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Damaged Prospects/Damaged Dialogue in Ukraine and Crimea: The Current Situation in Ukraine and Future Co-operation with the OSCE

The opportunities and requirements for co-operation between the OSCE and Ukraine are largely determined by the latter's domestic situation. This situation, the result of the events of the last five years, can be described in terms of four essential elements. *First*, a deep political disaffection among the public following the abandonment of the democratic goals of the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution. *Second*, ongoing attempts to formulate a concept of Ukrainian identity that would unite the multiethnic country by including both the Ukrainian titular nation and the non-Ukrainian ethnic minorities. Ukraine remains riven by deep ethnic divides. Denominational differences between and within the ethnic groups strengthen this. In some regions, such as Crimea, the problem is particularly clear. *Third*, poor governance and corruption, which have been exacerbated by the economic and financial crises since 2008 and the country's dependence on foreign trade, particularly the import of energy and raw materials. These factors have conspired to rob Ukraine temporarily of the prospects of a democratic, European renewal and an economic revival. *Fourth*, these problems implicitly endanger the security of the Ukrainian state. Ukraine is extremely sensitive to both internal and external uncertainties. In the period up to early 2010, domestic instability and unpredictability also damaged Ukraine's potential for external – European and Eurasian – development. The election of a new government in early 2010 created some movement in this frozen picture, particularly with regard to foreign policy.

Damage to Domestic Prospects following the Orange Revolution

The Orange Revolution, which spanned the end of 2004 and the start of 2005, was the defining political event in Ukraine since independence. The damage that has since accrued to its democratic values has led to a lasting disenchantment in intellectual circles and among the country's minority elites. Observers have spoken of a loss of Ukraine's internal potential for renewal.

Note: The author was the deputy head of the OSCE Mission to Ukraine from 1996 to 1999 in which function he represented the Mission in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The current contribution was written following a four-week research visit to Kyiv and Simferopol in October 2009, during which around 80 interviews were conducted, and follow-up visits to Kyiv and Lviv in early 2010. The key content of the interviews is presented in the following text.

Furthermore, both the country as a whole and regions such as Crimea are now said to lack a consolidated elite. According to journalists, the kind of independent media that could have contributed to the powers of renewal does not exist. Although freedom of speech and media freedom have improved since 2005, the media landscape has been taken hostage by commercial concerns and corruption. There is almost no serious journalistic analysis or investigative journalism. Discussions with Ukrainian insiders reveal a feeling that the opportunity for political renewal has been missed, and that there will not be another chance for at least two or three legislative periods, i.e. until the current generation of politicians has retired. Present-day elites are utterly discredited. The replacement of Victor Yushchenko as president by Victor Yanukovich was not expected to bring about a renewal of the disrupted democratization process – at least not on the eve of the elections – though the latter was expected to set new accents in foreign policy.

The Unsuccessful Search for National Identities

The unofficial but nonetheless real search for identity on the part of Ukraine's largest ethnic groups has been politically instrumentalized and emotionally charged more thoroughly in recent years than under Ukraine's first two presidents, Leonid Kravchuk (1991-1994) and Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005). The rigid Ukrainianization policy pursued by the central government under President Yushchenko (2005-2010) served to polarize the ethnic camps rather than bring them together. In nearly two decades of independence, Ukraine has failed to develop an image of Ukrainian identity or national myth that could unite ethnic Ukrainians and the country's minorities as a single nation. On the contrary, ethnic Ukrainians have insisted on maintaining their linguistic and cultural dominance. Ukrainian elites have resorted to traditional policies – particularly restrictive measures – to ensure their predominance in areas such as language, media, education, and administration. Together with incredibly polarizing gestures such as the veneration of controversial figures from Ukrainian history such as Symon Petliura (1879-1926) and Stepan Bandera (1909-1959)¹ or the campaign for international recognition of the 1932/1933 famine (Holodomor) as a deliberate act of anti-Ukrainian genocide perpetrated by Moscow, their main effect has been to create distance between ethnic Ukrainians and Ukraine's other nationalities.

¹ During a visit to Paris in 2005, President Yushchenko laid a wreath on the grave of Symon Petliura. Stepan Bandera was declared a "Hero of Ukraine" by President Yushchenko in January 2010, leading to much heated debate, though the declaration was ruled illegal in April.

A Rigid Policy of Ukrainianization

The inflexible policy of Ukrainianization pursued first under President Kuchma and then even more vigorously under President Yushchenko has served rather to turn minorities away from any possible Ukrainian national idea, if any such thing can be said to have existed in the current period. Important minorities such as the Russians and Crimean Tatars refuse to see themselves as part of a Ukrainian nation, which they believe does not offer them a respectable place in nation building. While they accept Ukrainian statehood and the Ukrainian citizenship of members of their ethnic groups, they often simultaneously regard themselves as belonging to the larger East Slavic people, the Russians, or, in the case of the Crimean Tatars, stress their autochthony. The minorities marginalized by the central government's Ukrainianization policy include more than eight million Russians (ca. 17 per cent of the total population and 58 per cent of the population of Crimea) and some 250,000 Crimean Tatars (ca. twelve per cent of the Crimean population).² Minority representatives describe the situation of their people as "discontented" at best.

Antagonistic Ethnic Identities

The existence of antagonistic ethnic identities has come to be one of Ukraine's central domestic problems. They are particularly critical in areas densely settled by minorities. Such identities develop in separate spheres of perception and are nourished by separate media realities. In this way, post-Soviet Ukraine has become strongly polarized along ethnic lines. This has also had a powerful effect on Ukraine's foreign relations, and has been influenced by countries abroad. It will continue to be easy to manipulate in the future. Key ethnic groups project their special topics (e.g. status, language, the Crimea question) onto foreign policy issues such as NATO membership or relations with Russia, or derive the former from the latter.

The Ukrainians' Unclear Self-Image

For members of the Ukrainian ethnic group in particular, Ukraine's necessary self-definition as an independent Eastern Slavic state, separate from, if influenced by Russia, is essential to maintaining the distinction between Ukraine and Russia. In this connection, the view, common in nationalist circles in Russia, according to which Russians, "White Russians" (Belarusians), and "Small Russians" (Ukrainians) all belong to an original "Great Russian" people, ultimately challenges both Ukrainian statehood and independence from Russia. The external ethnopolitical pressure that this places on Ukraine

2 Cf. State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, *All-Ukrainian Population Census 2001*, at: <http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng>.

from the east requires it to give its multiethnic citizens a convincing explanation of what is specifically Ukrainian.

On the other (western) side, Ukraine's loose identification with Europe has barely brought it closer to its European neighbours. Contrary to what is commonly believed, the tension between Eastern Slavic and European elements in Ukrainian identity is not wide enough to lead to a fundamental east-west split. Commentators have claimed that this issue first entered Ukrainian political life from abroad in 2004.

Poor Governance, Political Paralysis

The poverty of governance in Ukraine has recently taken on threatening dimensions. The process of coming to terms with the past that President Yushchenko promised his followers at Kyiv's Independence Square during the Orange Revolution, specifically with regard to the alleged criminal tenure of his predecessor Leonid Kuchma – to whom he personally owed his political career – not only failed to be implemented, there is general agreement that President Yushchenko's wholesale replacement of political and administrative personnel disastrously undermined public administration at all levels. (Moreover, aspects of this policy were also illegal.) Furthermore, president, parliament, and government were locked in a stalemate from 2005, which prevented any of the necessary political or administrative changes being made before the 2010 elections.

None of the major political camps possesses either the will or the other necessary prerequisites to overcome Ukraine's new nepotism and corruption. On the contrary, the corruption of President Yushchenko's regime triggered social and political apathy on a scale that is remarkable even for Ukraine. The regime appeared barely able to deal with basic interethnic, interdenominational, social, economic/administrative, and ideological problems. A number of commentators who have long spoken of precarious statehood and the danger of state collapse do not see President Yanukovich as a significant alternative.

Foreign Policy Prerequisites for Co-operation with Ukraine

Among Ukrainian elites, there is currently much discussion of what they describe as the "loss of European prospects". This refers to the country's relations with the European Union and with NATO, which are entirely different in character.

Complicated Prospects in EU Relations

In discussing the EU, Ukrainian observers note not only that Ukraine's wish to become a member of the Union was rejected by the existing members as late as 2004/2005, but also that no feasible proposal of how Ukraine could take significant steps towards EU convergence has been formulated that could be presented to the Ukrainian public. While the European Union stresses that domestic renewal is the only way towards such convergence, Kyiv counters that no such changes can be undertaken until the prospect of membership and a concomitant roadmap can be presented to the Ukrainian public. There are also those who campaign on the basis of what they see as the slight resulting from the obvious comparison of Ukraine with Romania and Bulgaria, or even Turkey, Albania, and Serbia. Yet this leaves out not only the increasing formalization of relations between the EU and Ukraine achieved via the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership, the EU-Ukraine Action Plan (2005), and the negotiations over an EU-Ukraine Association Agreement that began in 2007, but also the EU's long-standing willingness to work together with Ukraine to draft a detailed agenda for political association and economic integration. Here, substance and symbolism were (or still are) opposed. Expert observers say that the absence of a promise of membership is equivalent to the absence of a European vision for the country, which leads to discomfort, and makes practical steps more difficult. They claim Ukrainians feel they are being asked to gradually adopt the EU *acquis* without concurrent integration into EU institutions or a proper strategy. While public debate focuses on the headline stories of energy security and the visa regime, there is clearly a lack of willingness and other pre-conditions for significant change in Ukrainian domestic politics. Instead, departing president Victor Yushchenko continued to formulate anti-EU allegations, as delivered, for example, at the EU-Ukraine Summit in December 2009.

Regardless of the mood in Ukraine, the EU is attempting to enter into constructive, substantive dialogue with the new Ukrainian leadership. President Yanukovich also appears to be keen on more profitable relationships. The Ukrainian foreign minister, Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, explained the new government's basic approach in this area: "European integration remains the primary track of our internal and foreign policy. Integration to the European Union is an important driving force for Ukraine's ambitious domestic reforms."³ The EU has made Ukraine a "priority partner country within the European Neighbourhood Policy". In April 2010, in the midst of the political polemics, the proposal was made that the negotiations on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement could now be completed in as little as twelve

3 Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the OSCE, *Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine H.E. Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko at the Special Permanent Council Meeting of the OSCE*, PC.DEL/618/10, Vienna, 22 June 2010.

months.⁴ The List of the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda Priorities for 2010 outlines the co-operation activities of both sides on 78 items in detail.⁵

Damaged Prospects in NATO Relations

Ukraine's prospects of NATO membership have suffered even more clearly. On this question, there is not even a national consensus: The question of NATO splits public opinion along emotionally charged lines, and the alliance's two rounds of enlargement so far have only served to revive ideological reservations. Among the Russian minority, NATO's armed intervention in Serbia to resolve the case of Kosovo is being widely discussed. The most public demonstration of opposition on the part of Ukraine's Russian minority – and of the Russian Federation – is directed at NATO's presence in the Black Sea area and regularly takes place during the joint "Sea Breeze" manoeuvres.

Ukrainian leadership circles assume that the agreement in principle to Ukraine's membership of NATO that was given in Bucharest in 2008 will remain valid in the long term. (The wording of the statement was "We agreed today that these countries [Ukraine and Georgia] will become members of NATO."⁶) However, neither in Kyiv nor in the major European capitals is there any sign of the necessary political will. Soon after taking office, President Yanukovich announced that he was opposed to NATO membership. In April 2010, in an act whose symbolism was obvious, he dissolved the inter-ministerial commission tasked with preparing Ukraine's NATO membership as well as the National Center for Euro-Atlantic Integration, which was headed by the prominent politician Volodymyr Horbulin. He did, however, also declare that he was in favour of continuing co-operation with NATO. Under President Yanukovich, NATO accession is no longer on the agenda. Speaking in Vienna in June 2010, Foreign Minister Gryshchenko stressed Ukraine's bloc neutrality: "Ukraine is a European non-bloc State that implements transparent foreign policy and strives for cooperating with all interested partners, avoiding dependence on any State, groups of States or international structures."⁷

4 Cf. Ahto Lobjakas, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *EU Official Says Ukraine Association Talks At Crucial Juncture*, 8 April 2010, at: http://www.rferl.org/content/EU_Official_Says_Ukraine_Association_Talks_At_Crucial_Juncture/2006323.html.

5 Cf. European Commission – External Relations, *List of the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda priorities for 2010*, at: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/ukraine/docs/2010_association_agenda_priorities_en.pdf.

6 *NATO, Bucharest Summit Declaration – Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008*, Section 23.

7 Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the OSCE, *Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine H.E. Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko at the Special Permanent Council Meeting of the OSCE*, PC.DEL/618/10, Vienna, 22 June 2010.

NATO has nonetheless continued actively to pursue dialogue with Ukraine, publicly stating that co-operation has not been disrupted: “Under President Viktor Yanukovich’s current government, Ukraine is not presently seeking membership of the Alliance, though this has had no practical impact on cooperation with NATO.”⁸

Ukraine’s failure to find a place in either NATO or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) has, to some extent, left it bloc-free but lacking security guarantees. In Ukrainian public discourse, it has long been observed that the only real reference to security guarantees for the country is found in the document known as the Budapest Memorandum (signed in 1994 in connection with Ukraine’s abandonment of the nuclear weapons it had inherited from the Soviet Union), though that document is not binding under international law.⁹ It is also noted, moreover, that Ukraine is hardly in a position to ensure its own military security.¹⁰ Most experts consider Ukraine’s military forces to be in a disastrous condition. Most weapons and equipment are outdated, and the military-industrial complex is uncompetitive. Service personnel are also said to be demoralized. Several serious technical incidents in recent years have demonstrated low levels of training, failures in command structures, and problems with infrastructure. Whether to seek to join NATO or to attempt to maintain neutrality has been a topic of debate in Kyiv for some time.

Damaged Prospects in Relations with Russia

On the other geopolitical side, years of increasing tension in Ukraine’s relations with Russia have also damaged the prospects of co-operation in that direction, even if Moscow is always ready to intensify its relations with Ukraine at a moment’s notice. However, the ethnic Ukrainian elites tend to see Russia primarily as a threat, a factor that calls into question the existence of the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian nation. This view clearly influenced President Yushchenko’s leadership. Under President Yanukovich, by contrast, Ukraine’s relations with Russia have undergone a shift, not least because he has the support of the majority of Ukraine’s ethnic Russian voters. In June 2010, Foreign Minister Gryshchenko announced to the OSCE that “Our strat-

8 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO’s relations with Ukraine*, at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm.

9 Cf. USA, Russia, United Kingdom, *Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine’s Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, Budapest, 5 December 1994; France, *Statement by France on the Accession of Ukraine to the NPT*, Budapest, 5 December 1994.

10 See Vladimir Gorbulin/Valentin Badrak, *Konkvistador v pantsire zheleznom* [Conquistador in Iron Armour], in: *Zerkalo Nedeli* No. 34, 12-18 September 2009, at: <http://www.zn.ua/1000/1550/67168>, and Vladimir Gorbulin/Aleksandr Litvinenko, *Evropeiskaya bezopasnost: vozmozhnyi put oslabit vyzovy i ugrozy* [European Security: A Potential Way to Mitigate Challenges and Threats], in: *Zerkalo Nedeli* No. 43, 7-13 November 2009, at: <http://www.zn.ua/1000/1600/67675>.

egic partnership with Russia is gaining momentum in all spheres of mutual interest.”¹¹

The Situation in Crimea

Contrary to widespread media speculation, following the events in Georgia in 2008, at a potential crisis in Crimea, the situation on the peninsula is stable, at least superficially. There are no significant political powers in the region that would seek to bring about a sudden destabilization of the internal situation. On the other hand, the Ukrainian government does appear to be presenting the outside world with a sanitized picture of the Ukrainian domestic situation as a whole, and the situation in Crimea in particular. There is quite clearly a desire to avoid foreign political intervention in the country, although the activity of national and international agencies and organizations in the country can be seen to be increasing.¹²

The conflict-prone nature of the peninsula means that its stability is permanently endangered from within as well as susceptible to external influences. Escalations in tension can easily be provoked at any time. It is a simple matter for influences from the Ukrainian mainland, but also from Russia, Turkey, the Arab region, Europe, and the USA, to disrupt the situation in Crimea. This, at least, is how the major political and ethnic powers on the peninsula see the situation. The capacity that the central government still retained under President Kuchma to act as a stabilizing counterbalance to the splintered elites of Crimea no longer exists.

The Trivialization of the Crimean Situation by the Ukrainian Government

In the official view promulgated by Kyiv, Crimea is considered to be stable. This is also the picture that is presented to the OSCE.¹³ The image portrayed to the outside world even stresses the progress made towards integration and admits of only social and economic problems caused by the ongoing economic and financial crisis. While it is conceded that the situation is influenced by regional development gaps, social disintegration, and the increasing isolation of social strata from one another, the peninsula is said to enjoy a culture of tolerance and an absence of any tradition of domination by one

11 *Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine H.E. Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko at the Special Permanent Council Meeting of the OSCE*, cited above (Note 7).

12 For instance, an EU Joint Cooperation Initiative in Crimea (JCIC) for 2010-2011 was agreed upon in early 2010.

13 “One doesn’t see significant differences between the situation there few years ago and at present. On the contrary, there have been some positive developments.” Volodymyr Yelchenko, Delegation of Ukraine to the OSCE, *Statement in response to the report of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Knut Vollebaek*, PC.DEL/469/09, Vienna, 19 June 2009.

ethnic group. In various contexts, the government of Ukraine has made abundantly clear that it is opposed to any special consideration of the Crimea question by international organizations such as the OSCE.

Entrenchment of the "Balance of Conflict" in Crimea

Crimea is nonetheless subject to the same interethnic tensions that predominated at the time of the closure of the OSCE Mission in 1999. It could be said that the conflict situation has become entrenched. Strategic goals, perceptions, political slogans, and even the range of day-to-day topics of disagreement between the major ethnic and political camps have shifted only marginally, if at all. At the same time, a gradual escalation of the situation can be observed. This is confirmed by the most recent observations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), which speak of "increasing radicalization and xenophobia on the peninsula".¹⁴

Antagonistic Goals of the Ethnic Groups

The strategic goals of the major ethnic groups in Crimea remain incompatible. Russians and Ukrainians continue to struggle for predominance more tangibly than in other administrative regions of Ukraine. Other ethnic groups are also drawn into this inter-Slavic conflict. As always, the Crimean Tatars play the role of a third party between the two sides. They regularly share the views of the Ukrainian central government, and have even supported Ukrainian nationalists in electoral coalitions. They favour European integration and with it a greater distance between Ukraine and Russia.

Also a constant is the Crimean Tatars' insistence on the transformation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea into a national-territorial autonomous entity. The Declaration of National Sovereignty made by the Crimean Tatar *Kurultai* in June 1991, states that "Crimea is the national territory of the Crimean Tatar people, on which they alone possess the right to self-determination [...] The political, economic, spiritual, and cultural revival of the Crimean Tatar people is only possible within a sovereign nation state. [...] The land and soil as well as the natural resources of Crimea [...] are the basis for the national prosperity of the Crimean Tatar people and the source of the wealth of all inhabitants of the Crimean peninsula."¹⁵

The goal of establishing national-territorial autonomy is a central unifying factor for the Crimean Tatar people. It necessarily clashes with the support of Russians and Ukrainians for the preservation of the Autonomous Re-

14 Knut Vollebaek, OSCE HCNM, *Statement to the 765th Plenary Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council*, HCNM.GAL/7/09, Vienna, 18 June 2009.

15 Kurultai Krymsko-Tatarskogo Naroda, *Deklaratsiya o Natsionalnom Suverenitete Krymsko-Tatarskogo Naroda*, [Kurultai of the Crimean Tatar People, Declaration on National Sovereignty of the Crimean Tatar People], 28 June 1991, at: <http://kro-krim.narod.ru/LITERAT/TATARI/tatdekl.htm> (author's translation).

public of Crimea as a territorial autonomous entity without ethnic attributes and for maintaining East Slavic predominance – in ethnic terms currently Russian; in terms of statehood, Ukrainian – on the peninsula in the long term.

Kyiv's Ukrainization strategy, on the other hand, is contrary to both the interests of the Russian population in seeing their identity preserved and, in the long term, to the Crimean Tatars' goal of achieving a national revival. The Crimean Tatars are seeking to ensure the return to Crimea of as many of their kinsfolk as possible while fighting nationally and internationally for recognition of their – contentious concept of – autochthony, a matter that is closely related to their demands for national-territorial autonomy.¹⁶ This leads the Crimean Tatars into strategic conflicts of interest with Ukrainians and Russians as well as non-Slavic minorities, such as the Krymchaks and Karaims, who are few in number but also consider themselves to be autochthonic.

Decline of Interethnic and Interdenominational Dialogue

There has been a perceptible decline in dialogue between ethnic and religious groups in Crimea, even if this has not been acknowledged by official sources – quite the contrary. Observers note, however, that the dialogue formats that have existed in Crimea since the 1990s have, for various reasons, either been dismantled or have become trivialized.

Decline of Interethnic Dialogue

Looking at the current interethnic situation in Crimea, it can be seen that a number of formats for interethnic dialogue that were still a feature of the political landscape on the peninsula a decade ago have disappeared.¹⁷ The formats for social dialogue established by the government in the meantime, including the Public Council in the Office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers or the UNDP-sponsored Human Security Council under the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Crimea, cannot replace the interethnic exchange that used to take place, even while it is certainly possible to conceive of ethnic topics being included in a broader public conversation.¹⁸

16 The Ukrainian constitution of 28 June 1996 mentions indigenous peoples under Article 11, but lacks specific detail. The topic remains open. Ukraine abstained on the vote to adopt the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples on 13 September 2007.

17 The Association of Ethnic Societies and Communities of Crimea has, for financial and organizational reasons, ceased to exist. There is a successor organization, but it does not appear to be very active. The Interethnic Council of Crimea was dissolved by the authorities and replaced by a Public Council.

18 It is worth noting that a Council of National Minorities' Organizations does exist at state level in which 43 organizations and the State Committee for National Minorities and Religions are currently represented. Analogous bodies exist in all Ukraine's administrative areas (*oblasti*), with the exception of three, including Crimea. A similar council also exists as part of the presidential apparatus, where its role is to communicate government policy to the national minorities.

A number of analysts believe that the reason for the dissolution of these dialogue structures lies in the commercialization of the political discourse on ethnic affairs. There is much interest in “ethno-business” and established ethnic leaderships are concerned primarily with ensuring their own legitimacy. From this point of view, the recent revival of clashes between Crimean Tatars and Slavs is no coincidence. Acts of violence described in detail in the media, such as the demolition of illegally erected Crimean Tatar restaurants on the highest mountain on the peninsula, Ai Petri, street fighting over a market in Crimean-dominated Bakhchisaray, or the appearance of Russian Cossacks, trigger major public disquiet and provide opportunities to make political capital.

Decline of Interdenominational Dialogue

In comparison to interethnic dialogue, interdenominational dialogue in Crimea remains remarkably lively. (At national level, there is also a dialogue within the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, a platform currently shared by 19 denominations.) Discussion between denominational leaders in Crimea has had a moderating effect on escalating political situations on various occasions over the years. However, it must also be noted that the Crimean Interdenominational Council, the highest meeting of leaders of religions held to be historically established in Crimea, whose slogan is “Peace is the Gift of God”, has had no permanent Muslim member for nearly a decade, but had to make do with the sporadic attendance of Mufti Emirali Ablav. The Mufti, who, along with Orthodox Metropolitan Lazarus (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, UOC-MP), was the most important member of this body, explained his resignation in 2000 as a protest against the alleged call for a thousand crosses to be erected on the peninsula to celebrate the Christian Millennium festival and the failure to allow the representative of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) to join the Council, which the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate apparently opposed.¹⁹ The council is intended for interdenominational discussion and for conversation with the relevant organs of state. It has a charter, but is not registered with the authorities.

At least as far as the official image it presents to the outside world is concerned, the government in Kyiv believes that major interdenominational conflicts in the country, including Crimea, have largely been overcome. Such is the opinion, for example, of representatives of the State Committee on National Minorities and Religions, which is responsible for these matters. However, this view does not take into account the canonical dispute between the Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates or other differences between Christian de-

19 From the point of view of the Moscow Patriarchate, the key precondition for admission is absent – the canonical recognition of the UOC-KP by the community of autocephalous and autonomous churches around the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, in which the Russian Orthodox Church plays a special role.

nominations. Nor does it acknowledge the growing tensions between the Christian and Muslim sections of the population, and divisions within the Muslim population (see below). A number of commentators even believe that there is currently a displacement of tension going on, from the interethnic to the interdenominational sphere.

It should also be noted that many religious communities are still concerned to ensure the return of property confiscated from them by the Soviet authorities, above all their places of worship. In Crimea, that is true of most of the major denominational communities – from Christians to Muslims to Karaims. Representatives of the affected communities, however, tend to stress that these issues of restitution, over which negotiations have been ongoing for many years now, though key questions, are not irresolvable.

Compared to the restitution issue, the erection of a number of new places of worship, many of them in prominent civic locations, is a matter of great controversy. Muslims are critically observing the building of churches in many areas. At the same time, Christian Slavs have long been sceptically regarding the building of mosques, which has been strongly financed by donations from the Arab world. The officially recognized, quasi-state parallel administration of the Crimean Tatars, the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People, and the Muftiat under the above-mentioned Mufti Emirali Ablaev are involved in a long-running dispute with Simferopol municipal authorities over the planned erection of a central mosque in Simferopol, whose construction is said to have already been approved. Like many other affairs, this dispute has symbolic significance, and has garnered a great deal of publicity.

Dialogue Between Christian Denominations

Although it has a fairly religious, largely Christian population, Ukraine has no unifying national Christian church. At least five major Christian denominations are involved in disputes of greater or lesser intensity. The government of Victor Yushchenko, with its nationalist tendencies, gave its greatest support to the institutional autonomy of the two most important of the Orthodox churches that are independent of the Moscow Patriarchate – the self-designated UOC-KP under Filaret II, which split from the Moscow Patriarchate during the 1990s, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which is particularly important in the west of the country. (Alongside them, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, which owes allegiance to Rome, is also significant, also particularly in the west of the country.) The canonicity of the first two is disputed, as they are not recognized by the Orthodox churches of the Byzantine tradition.²⁰ They are opposed by the canonically recognized UOC-MP under Metropolitan Volodymyr. The UOC-MP enjoys a

20 The mutual recognition of canonicity by the Orthodox churches (or their congregations) extends to full communion, which includes joint celebration of the Eucharist, mutual recognition of sacraments, ordained clergy, and ministries, and the exchange of clergy.

particularly influential position, even though, thanks to its historical and canonical links with Russia, it has little connection to the Ukrainian national renaissance. On the contrary, it is often seen by ethnic Ukrainians as opposing the revival of an ethnic Ukrainian identity. Gestures like the blessing of President Yanukovich at his inauguration on 25 February 2010 by Kirill I, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves (Pechersk Lavra) – “whence the Rus’ once went out”²¹ (Kirill) – will thus have had a powerful symbolic significance for them.

On the other hand, during the crisis of values that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, the UOC-MP, like the other Orthodox churches, gave a focus to the lives of many Ukrainians. Moreover, the church has recently enhanced its work in Crimea to promote Christian values in education and with young people and families, as well as its involvement in combating alcoholism and drug addiction. The building of churches and prayer houses, as mentioned above, is visible in the cities and towns of Crimea, where new monasteries are also being constructed. Some Christian adherents of the Kyiv Patriarchate as well as a number of Muslims consider this to be expansionistic, just as for many Ukrainians events like the visit of Patriarch Kirill to Kyiv, Donetsk, western Ukraine, and Crimea in August 2009 served only to deepen the differences between the Orthodox churches in Ukraine.

The dialogue between the Ukrainian Orthodox churches of the Moscow and the Kyiv Patriarchates that first began in 1994 was taken up again in October 2009. Each party established a commission to run their side of the discussion. The government has commented that rapprochement would certainly be desirable, particularly given the increasing influence of recently arrived foreign churches.

Division among the Crimean Tatars

Divisions have been growing in the secular Crimean Tatar movement since the 1990s, and this has recently taken on a denominational dimension as well. Equally, Islamic organizations that previously had no presence in Ukraine and Crimea have been establishing structures there for some time.

Secular Division among the Crimean Tatars

The role of the *Mejlis* as the secular leadership of the Crimean Tatars has been continually challenged ever since the Crimean Tatars returned to the peninsula in the 1990s, for instance by the National Movement of the Crimean Tatars (NMCT). The opposition, however, has never had much political influence. Since 17 *Mejlis* delegates left as a body in 1997, however,

21 Cited in: RIA Novosti, *Ukraine: Moskauer Patriarch und Kiewer Metropolit beteten für neuen Präsidenten* [Ukraine: Moscow Patriarch and Kyiv Metropolitan Pray for New President], 25 February 2010 (German edition; author's translation), at: <http://de.rian.ru/postsowjetischen/20100225/125243279.html>.

several independent and politically effective organizations have come into existence. And while the *Mejlis* remains the leading representative institution of Crimean Tatars, it nonetheless feels forced to take action to arrest its declining influence, for instance, by organizing the first World Congress of the Crimean Tatars, which was held in May 2009. At the same time, opposition movements such as *Milli Firka* are growing. They accuse the *Mejlis* of lacking transparency and democracy, corruption, and failing to implement the Crimean Tatars' strategic demands, as detailed above, at whose centre lies the establishment of a Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomous entity. This also involves a rhetorical radicalization, at the very least. In *Milli Firka's* declarations, the leaders of the *Mejlis* are described as traitors, and the *Kurultai*, the representative body that elects the *Mejlis*, as illegitimate.²² The opposition claims that the current *Mejlis* represents only around a third of enfranchised Crimean Tatars.

Denominational Division among the Crimean Tatars

Turkish Islam, which is considered relatively liberal and tolerant, was particularly influential on Ukraine and Crimea in the early 1990s, but it has been gradually replaced by Arab-influenced Islam since the early 2000s. This is confirmed by the Department for Religious Issues of the State Committee on National Minorities and Religions in Kyiv.

It has also been confirmed in Crimea itself. The *Mejlis* has observed significant growth in the popularity of conservative Salafī and Wahhabi forms of Islam, which take their guidance from early Islamic traditions, which they claim represent authentic Islamic teaching. They are understood to be opposed to globalization, to Ukraine's European integration, but also to rapprochement with Russia. Commentators have also observed *Hizb ut-Tahrir* ("Party of Liberation") gathering strength on the peninsula. Though it has yet to achieve major influence it has had a significant effect in terms of values and is slowly beginning to establish its own structures. Its growing activity in the political sphere is also being felt. *Hizb ut-Tahrir* is not banned in Ukraine, as it is in countries including Germany and Russia. Various government sources rather vaguely estimate the strength of its support in Crimea as lying between 4,000 and 10,000 individuals. Other sources suggest that total support in the whole country amounts to no more than 10,000 to 15,000.

Islam, which was a factor in the ethnic cohesion of the Crimean Tatars as they returned to their ancestral homeland is gradually losing this property. The *Mejlis*-sponsored Muftiat under Mufti Emirali Abulaev lacks the necessary Koranic scholarship skills and integration in the wider Islamic world to compete with the new movements in terms of doctrine and religious practice.

There have even been physical confrontations between followers of the Mufti and supporters of *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, which indicates substantial problems

22 Cf. Milli Firka Press Service, *The Crimean Tatars declared leaders of Milli Medzhlis traitors of the people*, at: http://www.milli-firka.org/?mod=article_read&article=3246.

in confessional relations. A case has been reported of the *Mejlis* acting on its own initiative in closing down a mosque whose attendees had grown too close to *Hizb ut-Tahrir*.

At the same time, as a result of denominational differences and a sense that they are competitors, the *Mejlis* and the Muftiat under Mufti Emirali Ablaev have deliberately avoided contact with the Kyiv-based Religious Administration of Ukrainian Muslims under Mufti Shaykh Ahmad Tamim. The latter is considered part of the Habashi movement, which originated in Lebanon, and appears to be the most influential of the four Ukrainian Muftiats outside Crimea.

According to the responsible government agency, alongside 340 Muslim communities that accept the authority of the *Mejlis*-sponsored Muftiat, Crimea was, in late 2009, home to 47 independent Muslim communities, 28 of which can be categorized as adhering to “new Islamic movements”. As the *Mejlis*-sponsored Muftiat points out, five influential communities can be described as belonging to new Islamic movements.

The government finds it just as hard as the Islamic authorities to position itself with regard to the new Islamic movements. The Crimean Republican Committee on Religious Affairs in Simferopol has complained that it is legally obliged to register even politically questionable organizations and sects. The authorities claim that there are no practically applicable laws. They also certainly lack the expert knowledge of religious affairs necessary to evaluate the activities of religious communities and their political connotations. Their uncertainty in dealing with new religious movements has led the authorities in Crimea initially to adopt a defensive posture, and no new registrations have been granted since 2007. Some cases are said to have been decided in the courts, while others are pending.

The Agenda of the Crimean Tatars

As well as the long-term goal of establishing a national-territorial autonomous entity in which the Crimean Tatars are the titular nation, the political agenda of the Crimean Tatars also includes the demand for legal protection as an indigenous people. They oppose the lack of constitutional recognition of Crimean Tatar as an official language, the neglect of their language in education, literature, and the media, their under-representation in political bodies and the civil service, state-sponsored employment discrimination, the destruction or inadequate restoration of their built cultural heritage, and the Russification (since 1945-1948) and increasing Ukrainianization of their toponomy (naming of land features, settlements, streets, etc.).²³ In their most serious allegation, the Crimean Tatars accuse the Ukrainian government of

23 Cf. *ibid.*

practising cultural genocide or ethnocide.²⁴ The Crimean Tatars call for legislation to support the integration and compensation of formerly deported persons (FDPs) as a matter of collective rights and reject individual settlements.

Illegal Land Seizures by Crimean Tatars

The illegal seizure of land in Crimea, which is still going on after two decades, is an explosive issue. During the current wave of land seizures, the third of its kind, the descendents of deported Crimean Tatars have joined together to take possession of buildings and land in the towns of their ancestors, where restitution and compensation had generally been ruled out by legislators. For their part, Crimean Tatars speak of having their land stolen from them. They complain about major land confiscations (according to their own figures, 80,350 houses and their contents, as well as 78,455 plots of land in 1944, the year of deportation), the settlement of non-Tatars in their former homelands, the rejection of their demands for restitution and compensation, and their exclusion from the land privatization campaigns of the 1990s.²⁵ While Crimean officials state that, as of autumn 2009, only 1.5 per cent of Crimean Tatar families – ca. 4,000 households – are still looking for somewhere to live, some 10,000 Crimean Tatar property claims are outstanding. Since there is no register of returnees or formerly deported persons who continue to live abroad (mostly in Uzbekistan) and their descendents, there is no way of knowing how many applications will be received in the future, a fact that hangs over the political scene like a threat.

A comprehensive resolution of the land question would be possible, but is apparently being pursued systematically by neither the government nor business nor by the Crimean Tatars. Although the land register of Crimea has been in preparation for more than a decade, it has still not been brought into use. There is no means of proving that a plot of land is illegally occupied. The recent legalization of the trade in real property has led to an escalation in the level of conflict. Slavic commentators have remarked that the illegal acquisition of land appears to have become an acceptable business model.

Russians Turn their Backs

Among the ethnic Russians in Crimea, an ongoing disengagement with Ukraine as a political entity is evident. On the whole, they have been disappointed by nearly two decades of Ukrainian independence, the country's economic decline, and the constant ethnic insults they have had to face from the

24 Cf. Ayder Mustafayev, *Protect us from discrimination – help us restore our rights! – Appeal of Crimean Tatar People to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, PC.NGO/19/07, Bucharest, 8 June 2007.

25 Cf. *Ibid.*

central government. “We do not want to belong to a loser nation,” is typical of the comments made by Crimean Russians. They perceived the Orange Revolution, among whose targets was the pro-Russian future prime minister and current president, Victor Yanukovich, to be anti-Russian. They felt confirmed in this belief by the policies subsequently pursued by President Yushchenko, which set back their cause in terms of language, education, and the media – at least as portrayed by their political and media representatives. The forced Ukrainianization of their personal names was and remains a humiliation for ethnic Russians. The ministerial decree issued in 2009 that required the use of Ukrainian in schools, even outside the classroom, as well as for university entrance exams outraged ethnic Russians. In the light of these events, there are those who claim that anti-Ukrainian sentiment has become a permanent feature of the Crimean Russians’ world view. Kyiv’s ongoing pattern of restrictive lawmaking has even been invoked to justify civil disobedience. However, there is currently no evidence of activities that could lead to the dissolution of Ukraine, as there was up to the mid-1990s.

Effects of the Georgia Crisis

The 2008 Georgia crisis did more to make the Ukrainian public aware of the influence of Russia on the country than earlier bilateral disputes, such as the various gas-transit conflicts. Following the events in Georgia, the ethnic Russian camp appears to be consciously exercising restraint. Indeed, the Georgia crisis has had a strong influence on political thinking in Ukraine generally, and Crimea in particular. In the view of Ukraine’s minorities, Russia has returned to the stage as an actor with the power to transform political realities. Perceived as a response to Kosovo, the Georgia crisis has given a clear indication of Russia’s sphere of influence as well as its readiness to seek military solutions in the post-Soviet area. The peace accords between Moscow and Grozny that ended the Second Chechen War were viewed in the same light from the perspective of Crimea.

Perception of the Withdrawal of the Russian Fleet 2017/2042

In the aftermath of the Georgia crisis, the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol is considered by ethnic Russians to be even more important as a stabilizing factor in Ukraine’s domestic politics. For ethnic Ukrainians, the opposite is true. For President Yanukovich, the agreement he negotiated with Russia soon after assuming office, which coupled a long-term reduction in the price of Russian gas with an extension of the deadline for withdrawal of the Black Sea Fleet from 2017 to 2042, brought economic and political advantages. It strengthens his country’s links with Russia and, by ensuring the presence of the Russian fleet, reinforces the Russian element in

Ukrainian domestic politics. For the ethnic Russians in Crimea, it has had a profound morale-boosting effect.

In addition, local politicians in Sevastopol have long drawn attention to the employment problems the city faces as a result of the lay-off of military and civilian personnel, as well as the immense challenges of converting military infrastructure and cleaning up contaminated sites. They believe that the historic military base will throw up further controversial topics, including the accommodation and employment problems faced by Russian citizens, the ongoing task of unravelling military and non-military property, and the possible integration of the Sevastopol administrative area – whose independence is anchored in the constitution, and which encompasses the towns of Sevastopol, Inkerman, and Balaklava, as well as 60 villages and settlements – in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine

While, during 2009 and 2010, the government of Ukraine has intensified its efforts to secure the Chairmanship of the OSCE, it also appears to be seeking to wind down the activities of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. In doing so, it again positions itself in opposition to established forms of European security co-operation, as it did once before, in 1999, when it forced the closure of the OSCE Mission to Ukraine, thereby creating a precedent for the closure of OSCE field operations.

The Project Co-ordinator on His Own Activities

The Project Co-ordinator claims that he himself defines no specific focus areas or target groups for his work. Nor does he focus on specific regions, as Kyiv is not in favour of having the country's east-west divide or the issue of Crimea addressed individually. The Co-ordinator prefers to take no position on political topics such as the situation of minorities or the language question. His office's local knowledge, contacts, and collective memory make it a vital resource for the central OSCE institutions.

The work of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator is expressly restricted to project activities. Political monitoring of the kind previously carried out by the OSCE Mission is no longer undertaken in any shape or form. His regular progress reports are also limited in scope to the projects assigned to him by the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies. The exclusive right of the MFA to initiate and approve projects is acknowledged by all sides, including the Project Co-ordinator himself. Nonetheless,

the 1999 Memorandum of Understanding does not exclude the possibility of a more active role for the Project Co-ordinator in planning projects.²⁶

According to its own figures, the office of the Co-ordinator in Kyiv currently has a staff of four international and 51 national members. At the end of 2009, the office's eight or nine units were responsible for between 25 and 27 projects, which employed further national staff in their turn. No data is available on the total number of project staff. The Project Co-ordinator has a regular budget of 2,752,300 euros in 2010 (2009: 2,758,500 euros).²⁷ No source could provide full details of all extra-budgetary funds available to the Project Co-ordinator. The office's plans for 2010 include projects on electoral legislation; the electoral register; promoting civil society and the media; combating human trafficking, domestic violence, and torture and other cruel treatment; police training; tolerance and non-discrimination; promotion of human rights; administrative law and citizens' complaints; the integration of former military personnel; enhancing border security; and alternative energy sources.²⁸

The *mélange* project, which is the responsibility of the OSCE Secretariat, will continue to be implemented. The first phase of this project, which was due to end in November 2010, involves the disposal of 3,168 tonnes of rocket fuel. It is the OSCE's most high-profile project in Ukraine at present. A call has been issued for extra-budgetary funding for the second phase of the project, which the Secretariat describes as a "priority task" for 2010. The cleanup of explosive remnants of war will also continue. Successful projects of this nature have been carried out in Crimea – in Kerch and near Sevastopol – and in mainland Ukraine in Bila Tserkva. They are objectively necessary and their profile has been enhanced following several disastrous accidents at the ammunition dumps in Novobogdanivka in Zaporizhia Oblast.

The work of the Project Co-ordinator to enhance border security is carried out in co-operation with the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) along the 1,222 km long Moldovan-Ukrainian border, which therefore also has implications for Transdnistria. The aim of the EU programme is to ensure Ukraine's border regime conforms to Schengen standards by 2015. The Co-ordinator's willingness to take on the cost of providing expensive technical equipment has been criticized by a number of delegations.

26 Cf. *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Ukraine and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Concerning the Creation of a New Form of Co-operation*, Vienna, 13 July 1999, Article 1, points 2 and 3, Article 2, point 3.

27 OSCE Permanent Council, Decision No. 923, *Approval of the 2010 Unified Budget*, PC.DEC/923, 22 December 2009, p. 6.

28 Cf. *2010 OSCE Programme Outline*, SEC.GAL/74/09, 20 May 2009.

Ukrainian Sensitivities Regarding the Project Co-ordinator

The Ukrainian government appears to have envisaged the step-by-step reduction of the Project Co-ordinator's activities and their replacement with direct co-operation with central OSCE institutions for some time. It seems that their ultimate – long-term – goal is the removal of the Co-ordinator from Ukrainian soil altogether, though government representatives say they are not thinking in terms of closure at present. As things stand, they would initially like to see the Project Co-ordinator concentrate on a small number of projects – reducing the current number of 25 or 27 to just two or three in the future. They say the aim of co-operation should be to seek to hand projects over to Ukrainian partners. Interpreted strictly, this would mean that each individual project would need to come with an exit strategy, though Kyiv does not wish to impose time limits on this either.

The Ukrainian side does not seem to have a coherent concept of what topics the Co-ordinator should deal with and what formats his work should take. A number of discussions revealed no unifying point of view. On the whole, no specific topics were identified, apart from maybe energy security. Here one could conceive of a special role in the implementation of EU measures for the Ukrainian energy sector, according to the joint declaration of March 2009.²⁹ At the same time, topics such as support for legislative analysis in the context of Ukraine's growing closeness to the EU have been mentioned, as have aforesaid items of the Project Co-ordinator's activities.

As things stand, Kyiv is strongly insisting that the activities of the Project Co-ordinator are again closely tied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is argued that direct co-operation with other state authorities would escape the co-ordinating function of the MFA to negative effect. Kyiv further insists that the Project Co-ordinator's activities should not duplicate the activities of other international organizations and need to demonstrate tangible social and economic effects.

Ukraine's 2013 OSCE Chairmanship

Discussions of Ukraine's co-operation with the OSCE in general, and the Project Co-ordinator in particular, must necessarily be put in the context of Ukraine's 2013 OSCE Chairmanship. In explaining their motivations for applying for the Chairmanship, the Ukrainian side gave three key arguments:³⁰ First, chairing the OSCE would provide Ukraine with opportunities for

29 Cf. European Commission/Government of Ukraine, *Joint Declaration, Joint EU-Ukraine International Investment Conference on the Modernization of Ukraine's Energy Transit System*, at: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/energy/events/eu_ukraine_2009/joint_declaration_en.pdf.

30 Cf. Delegation of Ukraine to the OSCE, *Statement on the bid of Ukraine for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2013*, PC.DEL/802/09, 16 October 2009.

greater closeness to the European Union. In the second instance, Ukraine could genuinely achieve something. (“*Ukraine can make some difference.*”) Third, Ukraine wishes to profile itself as a European leader and, after all, it has never held the OSCE Chairmanship. Ukraine also gained vital experience in multilateral co-operation as a result of its membership of the UN Security Council in 2000-2001. The Ukrainian foreign minister, Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, personally underlined the case for the Ukrainian bid at a special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on 22 June 2010.³¹

Despite its forthcoming Chairmanship, the Ukrainian government makes a clear distinction between the contribution it expects the OSCE to make to Ukrainian security, and the activities of the Organization in Ukraine. In other words, the benefits of the Organization are seen primarily in terms of its external rather than its internal contributions. The value of the OSCE consists, it is stressed, in giving Ukraine an equal voice in the European security dialogue, and currently, therefore, in the Corfu Process. At the same time, there is scepticism about the Organization’s effectiveness together with a desire – based on an argument that remains questionable – for more balance between the OSCE’s three dimensions. According to Ukrainian sources, the OSCE’s specific activities in Ukraine are in the process of becoming superfluous, as the country’s political context is increasingly being shaped by the EU rather than the OSCE.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The situation in Ukraine is characterized by a singular ambiguity. On the one hand, there are no signs of an open crisis within either domestic or foreign policy. On the other, Ukraine demonstrates a plethora of vulnerabilities in both areas, which could easily be taken advantage of given the underlying weakness of the state.

This snapshot corresponds to the broader picture: On the one hand, major progress has been made, thanks to the Orange Revolution, in that murder and other forms of physical violence are no longer employed as means of resolving major political disputes, there is a degree of media freedom, and elections are obviously no longer subject to massive fraud. However, there is an enormous sense of helplessness and a lack of prospects regarding both domestic and international affairs, and the current financial and economic crisis is serving to further deepen the moral morass.

In this situation, it is of great importance that both the general public and the elites of Ukraine grasp that vital aspects of progress cannot come primarily from outside but must, first of all, result from the implementation

31 OSCE Press Release, *OSCE role in conflict prevention and resolution should be enhanced, says Ukrainian Foreign Minister*, Vienna 22 June 2010, at: <http://www.osce.org/pc/69466>.

of a Ukrainian agenda. Forms of co-operation with Ukraine in general, and between the country and the OSCE in particular, need to take account of this overriding goal.

The following approaches to co-operation and topics for projects are recommended in particular:

1. *Dialogue on the way to Ukraine's 2013 Chairmanship.* It is recommended that full use be made of Ukraine's preparations for the 2013 OSCE Chairmanship.³² Discussions should be held with members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government departments dealing with foreign and internal affairs on the political priorities for 2013. This would also provide opportunities for detailed discussions with academics and representatives of minorities on issues such as the role of Ukraine in the European security landscape or the expectations Ukraine has of the OSCE in the domestic sphere.
2. *Continuation of the work of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator.* The continuation of the work of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine should be insisted upon. The closure of this field operation would send the wrong signals to the Ukrainian public, and the effect would also be deleterious to other important field presences. It is barely conceivable given Ukraine's current domestic political situation.
3. *A thematic OSCE field presence in Ukraine.* Consideration should be made of reviving a former Ukrainian proposal for the establishment of a long-term OSCE presence on a thematic basis in Ukraine. The establishment of a centre for ethno-political research under the aegis of the HCNM or the Secretary General was originally proposed in 1999. The idea has since been abandoned, yet it offers a conceptual starting point for future activities.
4. *Promoting dialogue.* It is recommended that the Project Co-ordinator and the HCNM intensify their promotion of dialogue between the key ethnic groups in Ukraine at both central and regional levels. This could be accomplished by means of events organized in conjunction with the national, regional, and local government bodies responsible for inter-ethnic relations and the appropriate parliamentary committees. At the same time, the HCNM, in particular, should intensify contacts with the state authorities responsible for inter-denominational affairs and consultative bodies, such as the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations and the Crimean Interdenominational Council.
5. *Flagship projects, but no reduction.* It is recommended that this proposal of the Ukrainian side be taken up by defining a number of flagship projects within the Co-ordinator's work. However, this should not lead to a significant reduction in the activities of his office. Potential flagship

32 The application can be found in MC.DEL/31/05, CIO.GAL/145/07, MC.DEL/87/07, PC.DEL/802/09, MC.DEL/12/09, and PC.DEL/618/10.

projects include supporting the improvement of the national register (background: the 2012 census), the continuation of election-related cooperation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the second phase of the *mélange* project in collaboration with the OSCE Secretariat. The Ukrainian side is likely to have further requests regarding the cleanup of explosive remnants of war.