

Committee: DISEC 2

Topic: The Question of Ukraine

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Summary

The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia is one of the most serious geopolitical crises in modern history. The question of Ukraine centres on the conflict and territorial disputes between Ukraine and Russia, significantly affecting regional stability and international relations. The situation escalated in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and violence erupted in Eastern Ukraine involving pro-Russian separatists. This ongoing crisis has led to serious geopolitical tensions, humanitarian issues, and challenges to international law.

Definition of Key Terms

Annexation – the act of a state forcibly taking control of a territory outside its own borders, typically without the consent of the territory's inhabitants.

Separatists – groups that seek to break away from an established state to form a new independent entity or join another country.

Sovereignty – the authority of a state to govern itself or another state, including control over its territory and freedom from external interference.

Sanctions – penalties or other measures imposed by one or more countries against another country to influence its behaviour.

Ceasefire – a temporary suspension of fighting, typically one that is agreed upon by all parties involved in a conflict.

Proxy War – a conflict where two opposing countries or parties support combatants that serve their interests instead of waging war directly. In Ukraine, Russia is often seen as fighting a proxy war through its support of separatist groups.

Hybrid Warfare – a blend of conventional warfare, cyber warfare, and irregular tactics like propaganda, disinformation, and economic pressure used to destabilise and influence the adversary without direct confrontation.

Referendum – a direct vote in which the electorate is asked to accept or reject a particular proposal.

Occupied territories – areas that are under control of foreign military forces without the consent of the legitimate government. In Ukraine, this term refers to Crimea and parts of the Donbas region.

Ethnic Russian – a person of Russian heritage living outside Russia, particularly significant in Ukraine, where ethnic Russians have been used as a pretext by Russia to justify its intervention.

No-fly zone – imposed by the EU, US, and other countries on Russia to pressure compliance with international law and withdrawal from Ukrainian territory.

Background Information

The crisis in Ukraine has deep historical roots, including long-standing political, cultural, and economic ties between Ukraine and Russia. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine declared independence, leading to a period of tension and fluctuating relations with Russia. The situation worsened in 2014 following the Euromaidan protests, which resulted in the ousting of Ukraine's pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich. Subsequently, Russia annexed Crimea, and a violent conflict broke out in the Donbas region between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists.

Key Historical Context

1. Euromaidan Protests (2013-2014):

November 2013: Protests erupt in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, against President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to reject an Association Agreement with the European Union in favour of closer ties with Russia.

February 2014: The protests, known as Euromaidan, escalate, leading to violent clashes between protesters and police. Yanukovich is eventually ousted, and a new pro-Western government is installed.

2. Annexation of Crimea (2014):

February-March 2014: Following Yanukovich's ousting, Russian troops enter Crimea, a region with a significant ethnic Russian population. In March 2014, a controversial referendum is held in Crimea under Russian control, resulting in a declaration of

independence and subsequent annexation by Russia. This move is widely condemned by the international community as illegal.

3. Conflict in Eastern Ukraine (2014-present):

April 2014: Pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas region, which includes Donetsk and Luhansk, declare independence from Ukraine, leading to armed conflict. Russia is accused of providing military support to these separatists, further escalating the conflict.

August 2014: Fighting intensifies, with heavy casualties and significant displacement of civilians.

4. Minsk Agreements (2014, 2015):

September 2014 & February 2015: The Minsk I and II agreements are brokered to establish a ceasefire and outline steps toward a political resolution. Despite these agreements, sporadic fighting continues, and a lasting peace remains elusive.

5. Full-Scale Invasion (2022):

February 2022: Russia launches a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, leading to widespread international condemnation, increased sanctions, and a severe humanitarian crisis

Affected Territories:

Crimea: Annexed by Russia in 2014. Located on the Black Sea, Crimea's strategic position and large Russian-speaking population were key factors in its annexation.

Donbas Region: Comprising Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in Eastern Ukraine. This area has been a major site of conflict between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists.

Map of Ukraine Showing Affected Areas

[Interactive Map of Ukraine](#): This map from BBC News highlights Crimea, the Donbas region, and major cities affected by the conflict, including Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Mariupol.



Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Ukraine:

Ukraine is at the centre of the conflict, striving to maintain its territorial integrity and sovereignty against Russian aggression. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine with Russian-backed separatists are key issues.

Ukraine's desire to join NATO has heightened tensions with Russia. NATO membership would provide Ukraine with a collective defence guarantee, which Russia perceives as a direct threat to its own security and influence in the region.

Russia:

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, a move widely condemned by the international community as a violation of international law.

Russia supports separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine, providing military, economic, and logistical aid to these groups.

Russia aims to maintain its sphere of influence over former Soviet states and prevent them from aligning with Western institutions like NATO and the EU.

United States:

The U.S. has been a strong supporter of Ukraine, providing significant military and economic aid to help Ukraine defend itself and stabilise its economy.

The U.S. has imposed a range of sanctions on Russia, targeting its economy, political elites, and key sectors like energy and finance, in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine.

European Union:

Like the U.S., the EU has imposed sanctions on Russia, affecting trade, investment, and individuals involved in the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

The EU provides financial aid to Ukraine and supports its reform efforts, helping to stabilise the country and promote economic development.

The EU engages in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict, supporting initiatives like the Minsk agreements aimed at achieving a ceasefire and political solution.

NATO:

NATO has provided political and practical support to Ukraine, helping to enhance its defence capabilities through training, joint exercises, and military aid.

NATO's support for Ukraine is part of its broader strategy to deter Russian aggression and reassure its member states, particularly those in Eastern Europe, of the alliance's commitment to their security.

United Nations:

The UN is involved in diplomatic efforts to mediate the conflict, encouraging dialogue and negotiations between the parties.

The UN provides humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict, including internally displaced persons and refugees, through its various agencies.

Timeline of Events

November 2013:

Euromaidan protests begin in Kyiv, sparked by President Yanukovich's decision to reject an EU association agreement.

February 2014:

Yanukovich is ousted; Russia begins the annexation of Crimea.

March 2014:

Crimea holds a disputed referendum and is annexed by Russia.

April 2014:

Pro-Russian separatists seize control in Eastern Ukraine, leading to armed conflict.

July 2014:

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 is shot down over Eastern Ukraine, escalating international tensions.

February 2015:

Minsk II agreement is signed, aiming to cease hostilities, though fighting continues sporadically.

February 2022:

Russia launches a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, leading to widespread international condemnation and sanctions.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 (2014):

Affirms Ukraine's territorial integrity and declares the Crimea referendum invalid.

UN Security Council meetings:

Regular sessions to address the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

International Humanitarian Law:

Various treaties including the Geneva Conventions that apply to the treatment of civilians and conduct in conflict.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Minsk Agreements (2014, 2015):

Ceasefire agreements aiming to halt fighting in Eastern Ukraine and outline steps for a political resolution, though implementation has been problematic.

Normandy Format Talks:

Diplomatic meetings involving Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France to negotiate peace.

Sanctions:

Imposed by the EU, US, and other countries on Russia to pressure compliance with international law and withdraw from Ukrainian territory.

Possible Solutions

Diplomatic Negotiations:

Renewed international efforts to mediate a lasting peace agreement.

Increased Sanctions and Economic Pressure:

Intensify sanctions to coerce Russia into compliance with international norms.

Enhanced Support for Ukraine:

Provide more military, economic, and humanitarian aid to bolster Ukraine's defence and recovery.

Peacekeeping Mission:

Deploy UN peacekeepers to monitor ceasefires and ensure the protection of civilians.

Autonomy and Decentralisation:

Negotiate a political framework granting more autonomy to contested regions while maintaining Ukraine's sovereignty.

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