacy (peace value), defended the Ukrainian territorial integrity (international norm), and urged respecting of the Crimean Tatars human rights and freedoms

(constructivist). Turkey and Russia have high interdependence and sensitivity in many different issue areas such as economy, tourism, trade, mixed families, and energy. As a result, both sides may use diplomatic tools and dialogue to find the common solutions to their differences in many foreign policy issues. One indicator is the voting of extension of Russian sanctions at the European Council Parliament Assembly (ECPA) in January 2015. There were 10 Turkish parliamentary representatives at ECPA. In the voting, only two of them voted in favor of the continuation of sanctions against Russia. The extension of sanctions was rejected by four of them. Other four representatives used absentee votes (QHA, 2015e).

Diasporas are defined as pressure groups who search the potential allies such as journalists, civil society organization, academics, other diaspora groups, and media persons in order to carry out the lobbying activities to construct bridge between diasporas and home countries and to build transnational coalitions. Diasporas aim to change the foreign policy decisions and outcomes toward their homeland (Perazzi, 2011). In the first time in their history, the Crimean Tatars diaspora in Turkey has become an active player in Turkish foreign policy. Like the Kosovar Albanian and Chechen diaspora, the Crimean Tatars diaspora in Turkey has been witnessed a transformation from passive into active and pro-active lobbying initiatives and activities. In 1783, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea. Since then, most of the Crimean Tatars have been forced to immigrate “*Aktopraklar*” or Turkey. Because the Crimean Tatars have forced to escape from Russian oppression, persecution and tyranny for the last 200 years, approximately 5 million Crimean Tatars have been migrated to Turkey and another 250,000 have inhabited in Romania and Bulgaria (Mack and Surina, 2005). There are other diaspora groups in Turkey such as Bashkirs, Caucasians, and Volga Tatars who migrated to Turkey to escape the Russian oppression and aggression. The total number of people that become a Diaspora to Turkey from Tsarist Russia/Soviet Republics could be more than 17 million people. As a result, there are powerful lobbies that can influence not only Turkish-Russian relations but also Turkish-Ukrainian-Russian trilateral relationship.

The Crimean Tatars in Turkey have supported the idea that the Crimean Tatars have legitimate demands towards Crimea since they claim that the Crimean Khanate has ruled there for 365 years. The occupation of the Crimea by Russia had tremendous significance for political developments of the Crimean Tatar diaspora in Turkey. The diaspora has intensified its lobbying activities not only in Turkey but also all over the world. The World Crimean Tatar Congress has raised the Crimean Tatar cause in different international platforms such as non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and important world state capitals (QHA, 2015a). The Crimean Tatar diaspora in Turkey has become an important player and acted together with exiled Crimean Tatar leadership to

follow lobbying activities toward the Turkish government to support efforts to stop the Russian occupation of Crimea. In every February of the year, the Crimean Tatars diaspora in Turkey has participated demonstrations to show their solidarity with their co-patriots in Crimea at the anniversary of the occupation of Crimea. With the help of the diaspora, the Tatar issue has become a domestic political issue in Turkey (Balcer, 2015).

## Conclusions

In summary, first the Russian unlawful and illegal first occupation and then the Russian hybrid war (Özçelik, 2016e) tactics together with the controversial referendum of the annexation of Crimea have negative effects on peace, security and stability in the Caucasus and the Black Sea regions. The Western powers, in essence the European Union and the United States of America, have applied failed sanctions-based policy and soft power tactics.

After Crimea, Russia has become the main player in the Syrian conflict, it has shown its expansionist and irredentist aspirations with her political and military muscles in the backyard of Turkey and the Middle East region. The Russian policy in Crimea and Syria can be labelled as “double containment policy” toward Turkey. The occupation of Crimea was the first containment action of Turkey from the northern side. The Russian military intervention to Syria could be seen as the second containment of Turkey from the southern flank. The close relationship between Russia and Armenia as well as Russia and Iran could be viewed as the part of the northern and southern containment policy toward Turkey. The continuation of tension and instability in Crimea and Syria has given geopolitical, geo-economical and geo-strategical advantages to Russia in the Caucasus, the Black Sea, the Middle East and the Balkans (Özçelik 2016f).

Most Ukrainians have felt disappointment with the latest *Euromaidan* revolution and previous colourful revolutions that targeted to have better future with the hope of the integration of EU and NATO. They believed that the EU-led sanctions have not produced expected consequences against the Russian double containment policy because Europe has rising dependence and sensitivity toward the Russian carbon-based energy resources. Russia’s double containment policy involved economic, politic and military containment of Turkey in Crimea and Syria. Moreover, Russia has established friendly strategic relations with Armenia, Iran, and Iraq in order to contain Turkey from the southern part.

The only contention to the Russian invasion, occupation, and annexation of Crimea has come from the Crimean Tatars with peaceful and nonviolent strategies, tactics, and tools. The Crimean Tatars have made big differences on the ground and made harder for Russian authorities in Crimea



to establish full sovereignty over Crimea in comparison to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. When the unmarked and masked Russian armed men controlled over the Crimean Parliament on February 26, the Crimean Tatars gathered in front of the Crimean Parliament for mass demonstration and largest rally. They successfully confronted the pro-Russian separatists and opposed to Russian takeover of the Crimean Parliament (Oxana). The Crimean Tatars have endured suffering during the *Soviet Genocide* of the forced deportation (*Sürgün*) during the the post-World War II period. When the Little Green Men forcefully broke into Crimea on March 2014, the memories of the past chosen trauma have pushed resurface through Crimean Tatars' group consciousness again. Many Crimean Tatars has fled to Ukraine because of the fear of second forced deportation. Also, the example of Putin's iron fist against the Chechen independence disturbs the staying Crimean Tatars because of possibility of living constant tyranny and oppression under the new Russian rule in Crimea.

The condition of the Crimean Tatars has further deteriorated by the fact that they have been squeezed because of the power struggles among big powers the United States, the European Union and Russia, as well as regional powers such as Ukraine and Turkey. Also, the Crimean Tatars have been seen wrongly as so-called Islamist jihadists with the existing prejudice, biases, and stereotypes by the Russian mass media and Russian society. Russia has played well the Western concern about the rising so-called "Islamic terrorism" to put the Crimean Tatars as a part of the worldwide jihadist terrorist network. Although the Crimean Tatars was not and will never declare jihad on Russia because they have always implemented peaceful and nonviolent strategies, tactics, and methods to return their homeland and obtain their fundamental human rights and freedoms. However, the Islamophobia and Xenophobia have increased not only in Russia but also in the Western and Central regions of Ukraine because most of the Crimean Tatars have migrated to those regions and "the major part of the population is known for its religiosity and are mostly Greek Catholics" (Brylov, 2016). Also, it should be acknowledged that the Crimean Tatars have been structurally discriminated by the Ukrainian government up until the 2014 Crimean Hybrid Conflict. Under the Ukrainian rule in Crimea, they have seen no or little political, social, and economic improvements in their conditions. For example, Ukraine has accepted the Crimean Tatars' rights to return to the Crimean Peninsula from exile, but she has not given a full citizenship in order to integrate them into the Crimean society. Most of the Crimean Tatars have voted the first time in the 2002 elections because they obtained the Ukrainian citizenship. At that election, seven Crimean Tatars became successful to be the member of the Crimean Supreme Council (Kuzio, 2015). In 1994-1995, the almost carbon copy crisis has occurred between Ukraine and the Russian-supported Crimean authorities. The crisis has reached a resolution after a cooperative agreement with the help of successful fact-finding missions and third

party intervention, namely Mr. Max van der Stoel who was the High Commissioner of National Minorities (HCNM) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2014, the peace-loving and democratic Western powers reactions were absent. As a result, the Crimean Tatars have forced to sustain their lives under oppressive, fearful, and lonely conditions for the last five years. It is possible to categorize the Crimean Hybrid Conflict as “frozen conflict”. It became protracted and deep-rooted hybrid conflict (inter-state, ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) at the heart of Europe. Although most international relations specialists have analysed the 2014 Crimean Crisis with geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic factors, both Russians and Crimean Tatars have psycho-historical and psycho-analytical roots and origins toward Crimea. In order to find win-win and constructive solutions to the Crimean conflict, there should be a regional peace policy with a multi-level and multi-disciplinary focus as well as the implementation of multi-track diplomacy.

**Acknowledgement:** This paper is an extension of work originally presented in V. International Blue Black Sea Congress Proceedings 12-13 December 2016, Marmara University, Anadoluhisari Campus, İstanbul, Turkey.

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