

**Forum:** Security Council

**Issue:** The situation in Ukraine

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**Position:** President

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## INTRODUCTION

The country of Ukraine, located in the Donbas region between eastern European countries and the Russian Federation, has been subject to a constant invasion by Russian forces ever since the first months of 2022. More specifically on the 23rd of February, 2022, a Russian military operation surpassed Ukrainian borders and - under the command of Russian President Vladimir Putin - started seizing control of Ukrainian territory. The Ukrainian capital Kyiv, as well as numerous other significant urban centers in Ukraine, were attacked via means of bombing, military sieges, destruction of key-infrastructure sites and targeting of civilian services. The Ukrainian President Vladymyr Zelenskyy called upon citizens to join him in the fight against the Russian Federation and the conflict has been ongoing and increasingly volatile ever since.

The Donbas region has in general constituted ground for territorial conflict over the previous decades, as large communities of Russian ethnic identity reside on Ukrainian territory and harbor separatist ideas. With ardent support from the Russian Federation, separatist movements in recent years have achieved the establishment of breakaway, formerly-Ukrainian regions, which request recognition as sovereign nations of Russian origin. The recognition of the Luhansk and Donetsk breakaway regions as independent and sovereign by President Putin in February of 2022 became the starting point of the Ukrainian conflict, shortly before the Russian military invaded Ukraine.

The safety and security of Ukrainian civilians has remained under threat ever since. Internal displacement, atrocious attacks by the Russian military, shortage of basic resources and a massive wave of Ukrainian refugees constitute only part of the devastating effects the conflict has had on people.

The Security Council, primarily known as the UN body responsible for international peacekeeping, is under obligation to act whenever a major conflict within nations erupts. As far as the Ukrainian conflict is concerned, however, the Security Council's ability to take decisive action hinges on the following conflict of interest: the Russian Federation - a permanent member of the Security Council with the right to veto any resolution - remains firmly opposed to the Security Council's involvement in the matter. Hence, it is vital for the Security Council to convene

and approach the situation in a way that serves the interests of all members, while primarily securing the safety of all people involved in the conflict.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

### Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a personal, self-categorizing concept in which an individual identifies with an ethnic group and its cultural identity, beliefs, values, and origins.

### Martial Law

Martial law is law administered by the military rather than by a civilian government, typically to restore order. It is declared in an emergency, in a response to a crisis, or to control occupied territory. When martial law is declared, civil liberties—such as the right to free movement, free speech and protection from unreasonable searches—may be suspended.<sup>1</sup>

### Military Operation

Military operation is the coordinated military actions of a state in response to a developing situation. These actions are designed as a military plan to resolve the situation in the state's favor.<sup>2</sup>

### Invasion

Invasion is an occasion when an army or country uses force to enter and take control of another country.<sup>3</sup>

### NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)

NATO is an international organization which consists of the USA, Canada, Britain, and other European countries, all of whom have agreed to support one another if one is attacked.<sup>4</sup>

### Sovereign State

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<sup>1</sup> "What Is Martial Law?" Investopedia, [www.investopedia.com/terms/m/martial-law.asp](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/martial-law.asp)

<sup>2</sup> "What Does Military Operation Mean?" Definitions.net, [www.definitions.net/definition/military+operation](https://www.definitions.net/definition/military+operation)

<sup>3</sup> "Invasion." Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, [www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/invasion](https://www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/invasion)

<sup>4</sup> "Please Wait..." Please Wait... | Cloudflare, [www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/nato](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/nato)

Sovereign state is a state with a defined territory that administers its own government and is not subject to or dependent on another power.<sup>5</sup>

### Veto Power

Upon the establishment of the UNSC, five members (United States of America, Russian Federation, Kingdom of France, United Kingdom, Republic of China) were granted the Permanent Member States at the Security Council, along with a special voting power known as the "right to veto". It was agreed by the drafters that if any one of the five permanent members cast a negative vote in the 15-member Security Council, the resolution or decision would not be approved.<sup>6</sup>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Historical Background

Shortly after the unraveling of the Soviet Union, Ukraine - formerly known as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic - requested recognition as an independent state. The call for independence came to completion on December 1st, 1991 and Ukraine gained full, internationally recognized sovereignty and independence. Ukrainian citizens expressed ardent support for the request for independence, even though a sizable portion of the population residing on Ukrainian land was, and to this day remains being, of ethnic Russian origin. Following the official recognition of Ukraine as a sovereign nation, a series of agreements were signed by Ukraine in 1994 establishing further regulations regarding the state's independence. Ukraine, a former large nuclear power, agreed to transfer all nuclear weapons under the country's ownership to the Russian Federation. In return, numerous states including the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the Russian Federation signed to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial rights.

Despite the Ukrainian population's initial support for the state's independence being ardent, pro-Russian movements started arising within the county's borders as the years progressed. Unrest was instigated among citizens of Russian origin whose residence on newly-Ukrainian territory dated back to the period before the establishment of the USSR. The part of the population in question was large in number - thus, in presidential elections, the phenomenon of a pro-Russian and a pro-western candidate going against each other became quite common, forming two powerful political parties in the nation with contrasting agendas.

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<sup>5</sup> "SOVEREIGN STATE | Meaning & Definition for UK English | Lexico.com." Lexico Dictionaries | English, [www.lexico.com/definition/sovereign\\_state](http://www.lexico.com/definition/sovereign_state)

<sup>6</sup> "Voting System." Welcome to the United Nations, [www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/voting-system](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/voting-system)

A prominent example of this would be the 2004 presidential election between Viktor Yushchenko, a candidate in support of an independent Ukraine, and Viktor Yanukovych, a candidate supported by the Russian government. Shortly before the election, controversy was widely caused by the mysterious almost-fatal poisoning of Yushchenko. After his recovery, the outcome of the election declaring victory for Yanukovych was widely disputed. Citizens flooded the streets of Ukraine demanding a recounting of the votes, claiming that the results were fraudulent and the Yanukovych administration was corrupt. After those large-scale protests by civilians, also known as the Orange Revolution, the votes were recounted and Yushchenko was deemed the rightful President of Ukraine.



Figure 1: Ethnic division in Ukraine as shown by the 2004 Presidential election results

Four years later, tensions between the Russian Federation and Ukraine intensified when in 2008 Russian president Vladimir Putin expressed strong disagreement with the potential acceptance of Ukraine as part of NATO. He approached leaders of NATO countries, such as former American President George W. Bush, with unprofessional claims such as that "Ukraine is not even a real state"<sup>8</sup>. Eventually, talks regarding the extension of NATO membership to Ukraine were dismissed.

<sup>7</sup> "This one map helps explain Ukraine's protests." The Washington Post, 9 Dec. 2013, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/12/09/this-one-map-helps-explain-ukraines-protests/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/12/09/this-one-map-helps-explain-ukraines-protests/)

<sup>8</sup> "'You Have to Understand, George. Ukraine Is Not Even a Country'." Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, [www.belfercenter.org/publication/you-have-understand-george-ukraine-not-even-country](http://www.belfercenter.org/publication/you-have-understand-george-ukraine-not-even-country)

Political instability within the Ukrainian borders was heightened in late 2013 during a period of civilian protests known as the Euromaidan movement. President Yanukovich, elected in 2010 during his second candidacy after promising to work towards building a relationship with the European Union, changed his political direction, adopting a general pro-Russian policy which, following the arrest of the western-oriented opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko, caused public outrage. Numerous violent protests in the streets of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv caused Yanukovich to flee the country and seek shelter in Russian territory. Finally, the newly-elected administration committed to a pro-western policy. A year later however, in 2014, the Russian Federation decided to take advantage of the intense political instability within the Ukrainian borders and illegally seize Crimea, a formerly Ukrainian peninsula with a population of predominantly Russian origin. A significant number of Crimean citizens had openly expressed a wish that Crimea officially become a part of Russian territory, as this would allow them to connect with their ethnic roots.

In response to the aforementioned separatist ideas brewing among Crimean citizens, the pro-Russian head of the Crimean parliament (Prime Minister Sergei Askyonov) organized a referendum for all Crimean individuals, in order to publically validate an official political shift towards the Russian Federation. Voters were presented with two options: allow Crimea to either become a part of the Russian Federation or remain an autonomous region within the official territory of Ukraine. The Ukrainian government, as well as multiple other UN nations, called for a boycott of the referendum and deemed it illegitimate. The main reasons behind this claim were that the referendum was announced in a cloud of pro-Russian propaganda and disinformation, that it ultimately breached the Ukrainian constitution and that Russian military was present in the Crimean peninsula long before the referendum took place. Defying those claims, however, the Crimean parliament carried out the referendum on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 2014, with the disputably valid outcome of 96.8% of the Crimean population<sup>9</sup> supporting the annexation by Russia. A few days later a military occupation followed, with Russian troops occupying the peninsula and violently eliminating public protest and resistance among the remaining part of the ethnically-Ukrainian population. The breach of the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine and the violent acts committed by the Russian military during the annexation caused international outrage.

Following the occupation of Crimea, intensive separatist movements arose in other Ukrainian regions with a similarly predominantly-Russian population. Eventually, the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk successfully broke away from Ukraine after a series of violent protests and coups, overpowering regional Ukrainian authorities. The two breakaway regions openly received aid from the Russian Federation throughout that period, ranging from arms supply to financial

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<sup>9</sup> "Crimea Votes in Favor of Union with Russia." VOA - Voice of America English News, [www.voanews.com/a/crimea-votes-in-favor-of-union-with-russia/1872698](http://www.voanews.com/a/crimea-votes-in-favor-of-union-with-russia/1872698)

support. Hence, the Ukrainian government officially labeled the separatist forces in question “pro-Russian terrorists”<sup>10</sup>. Numerous atrocities were committed against the civilian residents of the regions, conducted both by separatist military forces as well as the Ukrainian army.

Diplomatic attempts to end the conflict and restore stability in the Donbas region were unfruitful, as tensions in the area remained high. In the following years, political unrest within and outside the Ukrainian borders continued to intensify, as a variety of separatist groups attained leverage through protests, small-scale attacks on national authorities, and the spread of pro-Russian propaganda on mass media. Similarly to the previously described period of conflict, the perpetration of violent acts remained bilateral - on the one hand, Ukrainian civilians often suffered harm due to attacks executed by separatist rebels aiming to cause instability. On the other hand, Ukrainian citizens of Russian origin became victims of ethnic violence perpetrated by government forces and Ukrainian nationalist groups.

### Events leading up to the invasion of Ukraine

Following five consecutive years of political unrest, former comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy was inaugurated President of Ukraine. In the 2019 presidential election Ukrainian civilians showed disregard towards established politicians. That constitutes a result of the former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko being convicted with charges of money-laundering and fraudulent acts. Zelenskyy’s entire election campaign revolved around two main points: initially ensuring peace in the Donbas region, and - in succession - creating a non-corrupt Ukrainian government which would harbor strong ties with the European Union and its allies from the west, such as the United States of America. Ever since the election, the Zelenskyy administration has been following a similar policy – the primary prospect remains to establish the image of Ukraine as a strong sovereign nation and to hone diplomatic relations with western states.

During the third year of his presidency, Zelenskyy conducted large-scale attempts to uproot all sources of corruption and pro-Russian separatist movement within the Ukrainian borders. A prominent one would be targeting pro-Russian politicians, such as Peter Medvedchuk. The distinguished politician was accused by the Ukrainian Prosecutor General of treasonous acts during the annexation of Crimea. He was eventually put under house arrest in March of 2021, an act which not only sparked controversy among his numerous supporters, but was also denounced by President Putin, who openly constituted a close acquaintance of Medvedchuk. A series of similar convictions against the political opposition and separatist advocates led Putin to deploy increasing numbers of troops near the Ukrainian borders and publish an article titled “On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians” in which he claims that citizens of the two nations

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<sup>10</sup> "Ukraine Labels Pro-Russian Rebels Terrorists, Ending Possibility of Peace Talks | CBC News." CBC, 27 Jan. 2015, [www.cbc.ca/news/world/pro-russian-rebels-officially-labelled-terrorists-by-ukraine-government-1.2933845](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/pro-russian-rebels-officially-labelled-terrorists-by-ukraine-government-1.2933845)

are “one people”<sup>11</sup>. By December of 2021, approximately 120,000 Russian troops were positioned along the borders separating Ukraine and the Russian Federation<sup>12</sup>. Following their deployment, Putin issues the official request that Ukraine never be admitted as a NATO member. The request was, however, ultimately rejected, as NATO follows the principle to never disallow any European Country to attain membership.

Following the aforementioned breakdown of relations with NATO and western nations, Putin retaliated by officially recognizing the territories of Luhansk and Donetsk - which were previously internationally considered Ukrainian breakaway regions - as sovereign on February 21st, 2022. In succession, Russian troops were positioned in the newly-recognized areas with the mission to execute, in Putin’s words, “peacekeeping operations”<sup>13</sup>. International outrage and confusion was sparked by this act, which resulted in western governments, such as that of the United States, denouncing Putin’s acts.

Three days after the recognition of Luhansk and Donetsk, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Russian troops already deployed on the eastern Ukrainian borders entered the country, causing chaos and carrying out violent acts against civilians and military in the process. Zelenskyy immediately declared martial law in Ukraine and addressed the Ukrainian citizens via a short video message, in which he stated that “President Putin announced a special military operation in Ukraine”, encouraged citizens to remain calm and showed a resolute stance towards defeating the Russian Federation as a united country. He immediately broke diplomatic relations with the Russian Federations and communicated with the US government and the United Nations offices in order to mitigate the security risk imposed by the invasion.

### **The security risk within and around the Ukrainian borders**

Within the months following the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian military proceeded to attack large Ukrainian cities including the Capital Kyiv, Kharvik, Kherson and Mariupol. Russian tanks enter urban areas and bombs are deployed, targeting mainly key-infrastructure sites such as hospitals and water and food services, as well as the offices of authorities and military. Civilians are put at great risk, as access to necessities including basic healthcare, heat and aliments

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<sup>11</sup> "Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"." Presidential Library, [www.prlib.ru/en/article-vladimir-putin-historical-unity-russians-and-ukrainians](http://www.prlib.ru/en/article-vladimir-putin-historical-unity-russians-and-ukrainians)

<sup>12</sup> Altman, Howard. "Russians Have 120,000 Troops on Its Border, Increased Intel Gathering, Ukraine Ministry Says." Military Times, 8 Dec. 2021, [www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2021/12/08/russians-have-120000-troops-on-its-border-increased-intel-gathering-ukraine-ministry-says/](http://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2021/12/08/russians-have-120000-troops-on-its-border-increased-intel-gathering-ukraine-ministry-says/)

<sup>13</sup> "Putin Orders Russian Forces to "perform Peacekeeping Functions" in Eastern Ukraine's Breakaway Regions." Reuters, 22 Feb. 2022, [www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-orders-russian-peacekeepers-eastern-ukraines-two-breakaway-regions-2022-02-21/](http://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-orders-russian-peacekeepers-eastern-ukraines-two-breakaway-regions-2022-02-21/)

becomes limited. Furthermore, the homes of numerous civilians have suffered wreckage and destruction ever since the Russian invasion, hence large numbers of internally displaced Ukrainians desperately seek temporary protective residence.

Apart from the shortage of resources, however, the Russian military operation significantly endangers the safety of Ukrainian citizens as well. Due to consecutive bombings of civilian shelters and violent acts conducted by Russian troops hundreds of innocent Ukrainians lose their lives daily. Those wounded or diseased also face inability to receive proper treatment, due to the targeted attacks on Ukrainian health units which have left the healthcare system in shambles. The lives of numerous civilians who were called upon to join the Ukrainian army are also under constant risk during the daily combat with the Russian military. Lastly, even conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking became a common phenomenon which put innocent civilians at great risk.

### More than 10,000 deaths reported in Ukraine

Figure likely an underestimate due to difficulty in recording deaths in a war zone



**Figure 2: Number of deceased individuals on Ukrainian territory from March 2022 to June 2022**

The devastation caused by the conflict does not, however, remain limited within the Ukrainian borders. Approximately 1.2 million Ukrainian citizens have fled the country since February, 2022<sup>15</sup>. Internally displaced individuals, orphaned children, families and migrants have been

<sup>14</sup> "War in Ukraine: Can We Say How Many People Have Died?" BBC News, 1 July 2022, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61987945](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61987945)

<sup>15</sup> "Ukraine Crisis: How Many Refugees and Where Might They Go?" BBC News, 1 Mar. 2022, [www.bbc.com/news/world-60555472](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-60555472)

rapidly attempting to escape Ukraine, as well as avoid potential attacks by Russian troops positioned along the borders. The countries bordering Ukraine, namely Moldova, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary have accepted massive waves of Ukrainian refugees, which struggle to find living accommodations and basic aliments. Therefore, their safety and well-being remains at risk as they are forced to leave their country and the threat of Russian attacks in foreign territory close to the Ukrainian borders continues to exist.

### **The conflict of interest within the Security Council**

Under the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Hence, the Council has taken a decisive role in the overwhelming majority of international conflicts within the current and previous century. It orders the deployment of peacekeeping missions as well as the immediate cessation of the military operation, it prompts diplomatic discourse and even imposes sanctions on nations threatening international security.

In the case of Russian military operations in Ukraine, however, a conflict of interest - which significantly influences the Security Council's involvement in the matter - arose. The Russian Federation constitutes one of the five Council members with the right to veto any draft resolution proposed within the organ (also known as P-5 nations), if it harms the nation's own interests - thus, the resolution at hand becomes automatically rejected.

In the past, the Security Council faced similar cases, where one of the P-5 members constituted a major actor in a conflict, which legally fell under the Security Council's jurisdiction to handle. A prominent example would be the conflict between the United States of America and Nicaragua in 1990 - the US vetoed all attempts of the Security Council to intervene, as the US government wished to resume operations on Nicaraguan territory. Due to the conflict of interest at hand the Security Council faced inability to execute decisive action to ensure peace and stability in the area. Thus, the Nicaraguan government initiated legal proceedings against the US in the International Court of Justice, a UN Organ in which the United States possessed no jurisdiction to influence the decision-making process.

The conflict of interest in the case at hand appears to be quite similar. The Russian Federation wishes to maintain control over recently-seized Ukrainian territory without retracting troops and de-facto Russian authorities within the Ukrainian borders. The Russian Federation also remains opposed to the concept of Ukraine being provided with humanitarian and military aid, to the deployment of peacekeeping operations and to the initiation of diplomatic discourse with the aim to re-establish peace in the Donbas region. Thus, the decision-making process within the Security Council hinges on the Russian Federation's right to veto. In all recent Security Council sessions since the February of 2022, the Russian delegates have shown unwillingness to

cooperate with fellow members on all matters concerning the Ukrainian conflict. Ultimately, the emergency resolution proposed on the 25th of February (2/2022/105) was vetoed by the Russian Federation, under the following grounds; the delegate claimed that Ukraine failed to abide by the Minsk agreements and that Ukrainian authorities and militias continue to commit atrocities against ethnic-Russian communities on Ukrainian territory. The delegate also emphasized that the special military operation of the Russian Federation targets neither civilians, nor Ukrainian cities.

Ever since the aforementioned resolution was vetoed, the Security Council consistently fails to abide by its main responsibility as the primary international peacekeeping body, as it has not further addressed the increasingly deteriorating security risk in Ukraine.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED**

### **Ukraine**

Ever since the beginning of the conflict the territorial sovereignty and integrity of Ukraine has been continuously infringed. An increasing number of Ukrainian provinces and cities have become occupied by Russian military, which continues to advance on towards western important Ukrainian sites daily.

The first major cities to be attacked were Kharkiv and Kerson – both located near the eastern Ukrainian border – and the capital, Kyiv. Highly lethal weapons are used by Russian troops as they press towards the aforementioned Ukrainian key-cities. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, Kherson is invaded by Russian tanks, thus becoming the first major population center of 250,000 residents to fall. Twenty days later and after numerous bombings on vital infrastructure facilities, such as civilian shelters and hospitals, the city of Mariupol also becomes occupied by Russian military.

In succession, Russian troops proceed with encircling Ukrainian forces from all directions, starting by setting military bases in the region of Sievierdonetsk in Luhansk and then progressively moving towards western, non-breakaway Ukrainian regions.

Ultimately, most eastern Ukrainian provinces, as well as an important number of major urban centers have been invaded by the Russian Federation, with troops, military bases and de-facto authorities stationed on their territory.



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Figure 3: The Current State of Ukrainian Territory

## Russian Federation

An aspect of the Ukrainian conflict which is often overlooked by the international community would be the fact that a critically major part of Ukrainian citizens do indeed identify as people of ethnic Russian origin. Those people, residing primarily in the eastern and central provinces of the country, have been expressing strong support for pro-Russian political figures and movements, in order to show their dissatisfaction with their official citizenship. Russian residents of territory that was deemed Ukrainian immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union suddenly got detached from their Russian roots and were forced to conform to their new identity: citizens of Ukraine, a country which they felt no ethnic connection to.

<sup>16</sup> "Institute for the Study of War." Institute for the Study of War, [www.understandingwar.org/background/ukraine-conflict-updates](http://www.understandingwar.org/background/ukraine-conflict-updates)

Thus, the divide between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians was deep and remained constantly harbored throughout the past years, due to the country's pro-Russian and pro-West political division. Ethnic Ukrainian citizens would launch numerous large-scale protests, demanding independence, the right to self-determination and waiver of their Ukrainian citizenship. Many desperate ethnic Russian individuals even formed rebel movements for liberation, such as the ones which executed the breakaway of Luhansk and Donetsk.

In the past there have been numerous instances of violent attacks on pro-Russian citizens, mainly conducted by Ukrainian nationalist groups. Especially during the Euromaidan era of 2014, ethnic Russians who protested against Ukraine's efforts for an EU membership were brutally attacked by Ukrainian nationalists as well as police forces and military authorities. Thus, it becomes clear that ethnic hatred and divide within the Ukrainian borders is indeed a vast phenomenon, even if not to the extreme degree where, as President Putin claims, "Ukraine is committing genocide against ethnic Russians"<sup>17</sup>.

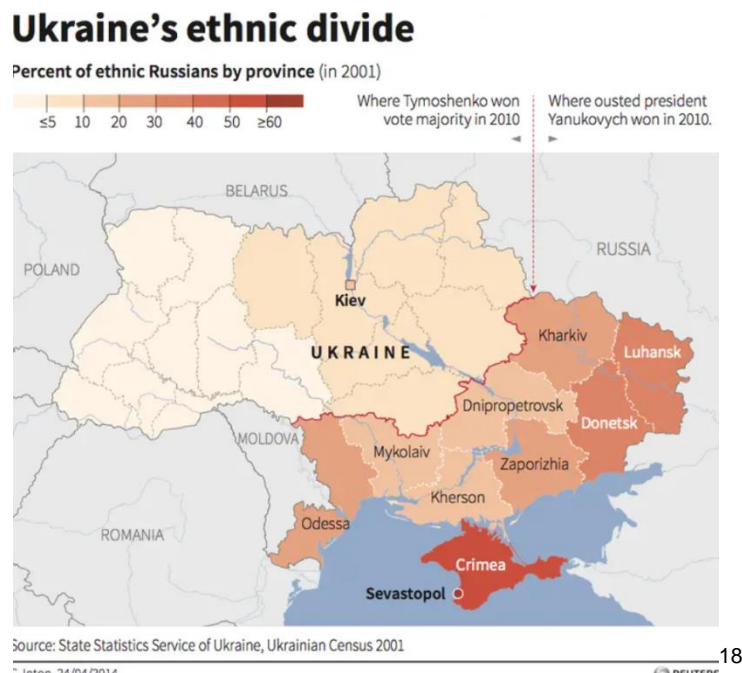


Figure 4: Percentage of people with Russian ethnic identity in each Ukrainian province

<sup>17</sup> Hinton, Alexander. "Putin's Claims That Ukraine is Committing Genocide Are Baseless, but Not Unprecedented." The Conversation, 25 Feb. 2022, [www.theconversation.com/putins-claims-that-ukraine-is-committing-genocide-are-baseless-but-not-unprecedented-177511](http://www.theconversation.com/putins-claims-that-ukraine-is-committing-genocide-are-baseless-but-not-unprecedented-177511)

<sup>18</sup> Kelley, Michael B. "Here Are The Parts Of Ukraine Where Putin Might Invade To 'Protect Ethnic Russians'." Business Insider, 24 Apr. 2014, [www.businessinsider.com/parts-of-ukraine-with-ethnic-russians-2014-4](http://www.businessinsider.com/parts-of-ukraine-with-ethnic-russians-2014-4)

## United States of America (US)

Over the past century, a long-term feud between the US and the Russian Federation has been apparent on a worldwide scale. The feud at hand mainly stems from the cold war era, when the US and the Russian Federation would compete for international supremacy in the form of military and financial power. Thus, a relationship of mutual suspicion and antagonism was instigated between the two major superpowers and has remained vivid until the present day.

The countries continuously attempt to undermine the financial influence and power of their “opponent”, as the financial conflict between the two western and eastern superpowers never seems to cease. Even before the invasion of Ukraine, the US was prompt to impose financial sanctions on Russian Banks with US assets, as soon as the Russian Parliament authorized Putin to use force against Ukraine on February 22, 2022. Following the Invasion, President Biden proceeded to impose even stricter financial sanctions on commerce and trading between the US and Russian Federation, in attempts to put the nation under a financial strain. A sum of initially \$13.6 billion US Dollars and later an additional \$40 billion are sent to Ukraine for aid of all kinds, including military and humanitarian. Finally, the Biden administration officially declared the acts of the Russian military in Ukraine as “war crimes”<sup>19</sup>, namely the exact words the Obama administration used to condemn the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Until the present day, the US has not ceased to constantly voice the nation’s support for Ukraine, launching multiple official anti-Russian media campaigns, imposing even stricter financial sanctions on the Russian Federation and condemning all actions of President Putin. Overall, the United States of America seized the opportunity to undermine the Russian Federation’s political and financial influence on a global scale and the country remains an ardent supporter of its ally, Ukraine.

## Republic of China

Ever since the cessation of the Second World War, the Russian Federation and China have one thing in common: their long-lasting feud with the US and western countries in general with regards to financial supremacy.

The two eastern countries have harbored strong diplomatic ties over the past years, being internationally considered as two powerful allies. Thus, the negative image surrounding the Russian Federation since the invasion of Ukraine also reflects on China. Hence, Chinese trade relations and agreements with western countries have recently been at risk of failure and

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<sup>19</sup> Mangan, Dan. "Biden Calls to Put Putin on Trial for War Crimes over Russia Killings in Ukraine." CNBC, [www.cnbc.com/2022/04/04/biden-calls-to-put-putin-on-trial-for-war-crimes-over-russias-actions-in-ukraine.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/04/biden-calls-to-put-putin-on-trial-for-war-crimes-over-russias-actions-in-ukraine.html)

imposition of financial sanctions. Furthermore the Chinese President Xi Jinping was even officially warned by the US and NATO to refrain from supplying its ally with any sort of aid.

Thus, Jinping publicly expressed his wish that the war in Ukraine reaches an end as soon as possible, similarly to most of his western counterparts. The Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian, however, officially characterized the US as “the one who started the Ukraine crisis and the one fuelling it”, thus indicating that the strong involvement of the US in the conflict is what prolongs it.

Overall, China’s response to the Ukrainian conflict could be characterized as a ‘balancing act’. China has strategically refrained from openly showing support for the Russian Federation throughout the conflict, with the aim of diverting the toxic image of its ally and avoiding international negative press. Additionally, Jinping is aware that a financially weakened Russian Federation may constitute an opportunity for China to ensure financial superiority over the entire eastern bloc, with minimized Russian competition. On the other hand, however, China indirectly shows support for its ally by blaming their common antagonist for the escalation of the conflict.

## European Union (EU)

The European Union is an international organization consisting of 27 member-states, all located on the European continent. The EU constitutes a primarily financial and political organization with a common foreign affairs policy, however no common European army and arms. Ukraine is not a member of the European Union, even though its western neighbors such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania are.

Since the beginning of the previous decade, strong pro-European movements have been harbored in the western half of Ukraine, supported by pro-western Ukrainian politicians. In June of 2014, shortly after the conclusion of the Euromaidan movement, the newly elected President Poroshenko signed the financial Ukraine – European Union Association agreement, and dubbed it as the “first major step towards Ukraine’s EU membership”<sup>20</sup>.

After the recent invasion of Ukraine by the Russian military, the EU has generally shown ardent support towards the Ukrainian front. It imposed financial sanctions on Russian oil and condemned the action of President Putin, as part of its common foreign policy. Individual member states were also urged to supply the Ukrainian people with humanitarian aid and military support, from trained personnel such as military doctors and arms. A sense of Unity between the EU and Ukraine has also recently been promoted, as Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, directed the following message towards Putin during a

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<sup>20</sup> "Ukraine’s Road to EU Membership." Center for Strategic and International Studies |, [www.csis.org/analysis/ukraines-road-eu-membership](http://www.csis.org/analysis/ukraines-road-eu-membership)

visit to Kyiv: “Dear Volodymyr, my message today is clear: Ukraine belongs in the European family.”<sup>21</sup>

Zelenskyy’s request for fast-tracked EU membership on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, 2022, was, however, left unanswered. Ukraine’s accession to the EU would constitute a grand risk for the Union, as Ukraine directly borders the Russian Federation. European members fear that the acceptance of Ukraine as an EU member would only heighten tensions between the Russian Federation and the west, resulting in political insecurity and financial unrest within the Union. Thus, a potential future EU membership for Ukraine currently seems unlikely.

### **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

The NATO constitutes a major component to the conflict at hand, as the prospect of Ukraine’s potential membership in the organization were one of the instances which triggered Russia’s violent invasion. Since the establishment of NATO, its primary purpose has been to create a united military front among the 30 members and preserve peace and security within and around their borders. Furthermore, NATO members remain under the responsibility of providing any other member with military aid, in case that the member in question is attacked. Such aid includes troops, trained personnel, valuable information, arms and aliments.

In February of 2019 the Zelenskyy administration voted to make ardent attempts towards attaining a NATO membership. Ever since, Putin has expressed strong disagreement towards that accession, as having a NATO member as its neighbor would constitute a great risk for the Russian Federation – it would be unable to proceed with its military operations around the Ukrainian borders and to annex any other Ukrainian territories with ethnic Russian residents. On the other hand, a NATO membership would currently be largely beneficial for Ukraine, as all members would be obligated to provide the country with military aid in its war against Russia. Thus, NATO and its 30 current member states play a key role in the issue, as far as the potential membership of Ukraine is concerned.

### **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**

The OSCE constitutes a coalition between 57 member states located in Europe, Central Asia and South America – including both the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The security-oriented intergovernmental organization in question has a seat as an observer in United Nations sessions and addresses issues such as arms control and protection of human rights and security within the territory of its members. The OSCE aims to prevent conflicts from erupting, undertakes crisis management missions in volatile situations and aids nations in post-conflict rehabilitation.

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<sup>21</sup> "Ukraine’s Road to EU Membership." Center for Strategic and International Studies |, [www.csis.org/analysis/ukraines-road-eu-membership](http://www.csis.org/analysis/ukraines-road-eu-membership)

Regarding specifically the situation in Ukraine, the OSCE first took action in March of 2014 – the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine was deployed, following the rising tensions on the Crimean peninsula. The mission continues to operate until today, providing wounded citizens and troops with aid, securing shelter and aliments for civilians and attempting to mitigate the tensions. As one of the few UN-associated components with the means and jurisdiction to act as a peacekeeper in the area, the OSCE plays a vital role to the elimination of security threats for Ukrainian people.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

| DATE                            | DESCRIPTION OF EVENT  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| December 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1991 | Ukraine becomes and independent state   |
| December 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1994 | The Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances is signed and all Ukrainian nuclear arms are transferred to the Russian Federation |
| November and December, 2004     | Pro-Western candidate Yushchenko becomes President of Ukraine after fraudulent election results are overturned                    |
| April 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2008    | NATO considers extending a membership to Ukraine, which the Russian Federation denounces  |
| November, 2013 - February, 2014 | Euromaidan protests prompt a sudden turn towards a west-oriented government   |
| February - March, 2014          | Russian forces seize the Crimean peninsula  |
| February 12th, 2015             | The Minsk II agreement is signed among Ukraine, the Russian Federation and other parties  |

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| April 21st, 2019             | Volodymyr Zelensky is elected President of Ukraine   |
| Early 2021                   | President Zelensky targets pro-Russian politicians and separatist figures via judicial prosecution     |
| 17 December, 2021            | President Putin deploys troops in Ukrainian borders and demands that Ukraine be permitted to join NATO |
| February 21st, 2022          | Putin officially recognizes Luhansk and Donetsk  |
| February 23rd, 2022          | The Russian Federation launches full-scale invasion in Ukraine   |
| February 25th, 2022          | The Russian Federation vetoes the Security Council Resolution S/2022/105                               |
| April 21st, 2022             | The Ukrainian city of Mariupol is captured by Russian troops<br>Relevant UN                            |
| May 31st, 2022               | EU bans Russian oil and petroleum imports  |
| July 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2022 | Turkey hosts the first official negotiations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation in Ankara.     |
| July 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2022 | Russia and Ukraine sign UN-backed deal to resume grain exports via the Black Sea.                      |

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| July 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2022 | President Biden authorizes the 16th US weapons package for Ukraine. |
|------------------------------|---|

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### **‘Uniting for Peace’ Security Council Resolution 2623 (S/RES/2623)**

The resolution at hand was passed by the Security Council on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 2022. The Council called for an “emergency special session” (ESS) of the General Assembly to consider and recommend collective action on the situation in Ukraine. The Resolution 2623 constitutes a special case of Security Council decisions which fall under the category of ‘Uniting for Peace’ resolutions. As explained in the first resolution of such kind, namely the Resolution 377 (V) implemented in 1950, ‘Uniting for Peace’ resolutions serve the following purpose:

“If the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

### **General Assembly Resolution titled “Aggression against Ukraine” (A/RES/ES/11-1)**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution at hand with an overwhelming majority of 141 against 5. It was drafted mainly by the European Union in cooperation with Ukraine and “deplores in the strongest terms” the offensive aggression by the Russian Federation on Ukrainian territory. It requests the immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops and that President Putin abides by the UN Charter, which aims towards international peace and stability. The resolution expressed the ardent commitment of the United Nations against territorial violation and atrocious aggression.

The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are not legally binding, as opposed to Security Council resolutions, and can thus not be implemented as direct orders of the United nations towards the Russian Federation. They do, however, hold significant political weight and this specific resolution proves that the UN as a whole deplores the actions of President Putin.

### **General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/ES/11-2 and A/RES/ES/11-3**

On March 24th, 2022, the General Assembly proceeded with the adoption of a second relevant resolution, titled “Humanitarian Consequences of Aggressions against Ukraine”. The resolution focuses on decisive action which ought to be immediately taken, in order for the humanitarian crisis within Ukrainian territory to be alleviated. After repeatedly condemning the ongoing aggressions conducted by the Russian Federation, it explores the potential consequences of the humanitarian crisis on global food security. Supported by 90 co-signatories and voted upon in favor by 140 member states, the measures proposed in the resolution constituted a step towards a necessary response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

A few days later, on the 7th of April, 2022, the General Assembly also adopted the resolution A/RES/ES/11-3, which ultimately aimed for the suspension of the Russian Federation from the Human Rights Council (HRC). The HRC constitutes a UN body with the primary mission to ensure that the rights of all individuals remain unthreatened. Thus, the Russian Federation was deemed unfit to be a member of such a Council, after repeatedly violating the rights of Ukrainian individuals during the period of conflict.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

### **Security Council Draft Resolution S/2022/105**

The draft resolution at hand was submitted on the 25th of February, 2022, and introduced by the delegations of Albania and the United States of America. It served the purpose of ending the Russian Federation’s offensive military operation against Ukraine. The draft would denounce the invasion of Ukraine conducted by the Russian Federation and request the immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukrainian territory. It would also facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid to the besieged Ukrainian territory and demand that President Putin retracts his recognition of Luhansk and Donetsk as independent states. Ultimately, the draft would seek the de-escalation of conflict within and around Ukrainian borders, preventing the Russian Federation from proceeding with any sort of operation on the area. Although the majority of the Council’s members voted in favor of the draft resolution, the veto posed by the Russian Federation deemed it failed and it was never implemented.

### **Security Council Draft Resolution introduced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2022**

After exercising its P-5 veto power and thus causing the draft resolution S/2022/105 to fail, the Russian Federation proceeded to propose an alternative draft which focused on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The resolution expressed concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation within and around the Ukrainian borders and addressed matters such as

the growing number of internally displaced civilians and the significant amount of damaged infrastructure. In contrast to the resolution failed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, the draft proposed by the Russian Federation had a stark difference: it included no reference to the nation of the Russian Federation itself acting as an aggressor and committing illegal acts. In other words, the Russian Government called upon the Council to mitigate the humanitarian crisis while neither holding itself accountable for instigating the crisis, nor vowing to stop the offensive against Ukraine. 13 Security Council delegates decided to abstain from voting on the draft resolution, refusing to support a resolution that vaguely addresses humanitarian concerns in Ukraine without condemning the acts itself and the aggressor responsible for them. Thus, the draft resolution ultimately failed, with only the Russian Federation and the Republic of China extending a vote in favor.

### **The Minsk I and Minsk II agreements**

In September of 2014, shortly after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation, the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian separatist leaders convened in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, to discuss a potential ceasefire. The agreement's provisions included an exchange of prisoners, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the commitment towards ensuring that citizens be supplied with financial aid. The terms were, however, violated by both sides a short time after and the Minsk I failed.

A second attempt for a ceasefire was conducted in 2015 when Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the OSCE and the leaders of two pro-Russian separatist movements signed the Minsk II. The terms once again included the withdrawal of all heavy weapons and an immediate ceasefire, along with the removal of all troops from foreign territories. The agreement seemed promising, until the point when the Russian Federation objected to implementing any of the terms agreed upon. The Russian representatives claimed that the nation was under no obligation to abide by the terms, as the conflict remained strictly between Ukraine and the pro-Russian separatist Unions - namely, the Russian Federation insisted that it was actually not a party of this conflict.

### **Ban of Russian oil and petroleum imports by the European Union**

As one of Ukraine's most ardent supporters throughout the conflict, the European Union decisively proceeded to ban oil and petroleum imports by the Russian Federation. Such products of Russian origin could no longer be sold in European markets or passed onto other nations by European means of transport. This strategic move was ultimately decided upon on the 31st of May, 2022, and aimed to put a financial strain on the Russian economy. Minimizing the financial leverage of the Russian Federation would constitute an important hit to its

superiority to Ukraine. Until April of 2022, 45% of the EU's gas resources originated from the Russian Federation, accumulating daily revenue of approximately \$900 USD for the supplier<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the ban in question did indeed instigate a significant downfall of the Russian economy. It did, however, also put the European Union in a difficult position, as the individual member states are currently struggling to find alternative energy sources.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

When assessing the issue at hand, the Council must act with the conflict of interest within its members in consideration. The previously failed or vetoed resolutions on the issue should set an example of what to endorse and what to avoid, as the Council creates new, alternate resolutions. The primary aim of the Council should remain safeguarding the security of all people involved in the conflict.

### **Facilitating Dialogue between the Nations Involved**

As proven by the recent history of international conflicts negotiations, peace talks and especially mutually beneficial agreements, have constituted the basis for resolving most volatile situations similar to the one in Ukraine.

Concerning specifically the Ukrainian conflict, a few attempts for negotiations have been facilitated, with the first official one being the four-way negotiations hosted in Ankara on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 2022. Turkey and the UN brought Ukraine and the Russian Federation together with the aim of monitoring and facilitating dialogue between the feuding nations. Ultimately, the negotiations ended in good faith and a concrete plan regarding the un-blocking of several Ukrainian ports, formerly controlled by Russian military. This so called Ukrainian Grain Deal could alleviate the food insecurity in Ukraine to a certain level, as imports and exports of Ukraine's main agricultural products – namely grains – would allow Ukraine to engage in financial activity again.

Taking example from the Ankara negotiations, the council could create similar future opportunities for discourse between the two nations. The council could decide on key-elements of future negotiations, such as their aim, their main focus, the place where they could be conducted and which actors could monitor them. The council should also take into consideration that neutral ground and moderators are generally beneficial in the case of controversial discourse, as neither of the two sides would feel as if they are at a disadvantage compared to their opponent.

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<sup>22</sup> "How Europe Can Cut Natural Gas Imports from Russia Significantly Within a Year." IEA, [www.iea.org/news/how-europe-can-cut-natural-gas-imports-from-russia-significantly-within-a-year](https://www.iea.org/news/how-europe-can-cut-natural-gas-imports-from-russia-significantly-within-a-year)

### **Addressing the Issue of the Ethnic Russian Identity within Ukrainian Borders**

One of the main arguments President Putin presented when confronted about his reasoning behind the invasion of Ukraine was his intent to eliminate aggression against ethnic Russians of Ukrainian citizenship. The reasoning is similar to the one he used when asked about the annexation of Crimea in 2014 – the Russian Government considered the annexation a mission to liberate the ethnic Russian people of the formerly Ukrainian peninsula.

The Security Council could implement preventive and protective measures in relation to the rights of ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Their safety and protection from structural violence and Ukrainian nationalist groups can be achieved with the involvement of the UNSC. Initially, the Council could decide upon protective legislation which ought to be adopted by the Ukrainian government, with the aims of dismantling anti-Russian structures within the Ukrainian political scene and eliminating violent nationalist groups. Measures such as a potential double citizenship or the recognition of their Russian identity, would diminish the unrest among ethnic Russian populations – thus, the claims of President Putin that citizens of Russian descent are unsafe within Ukrainian borders would be invalid, as the citizens in question would be protected by the Ukrainian government itself.

### **Eliminating the Security Risk in the Territory of the Conflict**

The security of all civilians involved in international conflicts remains the main goal of the UN Security Council. In the few previous months, western member-states as well as the Russian Federation and a few of its allies have proposed measures regarding humanitarian aid and elimination of risk regarding the people of Ukraine. Thus, the members should come to an agreement regarding the extent to which security operations can commence on Ukrainian territory, without resorting to extremes. It has been proven that the approach of the SC to the issue shall be neither too drastic – as that in the resolutions vetoed by the Russian Federation – nor too insubstantial – as that in the resolution proposed by the Russian Delegates and failed by the Council. Middle ground and a common, neither too drastic nor too insubstantial approach ought to be found as soon as possible, in order for the Ukrainian people to be off of risk.

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