



Ukraine - Russia Conflict

**2016 Background Guide for the Introduction to Model U.N., Sat., Sept. 17,
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Conflict Background

Russian history, culture, and the spread of Russian Orthodox Christianity generally began in Kiev (Ukraine capital today) around the 10th century CE. By the 18th century, Ukraine was largely ruled by Russia, aiming to halt Ukrainian nationalism and establish it fully as a part of the Russian, land based empire. Use of Ukrainian language and culture was banned, and some Ukrainian intellectuals moved to Western Europe to escape persecution.

The first modern Ukrainian independence was brief in 1917. It became part of the Soviet Union in 1922, at a time when Ukraine's economy and people were suffering. When many refused to participate in communism-based, USSR collective farms, Stalin ordered the mass executions of up to 10 million Ukrainians - mostly farm families.

During World War II, Ukraine was deeply divided and experienced much violence. Given the disillusionment many Ukrainians felt about Soviet Russian political oppression, the mass murder of farm families, and failed economic policies, some Ukrainians saw the Germans initially as liberators from the USSR.

USSR Premier (leader) Nikita Khrushchev (a Ukrainian) awarded Crimea (58% Russian speakers) to Ukraine in 1954, as part of a celebration of Russian and Ukrainian leaders 300 year history of hiring Cossacks - independent, Black Sea region cavalry/horse riding soldiers - as paid mercenaries.

Ukraine and Russia were two of 15 provinces of the Soviet Union (USSR) in its communist period (1922-1991). Ukraine became independent in 1991, when the Soviet Union broke up. 90% of Ukrainians voted to become a separate state/country. Crimea also voted to join Ukraine. Russia wanted Ukraine to remain as part of its territory, and continued its involvement in Ukrainian politics. Ukraine refused, but agreed to allow the large, Russian Black Sea naval fleet to continue being stationed at the large, important, Crimean, deep-water port city of Sevastopol.

Western and central Ukraine have a large majority of Catholic, Ukrainian speakers, while eastern and southern Ukraine (including Crimea) have large numbers of Russian Orthodox Christian and Russian speakers.



In 1991, experts believed Ukraine had the best opportunity of the 15 former, USSR republics to develop a strong economy, due to its: high quality farmland and topsoil; significant amounts of iron ore, coal, natural gas, and other valuable minerals; a warmer climate than most of Russia; and access to the Black Sea, Straits of the Dardanelles, and the Mediterranean Sea - including Russia's only Mediterranean naval base at Tartus, Syria.

Unfortunately, since its 1991 independence, Ukraine's potential has been severely limited by a weak, unstable, and corrupt political system; heavy reliance on Russian trade, oil, and natural gas; sharp differences of language, religion, and ethnicity between Ukraine's distinct west/central and south/east regions; and an unfair, unequally balanced economy dominated by oligarchs (a few, very wealthy and powerful individuals). In the two decades following independence, successive presidents allowed oligarchs to gain increasing control over Ukraine's economy, while repression against political opponents increased. By 2010, Ukraine's 50 richest individuals controlled nearly half of the country's gross domestic product (total value of goods produced and services).

Pro-Russian politician, Yanukovich won the 2010 presidential election, supporting closer ties with Russia. By many accounts, corruption increased during his years as president of Ukraine. His family may have embezzled/stolen as much as \$8 billion to \$10 billion a year over three years. He also imprisoned his reformist and nationalist opponent in the 2010 presidential race, Yulia Tymoshenko, on unsupported charges of abuse of power.

President Putin of Russia badly wanted Ukraine to join the newer, 2010 Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) and trade primarily with ECU countries Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan - all former USSR republics. See map below. Joining this ECU trade group, like the European Union, having no taxes on trade goods between member states, Ukraine would be more influenced by Russia - and also less likely to also join the NATO military alliance (U.S., Canada, and most western European countries). Putin considers the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union as the "worst geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century and wants to rebuild Russia's economic, political, and military influence and power in Europe and Asia.

Pro-Russia, Ukrainian President Yanukovich held talks with the European Union on a possible agreement to increase trade with those 28 states/countries in Western Europe - and he signaled he would sign in late 2013. (Yulia Tymoshenko's release was one of the conditions set by the EU for the trade association agreement.) But under pressure from President Putin, he dropped those plans in November, 2013, citing concerns about Western European trade and economic competition.

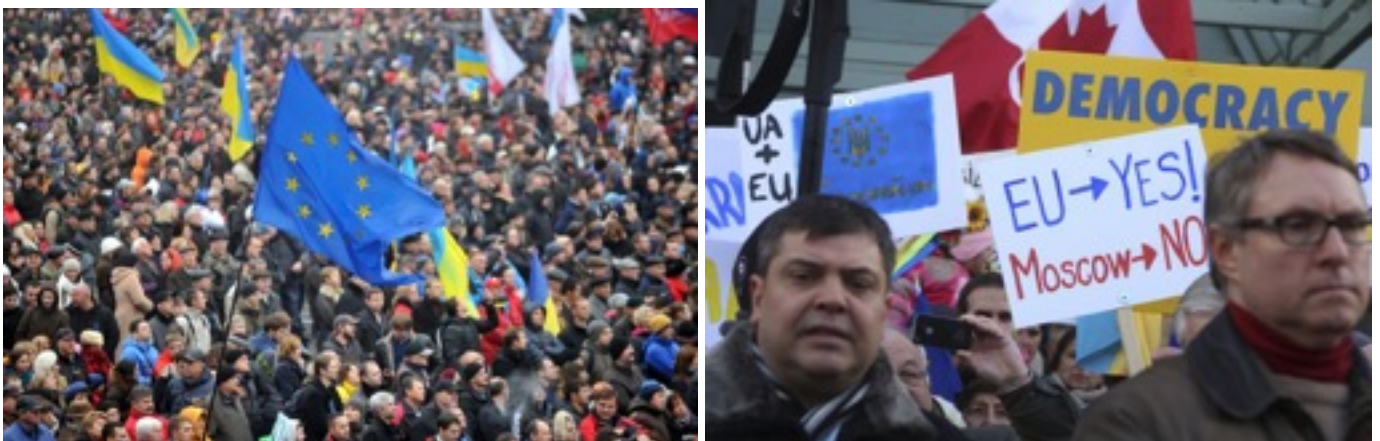
European Union vs the Eurasian Customs Union



Recent Conflict Key Events

November 2013 - Protests erupted in Ukraine following pro-Russian, President Yanukovich ending discussions for closer economic ties with the European Union. At the last minute, Yanukovich backed out of the agreement, sparking anger and protests among pro-West and pro-EU Ukrainians who long hoped for more trade agreements and engagement with the EU and Western Europe.

February, 2014 - Gunfire during a EU and trade related protest led to casualties. Ukrainian, nationalist protesters blamed government snipers, and the Government blamed opposition leaders, leading to further conflict.



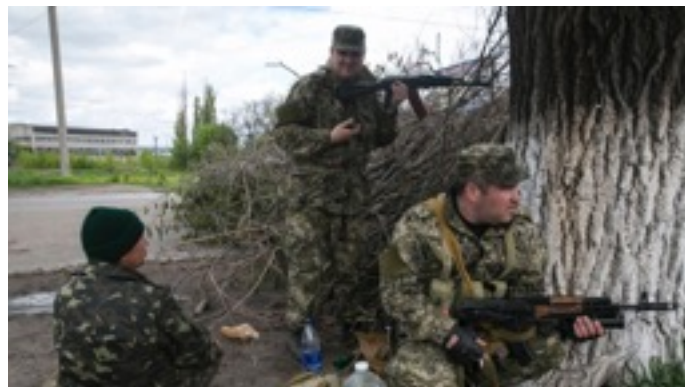
Blue and yellow striped Ukrainian flags and blue, with yellow stars European Union flag of pro-EU protesters

February, 2014 - President Yanukovich fled Kiev to Russia, causing many Ukrainians to call for his resignation. Meanwhile, former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko (below) was released from prison and addressed the crowds of protesters. Speaker of the Legislature Turchynov was appointed acting President with limited powers.



February, 2014 - Unidentified, pro-Russian troops, who were believed to be Russian Special Forces, surrounded the Crimean Parliament building. The Crimean regional government declared independence from Ukraine, with the possibility of joining Russia, declaring that 96% of the Crimea population voted in favor of the independence. The vote was widely challenged and not recognized by most countries and the United Nations. Ukraine condemned it as unconstitutional and invalid.

March 1, 2014 - The Russian Parliament decided to annex (take control over) Crimea. Russian troops entered the region. The Ukrainian government in Kiev took its first military action against pro-Russian rebels, and separatists. The southeast regions of Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence from Ukraine. (See map on next page.)



Pro-Russia, Ukrainian separatists

May, 2014 - Ukraine President Poroshenko was elected as a pro-EU, Ukrainian nationalist. Pro-Russian separatists were accused of preventing citizens from voting in some regions of Ukraine. Soon after, President Poroshenko signed the earlier, 2013 European Union trade agreement.

July, 2014 - Malaysian Airlines flight 17 was shot down by a missile, while flying above rebel-held territory in eastern Ukraine. 298 people were killed. Pro-Russian separatists were blamed by many military experts in the U.S., Western European, and other countries.

September, 2014 - The **first Minsk Protocol ceasefire** was negotiated, led by Germany, France, Ukraine, and Russia in the capital city of Belarus - a former USSR republic.

Strong, severe economic sanctions (punishments) were established against Russia - enforcement depending on Russia's following through on the terms of **Minsk ceasefire** agreement. "The purpose of sanctions is not to hurt Russia," Poroshenko told reporters. "The purpose of sanctions is just to keep Russia responsible." It is felt widely that Russia had not kept its agreement, so the economic sanctions continue to be tightened - up to the present. There were suspicions about large, Russian truck convoys - not carrying food and aid, but military supplies.

The Ukrainian Parliament passed two laws (with difficulty) allowing three years of self-rule for the two separatists regions, and some amnesty for those involved. However, both Luhansk and Donetsk decided to remain independent from Ukraine and consider to this day becoming part of Russia.

November, 2014 - Claims that Russia broke the ceasefire by transporting large numbers of tanks and weapons across the border emerged; Russia denied the allegations.



January, 2015 Map of Pro-Russia, separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk

January 2015 - The Donetsk airport fell to the separatist rebels, as the violence continued and increased. The recently elected Ukrainian President spoke to International Criminal Court at The Hague about rebel/separatists crimes against humanity.

February 2015 - France and Germany worked to arrange another ceasefire, while the U.S. considered their position carefully, deciding whether to give military aid to Ukraine and risk complicating the situation more. World leaders did not wish to arm the Ukrainian army, since doing so might increase the violence. The ceasefire was implemented, but violations occurred soon thereafter (and currently continue).

June 2015 - The European Union, Japan, the U.S., and Canada expanded economic sanctions against Russia. Russia responded by calling the sanctions illegal and unjust.

2016 - A lack of progress has led to a sense of hopelessness, and there continues to be an increase in casualties, with numbers the highest they have been since August of 2015. A sobering report released in March revealed that 9,500 people have been killed since the start of the conflict, and another 22,100 have been injured. Raids and small-scale battles between Ukrainian and pro-Russia rebels/separatists continue on a regular basis. International observers report human rights violations and crimes committed by military forces of both sides.



Lessons from Previous Ceasefires - What worked, what didn't work, and lessons learned

Minsk I Protocol - September, 2014 (initial ceasefire agreement)

Goals and text:

1. To ensure an immediate bilateral (two sides) ceasefire.

2. To ensure the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire by the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), which has played an occasionally valuable role in defusing other Eurasian conflicts, as in mediation and compromise efforts in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan
3. Decentralization of power, including through the adoption of the Ukrainian law "On temporary Order of Local Self-Governance in Donetsk and Luhansk."
4. To ensure the permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.
5. Immediate release of all hostages and illegally detained persons.
6. A law preventing the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the violence against civilian, non-combatants that have taken place in some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk.
7. To continue the inclusive national dialogue and discussions.
8. To ensure early local elections in accordance with the Ukrainian law "On temporary Order of Local Self-Governance in Particular Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts".
9. To withdraw illegal armed groups, military equipment, fighters, and mercenaries from Ukraine.
10. To adopt a program of economic recovery and reconstruction for Donetsk and Luhansk.
11. To provide personal security for participants in the consultations.

Some small **successes** occurred surrounding prisoner exchanges; however, the first attempt at a ceasefire did not work in the long run.

Issues:

- Each side accused the other of violating the cease fire agreement, claiming that "the other side fired first."
- Rebels felt that they were not given the political control promised in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.
- Both sides used the ceasefire as an opportunity to re-arm themselves.
- Skepticism was present even during the writing of the ceasefire. According to the Reuters news service, one, armed rebel joked: "Listen to the sound of the ceasefire. There's a proper battle going on there."
- OSCE monitoring efforts were interrupted/delayed by continuing violence and interference.
- Lack of coordination and communication around humanitarian aid led to eastern Ukraine often being dependent on Russian convoys to provide supplies, rather than a more transparent Red Cross, that has fewer strings attached.
- Failed to address humanitarian aid and local elections.

Overall, critics of the first Minsk Protocol say that it failed because the agreement focused on the wrong areas, and did not represent successful long-term conflict resolution. "The agreements only addressed the symptoms of conflict rather than its root causes, which required long-term, sustainable peace-building processes." There remained an underlying current of mutual disrespect and differing end goals. In addition, there was an important point that the separatists and the Russian government are not one and the same. While there may be collusion and cooperation and similar views on the annexation of Crimea, they are separate entities, and behave as such.

Minsk II Protocol (February, 2015)

A second attempt at negotiating a ceasefire came in February 2015, at a time when violence continued to increase. With new pressure, more at risk, and lessons learned from the failure of the first Minsk Protocol, Minsk II ultimately had more success. The main directives of the Minsk II Protocol called for

- 1) An immediate ceasefire
- 2) Withdrawal of all heavy weapons and the creation of a buffer zone
- 3) Facilitation/support from OSCE and Trilateral Contact Group
- 4) Effective monitoring of activity and weapons
- 5) Discussions related to local elections
- 6) An interim self-governance for the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk
- 7) Amnesty (official forgiveness) for those involved
- 8) Exchange of hostages and prisoners
- 9) Safe delivery and storage of humanitarian aid supplies
- 10) Resumption of socio-economic ties
- 11) Reinstatement of full control of the border by the Ukrainian government

12) Constitutional reform in Ukraine

Successes:

- Acknowledgement of sequencing for the implementation of the protocol's directives, rather than setting the unrealistic expectation that all parts of the plan would be implemented immediately.
- Reflection of the goals of all parties related to the issue
- Transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding

Issues:

- Minsk II does not include holding Russia responsible for their involvement of supplying arms to the pro-Russia separatists.
- Both sides halted OSCE monitoring, which had provided much-needed insight into the situation. All knowledge of the true extent of weapons, troops, and activity ended and contained gaps, and reduced the movement towards peace.
- Questions existed regarding the sustainability of the plan.

Minsk II was nearly derailed by the Battle of Debaltseve, which included some of the worst fighting yet of the two year conflict, but once the conflict declined somewhat, Minsk II began to be implemented sporadically. However, fighting continues.

Multiple Opposing Views

What has makes this conflict so complicated and difficult to end is the deeply ingrained and opposing points of view surrounding Crimea, sovereignty (internal control over a country and its independence), cultural roots, and Russian opposition to Ukraine possibly joining the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization military alliance.

Many view Russia's annexation of Crimea as a protective measure taken by Putin in order to prevent being entirely encircled by NATO. (See map on next page.) Tensions surrounding the enlargement of NATO have led to resentment, and a sense of military and security threats towards Russia.

However, others argue that Putin's annexation of Crimea and Russian military involvement in eastern Ukraine was an imperialist move; an overstep of political power, and deserving of international condemnation. Russia justified its actions by citing the Crimea referendum and cultural history of the region. Russian officials see the conflict as stemming from Western aggression, look unfavorably on Western interference, and see the matter as a "family affair" which is merely complicated by outside interference.

Western countries/states in Europe and the United States have condemned the actions taken by Russia, and many are vocal that military weapons and equipment should be supplied to Ukraine. Others feel that doing so will only increase the conflict. There is also the viewpoint that Russia has overstepped, resulting in applying economic sanctions, and international attention and condemnation.

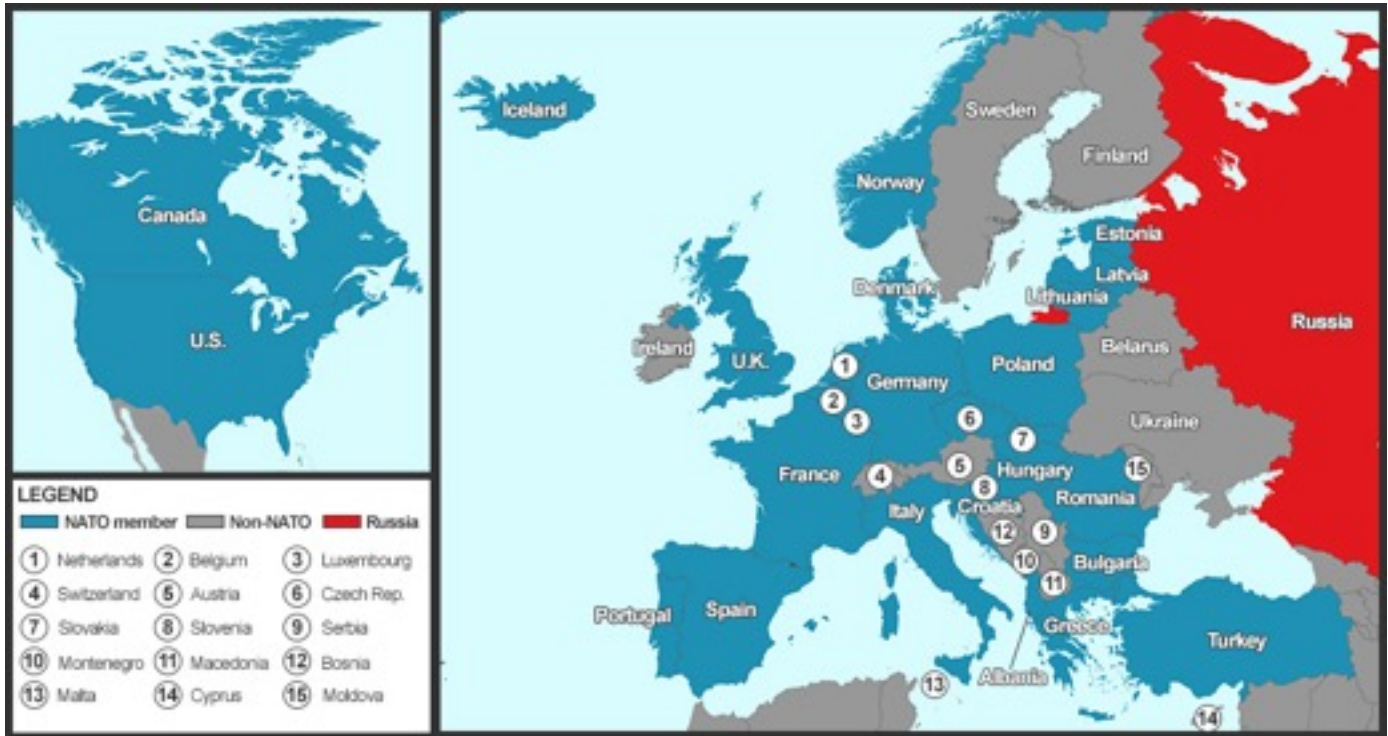
British Foreign Secretary William Hague has described Russia's intervention into Ukraine the "biggest crisis in Europe in the twenty-first century." Great Britain believes Russian intervention challenges a stable world order, established international principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, and raises the possibility of a return to great power spheres of influence. Russia's sending troops into eastern Ukraine and Crimea and the effective seizure of Crimea is a blatant violation of Ukrainian sovereignty (control over its territory and independence) and of the nonintervention provisions contained in Article 2.7 of the United Nations Charter. While Russia has long maintained naval, military installations in Sevastopol, home of its Black Sea Fleet, the Crimean peninsula has been part of Ukraine's sovereign territory since its 1954 transfer from Russia by then Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Moscow's "brazen act of aggression," as U.S. Secretary of State Kerry has termed it, may be the clearest violation of another nation's sovereignty since Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. It is not without precedent, however. In 2008, Russian troops invaded Georgia to assist two breakaway, Pro-Russian republics - and has not lived up to its promise remove Russian troops. Allowing Russian actions in Ukraine to stand now would gravely undermine the doctrine of state sovereignty, which remains - for all its limitations - a force for global stability.

Moscow's intervention in Crimea cannot be viewed in isolation. It is part of a broader post-Cold War effort to consolidate control over Russia's "near abroad," neighbor states/countries to the west. Russian President Putin has never sought to disguise this aim. To pull former Soviet republics into Moscow's orbit, he has started several initiatives, such as creating a "Eurasian Union" intended to rival the EU. Russia's goal is to destabilize Ukraine, showing both its own people and other former Soviet republics that any revolt would be followed by bloodshed.

Meanwhile, separatists in Ukraine call for independence. They have a strong belief that eastern Ukraine and Crimea are rightfully Russian. "Everybody knows that Ukrainians are Russians," said Kremlin adviser Sergei Markov, "except for the Galicians" - a reference to the Ukrainian-speaking residents of western Ukraine.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states



United Nations and International Involvement

In 2014, the interim president of Ukraine spoke to the United Nations, requesting U.N. peacekeepers be provided. The U.N. Security Council initially passed a resolution condemning the pro-Russia, Crimea independence referendum, but Russia exercised its veto power. A U.N. General Assembly resolution on March 27th, declared the pro-Russia, Ukrainian separatists referendum illegal. 100 countries voted in favor, 58 abstained, and eleven voted against it. However, it was a non-binding resolution, and contained little action, causing it to be mostly symbolic.

In July, 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning "the downing of a civilian aircraft on an international flight, Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, on 17 July in Donetsk, Ukraine, with the loss of all 298 passengers and crew on board."

To see all U.N. Security Council meetings, letters, and resolutions concerning Ukraine, visit this link: www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/ukraine/. The "28 April 2016 Selected Security Council Meeting Records" is very helpful because it has speeches from the various S.C. countries' ambassadors or representatives.

In addition, many countries have placed extensive, economic sanctions on Russia aimed to encourage Russia to act its promises in the Minsk II agreements and to pull back Russia's involvement within Ukraine.

Recent Events and Current Status

While the transition from basic military agreements to long-lasting peace takes time, and long-term goals are essential, a complaint surrounding the Minsk Protocols argues that they have been too slow, and are not contributing to a solution in an immediate fashion. Many Ukrainians are caught in a state of conflict and feel hopeless. There is the pressing issue of an undeniable, humanitarian crisis of the deaths of civilian non-combatants; destruction of homes, farms, and businesses; and the migration of 1.7 million Ukrainians away from the areas of military combat.

On June 21, 2016, Hryhoriy Nemyria, the chairman of the Human Rights Committee at the Ukrainian Parliament stated: "Europe pays insufficient attention to the crisis caused by the Kremlin's aggression."

Peace talks have continued. Putin pulled out of one such discussion, calling it "senseless," but has recently stated that he will most likely have to meet again with Ukraine's president.

Russia is a permanent, five (P5) veto state in the U.N. Security Council and has vetoed or threatened to veto any Security Council resolution that would punish Russia for its actions in Ukraine since 2014.

Instead, the U.S., Canada, Japan, the European Union, and other states have established and tightened economic sanctions or punishments to weaken Russia's economy. Generally, the above countries agree not to allow trade with, investment in, or transfer technologies to the wealthiest and most powerful oligarchs in Russia, who own large banks, oil, natural gas production and other large companies. These oligarchs are also prevented from traveling to the West and Japan and cannot bank with or invest in businesses in those sanctioning countries.

A stated purpose of the economic sanctions is to convince Mr Putin's inner circle to persuade him to moderate his policies. However, trade, asset and travel bans on influential Russian individuals may have only reinforced Russia's fortress mentality. There is disagreement among economists as to the impact of the sanctions.

There was a recent G20 (Group of 20 countries with large economies/ GDPs) summit in China, with meetings between the leaders of France, Germany, and Russia regarding Ukraine. President Putin also suggested to President Obama there, that Russia might co-operate with the U.S. in fighting ISIS in Syria and Iraq in exchange for the U.S. lifting or reducing the economics sanctions. The international goal remains a successful peace agreement, and foreign ministers still view the Minsk II Protocol as a "key reference and key way of solving the conflict."

Links and Helpful Resources

www.wsj.com/articles/russia-ukraine-crisis-prompts-meeting-with-putin-at-g-20-summit-1471964484

www.cnn.com/2015/02/10/europe/ukraine-war-how-we-got-here/index.html

www.cfr.org/ukraine/ukraine-crisis/p32540

www.economist.com/.../21701184-blocking-investment-has-only-slightly-restrained-russia-small-carrot-medium-stick

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11449122/Ukraine-crisis-timeline-of-major-events.html

www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-putin-took-crimea

<http://theweek.com/articles/449691/ukraines-fraught-relationship-russia-brief-history>

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-russia-sees-the-ukraine-crisis-11461>

www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/02/27/to-understand-crimea-take-a-look-back-at-its-complicated-history/

www.ceicdata.com/en/blog/economic-implications-ukraine-russia-trade-relations

www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/03/06/world/europe/russias-endgame-in-ukraine.html?_r=0

<http://research.un.org/en/ukraine>

www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/ukraine/

<http://blogs.cfr.org/patrick/2014/03/04/at-stake-in-ukraine-the-future-of-world-order/>

U.N. Security Council

Authorized Actions (What it may do)

The United Nations Security Council deals with issues related to maintaining the security and safety of the international community. The Security Council is the only U.N. council or committee that may initiate economic sanctions, peacekeeping operations, military actions, or any other direct intervention in a state. When states join the United Nations, they agree to abide by the resolutions passed in the Security Council.

The Security Council's has a wide range of options to insure international security. They include:

- Acquire additional information about a conflict or potential conflict
- Request information from other U.N. related agencies - for example the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Human Rights Council (HRC), etc.
- Investigate the presence of banned weapons or weapons of mass destruction
- Request states or parties provide information about war crimes or attempts at genocide in disputed territories or states
- Investigate possible violations of international humanitarian law
- Call for an immediate cease-fire between combatants in a conflict (civil war or war between states/countries)
- Call for negotiations, suggest a peace plan, and/or provide a trained peace negotiator/diplomat
- Invite the logical, regional transnational organization (ie., African Union, League of Arab States, European Union, NATO, ASEAN, OAS, OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) to provide expertise, negotiators, peace keepers, aid workers, financial or military assistance
- Impose a no fly zone patrolled by a regional military alliance
- Impose a trade embargo on one or several states or parties in the dispute
- Authorize a naval blockade by a regional military alliance
- Establish a U.N. peacekeeping force – lightly armed to preserve a peace agreement
- Establish “safe areas” for refugees and provide relief services to refugees fleeing the conflict, with the assistance of various international aid organizations
- Authorize military force against one or both parties in the dispute or conflict, reflecting the U.N. “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine
- Establish an international criminal tribunal to try persons responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the disputed area
- Establish a compensation commission to give money to the victims of the conflict
- Call upon the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission to work with international non-government organizations (NGOs) to help rebuild war torn states and territories.

The U.N. Security Council is composed of fifteen member states. **China, France, Russia**, the **United Kingdom**, and the **United States** are the five permanent members of the Security Council, and have veto power on resolutions (but not amendments or procedural votes). The Security Council may also invite countries or organizations involved in the issue at hand to participate in the discussion, however these countries or organizations do not have voting rights on resolutions or amendments to resolutions.

2016 Security Council member states: Angola, Egypt, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the five permanent members: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States