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SOCIO-POLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMIC UPTURN IN CRIMEA IN 2000–2008

Summary

The article examines the impact of a sharp improvement in the economic situation on the Crimean peninsula in the 2000s on the political situation in the region and makes an attempt to use the latest methodological approaches. According to the author, economic growth in Crimea was one of the factors of relative socio-political stabilization from 2000–2008. Specific manifestations of this included the regional elites abandoning the course of confrontation with the central government of Ukraine, decreasing tensions between the ethnic communities of the peninsula and an overall decline in political activity. The underlying causes of these phenomena were integration processes – both between Crimea and Ukraine as a whole, and within the region, both at the inter-elite level and at the level of ordinary members of the Crimean society.

However, a decrease in the level of conflict activity in society and an increase in living standards occurred within the limits of an ineffective and unfair political and economic system created in the 1990s on the ruins of the Soviet order. This system was, by definition, incapable of responding quickly to challenges, and its evident

unfairness made it difficult or even impossible to create a nationwide supraethnic civic consciousness. The fragile stability of such a construct is in fact always one step away from the collapse, and one strong external shock may be enough for this step to be made.

This also happened in the present case: insufficient integration of Crimea into the Ukrainian state, and of ethnic communities of the peninsula into a single society, played a role during the annexation of the region by Russia in 2014. Thus, the seeds of the collapse of the Ukrainian political project on the peninsula were being sown also during that seemingly stable period which is considered in this work.

Another conclusion to be drawn is that, contrary to some popular political science theories, rapid and uneven economic growth should be considered as a phenomenon which is fully compatible with socio-political stabilization.

Key words: *Crimea, economic growth, socio-political stabilization, central government.*