

organizations in Canada could provide expertise to deal with some of the problems faced by this region of Ukraine.

All attempts to assess developments in Ukraine have consistently stressed that certain distinctive features of the situation in Crimea (formal title -- Autonomous Republic of Crimea) have turned it into a region of tension which poses a very significant challenge to Ukraine's development as a democratic, independent state, and to regional stability in the Black Sea basin.

1. Crimea has the anomalous status of an autonomous republic within an otherwise unitary state, and controversies over the relationship between the Crimean and central Ukrainian authorities continue.
2. The majority of Crimea's population is of ethnic Russian background, and many of the Ukrainians in Crimea are Russified. Many local politicians who claim to represent the interests of the Russian population have played on its resentment of the central authorities in Kyiv, who are accused of being anti-Russian and blamed for the economic downturn in the peninsula. In addition, the rhetoric used by these politicians has often fanned inter-communal tensions between the Russian and Crimean Tatar populations. Crimea has also attracted the attention of numerous politicians in Russia who are eager to demonstrate their support for Russian diaspora communities, and this situation has been further complicated by the significant (and, until recently, largely unregulated) Russian military presence in the Crimean naval base of Sevastopol. Crimea's role as a source of tension between Ukraine and Russia has diminished as a result of recent agreements between these two countries. However, relations between Russia and Ukraine will continue to be greatly affected by developments in this strategically located peninsula.
3. Two hundred and sixty thousand Crimean Tatars have recently returned to their homeland after more than forty years of exile following their brutal deportation to Soviet Central Asia in 1944. A similar number of Crimean Tatars still hope to return to Crimea (mostly from Uzbekistan and other regions of Central Asia), but those who have already moved to Crimea face harsh discrimination, very difficult living conditions, and high levels of unemployment. Thus a majority of adult Crimean Tatars are currently unemployed, and most of those who are employed do not work in their field of specialization. At the same time the Crimean Tatar community is very disciplined and well-organized, and its leaders have shown that they can easily mobilize the community for political action.
4. A meeting of the heads of government of the countries of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) decided that the expenses associated with the return of the Crimean Tatars to Crimea would be shared by these countries. However, to date only the Ukrainian government has assisted the Crimean Tatar returnees, and the funds it has provided cover only a small percentage of the massive costs of reestablishing a viable Crimean Tatar community in its homeland.