

Committee/Council: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

Issue: The disarmament of Eastern Ukraine

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Introduction

As the first committee of the General Assembly, the Disarmament & International Security Committee deals with disarmament and threats to peace and security that trouble the international community. The Committee pursues solutions to the challenges in the international security system that are in accordance with the United Nations (UN)

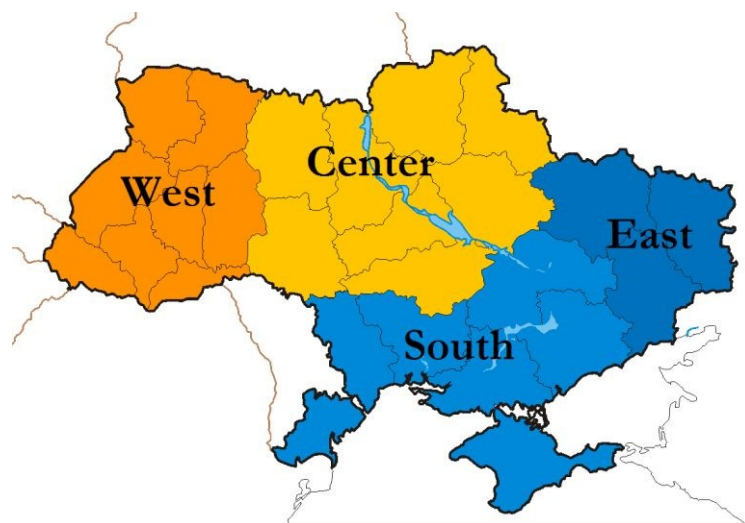


Figure 1: Ukraine's main regions.

Charter and the general principles of cooperation and governing disarmament as well as the regulations of armaments. The measures proposed by the specific Committee aim to promote cooperative arrangements targeted to maintain stability with lesser armaments. Bearing the above in mind, it is essential to focus the Committee's attention on the ongoing territorial dispute in Eastern Ukraine. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, it is estimated that the conflict has caused 10,303 deaths and 1,6 million people being internally displaced.

Definition of Key-Terms

Donets Basin

Donets Basin, Ukrainian; Donetsky Baseyn, Russian; Donetsk Bassey, byname; Donbas or Donbass, refers to the large mining and industrial region of southeastern Europe, which is notable for its large coal reserves. The coalfield lies in Southeastern Ukraine and in the adjoining region of Southwestern Russia.

Territorial Dispute

Territorial disputes occur when official representatives of one country make explicit statements claiming sovereignty over a specific piece of territory that is claimed or administered by another country. Territorial disputes lead to militarized conflict more frequently than other types of diplomatic disputes involving maritime, river, identity, economic, cultural or other issues.

Ukrainian Separatists/ Pro-Russian separatists/ Russian-backed rebels

The group of the pro-Russian rebel separatists is a loose group of unarmed Ukrainians along with trained military personnel, who have formed a territorial army under the command of pro-Russian rebel commander, Igor Girkin. They are gathered in the Eastern part of Ukraine, and more specifically in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Background Information

The Ukrainian Crisis has been troubling the international community for years, as turmoil goes back to the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections. In November 2004, the pro-Russian candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, was accused by the rival candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, for extensive vote-rigging, causing millions of Ukrainians to organize nationwide non-violent protests that came to be known as the "Orange Revolution." Following the revolution, the Supreme Court cancelled the results of the elections.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Donets-Basin>

² <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0178.xml>

³ <https://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/incidents/who-are-the-proussian-rebel-separatists-10-questions-answered-about-the-history-of-ukraine-and-the-tragedy-of-mh17/news-story/413876d1b0883b529e24e9d64438a25d>

Yushchenko won the re-elections, even though Yanukovych challenged the results and finally resigned as prime minister.

Historical Explanation

The reason behind the desire of the Ukrainians separatists to become part of Russia lies in the history and culture of the nation. Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union from 1922 until 1991 when it became independent. Although the country has its own official language, which is Ukrainian, both Russia and Ukraine use the Cyrillic alphabet. It is estimated that one in six Ukrainians speaks Russian as his/her first language. These people are mostly concentrated in the east, which borders Russia, while many are actually ethnically Russians. That part of the population still considers themselves part of Russia and this might be the answer to why the group of the rebels has been formed. Hence, the geographical location of the Donbass region, along with the identity of the separatists serve as the root causes of the ongoing conflict.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17

The Malaysia Airlines flight 17 refers to the flight of a passenger airliner that caused 298 deaths, as it crashed and burned in eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. Directly following the crash, the government of the Ukraine presented captured audio broadcasts in which suspected pro-Russian separatists spoke of having shot down a plane. In addition, according to a Dutch investigation, the aircraft was shot down by Russian-made weaponry that entered and left the country on the same day.



Figure 2: Images after the Malaysia Airlines jet crash.

However, the separatists, along with their Russian supporters, refused every accusation; instead, they proposed alternative explanations. Following this incident, the Russian Federation chose to veto a resolution of the United Nations which would set up a court to

administer justice for the crash. In September 2016, the Dutch-led prosecutorial team put forward evidence that proved that the mortal missile was launched from separatist-held territory in Ukraine. Although suspicions and evidence existed, a trial seemed to be far off since the extradition of suspects would be very difficult.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Ukraine

Ukraine is the country the most directly affected by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, since the battles are taking place in its territory. People living in the Donbass region experience war conditions, including limited access to education, while the number of victims exceeds 10,000 people. The conflict in Eastern Ukraine is between the government and the pro-Russian rebels, who have direct support from the Russian Federation, so the conflict is essentially between Ukraine and Russia. The rebels suggest that Crimea is Russian and their protests have led to Russia's invasion of Crimea.

Although Ukraine may suffer from the Russian powers, it has the support of the international community that does not recognize the Russian invasion and occupation of Crimea. Even though the country is not a member of NATO, it has the organization's support, along with USA's and EU's aid.

Russian Federation

The other party of the conflict is the Russian Federation, widely known as Russia. Although Russian President Vladimir Putin constantly denies having direct influence over the separatists, the country is widely accused of actively supporting them, which is why the separatists are also called Russian-backed rebels. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, Russia has annexed Crimea and publicly said it would not return the region. This action has not been internationally recognized and it is often characterized by many as both illegal and illegitimate. The international community has shown its dissatisfaction with Russia's behavior by implementing multiple sanctions against Russia. However, the current Russian President, Vladimir Putin, recently said that the country has managed to restore its stable

growth despite the U.S. and EU sanctions, which are eventually going to harm everyone, including those who initiate them.

USA (United States of America)

The USA is one of the most highly involved countries in the matter of resolving the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. USA's policy seems to be keen on providing military support to Ukraine since the summer of 2017 when the Pentagon and the State Department proposed arming Ukraine, for defensive reasons, so as to enable the country to deter the Russians. Although America did not allow the sale of large weapons, like anti-tank missiles, an export license for Ukraine to buy small arms from U.S. manufacturers was approved.

The country has occupied many of its top diplomats with aiding the negotiations for resolving the conflict. They have taken part in meetings and negotiations for ceasefire deals in Eastern Ukraine. Moreover, American diplomats have pressured Russians to abandon their current annexation plans in Crimea and cease to support the rebels. The U.S. has shown no intention of reconciling or looking past Russia's actions in the Donbass region. However, the country has expressed its desire to re-normalize the relations with Russia, only if the conflict is resolved, since a country's invasion in another, is an extremely difficult obstacle in diplomatic relations for them to overcome. Lastly, although the U.S. has not reached the point of armed fighting with Russia, it has implemented multiple sanctions against the country from 2014 until today.

EU (European Union)

Members of the EU, including France and Germany, have expressed serious concerns for the situation in Eastern Ukraine and seem to be greatly interested and involved in resolving the issue. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel have strongly voiced support for a lasting cease-fire in Eastern Ukraine that would allow children living in that region to attend school.

Apart from the activities of individual EU members, the Union as a whole has moved forward with multiple actions, such as a series of sanctions against Russia. In March 2018,

the EU announced it has extended the sanctions for another period of six months as it continues to condemn Russia's invasion of Crimea and its support towards the rebels in Eastern Ukraine. These sanctions include travel restrictions and assets freeze against 150 people and 38 companies.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)

Although Ukraine is not one of the member countries of the NATO, the organization's relations with the country have developed since the early 1990s and cooperation between the two has intensified since the Russia-Ukraine conflict (2014).

Over the last two decades, NATO is trying to develop a partnership with Russia, keeping political and military channels of communication open. However, cooperation between them has been suspended as the Allies strongly condemn Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

NATO's position in regards with the issue at hand remains the same since the beginning of this territorial dispute; the organization fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the borders that are currently globally recognized. NATO has neither recognized Russia's illegal and illegitimate "annexation" of Crimea in 2014 nor expressed any intentions of doing so.

OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe)

The OSCE is a group that was created during the Cold War, aiming to encourage dialogue and cooperation between East and West, having 57 members including both the United States and Russia. The organization has helped with the implementation of various programs related to the disarmament of Eastern Ukraine. Various meetings have also taken place under its auspices, in which negotiations between western countries, including USA and Russia, have been conducted in order to achieve a resolution of the conflict in the Donbass region.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
August 1991	Ukraine declares independence from the Soviet Union (USSR), acting accordingly to the results of a national referendum; 90% of the votes were in favor of independence.
November 2 004	Yushchenko and Yanukovych lead Ukraine to the "Orange Revolution".
February 2010	Viktor Yanukovych is officially announced the winner of a presidential election while being free of all charges.
October 2011	Leader of opposition, Yulia Tymoshenko, faces the law, after being accused of abuse of power.
November 2013	President Yanukovych prefers to develop closer co-operative relations with Russia, while loosening trade affairs with the European Union (EU), causing, at first, small protests. Until the end of the month, 100,000 protestors gather at a demonstration in Kiev.
March 2014	This month marks the official beginning of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. On March 1, at the request of President Vladimir Putin, the Russian parliament approved of sending force to Ukraine to protect the rebels, in this way protecting the country's interests.
March 16, 2014	A referendum is hosted, whose results show that 97% of the voters support Crimea joining the Russian Federation. However, the referendum was condemned by the West as it was characterized a sham. The following day, the EU and the U.S. impose sanctions, including travel bans and assets freeze, because of the Crimea referendum.
March 18, 2014	Russian President signs a bill to absorb Crimea into the country. A few days later, U.S. President Obama, urges Moscow to "move back its troops" in order to lower the tensions. This statement clearly shows that the conflict has caught international attention.

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

[A/RES/68/262](#)

On March 27, 2014, the General Assembly, in its 80th plenary meeting of its 68th session, adopted a resolution for the territorial integrity of Ukraine.¹

S/RES/2202

On February 17, 2015, the Security Council, at its 7384th meeting, adopted a resolution calling upon parties to implement the agreements targeted to achieve peaceful settlement in Eastern Ukraine.²

A/RES/71/205

On December 19, 2016, the General Assembly, in its 65th plenary meeting of its 71st session, adopted a resolution regarding the situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine).⁶

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The issue has seemingly attracted global attention as it has been challenging both many countries and international organizations. Different bodies of the United Nations, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the UNODA (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs), have attempted to resolve the matter by publishing resolutions like the aforementioned in the previous section of the study guide. The UN is not the only organization that puts effort into tackling the challenges of resolving the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The NATO, the EU, the OSCE and many others have taken actions.

Ukraine Disarmament Program

¹ http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/262

² https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7b65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7d/s_res_2202.pdf

⁶ http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/205

Following the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the UNODA introduced the "Ukraine Disarmament Program" aiming to establish a reliable baseline of armed groups, their weapons and ammunition in Ukraine, with a view to assisting in future disarmament programming. The project was implemented by OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) over a period of four months, beginning on September 14, 2014. Reports on the matters of "Armed groups mapping" and "Technical weapons and ammunition", as well as recommendations for future actions, were included in the activities and outputs of the particular program.

New ceasefire deal

In August 2017, Germany, France, USA, Russia and Ukraine agreed upon a new ceasefire deal that would be implemented after the beginning of the following school year in the region of Eastern Ukraine. The leaders of the four countries unanimously supported the deal proposed by the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. The special envoy of the U.S. said that the leaders agreed because the status quo is not beneficial for anyone, and it is crucial to find common ground in order to ensure the local citizens' safety and security.

Possible Solutions

In order to achieve the disarmament of Eastern Ukraine, the territorial dispute between Ukraine and Russia needs to be completely resolved. Although previous attempts to solve the issue have occurred, tension in the region still exists.

Encouraging further dialogue between the West and Russia

Since April 2014, the U.S. and EU have been imposing sanctions against Russia. As the Russian President said, these sanctions are harmful to everyone. Therefore, the committee should encourage the continuation of dialogue and negotiations between western countries and Russia, in order for them to improve their diplomatic relations. That would lead to the sanctions' withdrawal by western countries, which would urge Russia to stop providing military support to the separatists. The territorial dispute needs to be resolved through

dialogue between the leaders of not only the two directly involved countries but also their allies. At the moment, the most crucial aspect of the issue is to ensure that no more deaths will occur.

Reinforcing existing ceasefire deals

The Ukrainian government and the separatists often accuse each other of violating the ceasefire deals, which leads to the continuation of the armed conflict. The international community needs to find ways of ensuring the correct implementation of the ceasefire agreements. International organizations should become responsible for carefully investigating violations of ceasefire deals, so as to avoid turmoil and ensure the objectivity of the investigations. Future ceasefire deals should include and thoroughly explain the consequences for the states or individuals who violate the particular agreements. In this way, the significance of violating such agreements will be even clearer and possible violators will be discouraged from doing so.

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