

SPECIAL COMMITTEE: TEDIC
Topic C: Promoting Solutions to the
Crimea Land Dispute

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INDEX

Background Information.....	3
Timeline.....	9
Key Terms.....	12
Guiding Questions.....	13
Further Research.....	14

Background Information

Ukrainian Independence

As the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it slowly let go of its hold on the Soviet republics under its influence, the so-called “puppet states”. One of these was Ukraine, which successfully achieved independence. In fact, the Ukrainian parliament declared independence from USSR following the attempted coup in Moscow. In a nationwide referendum in December, 90% of Ukrainians voted for independence. Merely three years later, Ukraine, Russia, the US, and Britain signed the Budapest Memorandum which aimed at containing the Soviet-era nuclear weapons. Ukraine agreed to send Russia its nuclear weapons in order for them to be disarmed there, in exchange for the promise that the three countries would never coerce Ukraine with economic pressure, never threaten or use force against Ukraine, and respect Ukrainian territory and sovereignty.



Ukrainian Revolution

Before the Ukrainian Revolution of February 2014, there was the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine of 2005, 9 years prior. The Orange Revolution was the immediate result of the run-off vote of the 2004 Ukrainian

presidential election between Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich. This election was thought to be rigged, suffering from the intense corruption of the Ukrainian

government. After hearing about the massive corruption, voter intimidation, and direct electoral fraud from several domestic and foreign election monitors, the Ukrainian people organized several protests, centered mostly in the capital, Kiev. The mass protests of the Orange Revolution lasted two whole months, and eventually succeeded when the results of the original run-off were annulled and Ukraine's Supreme Court ordered a revote. This revote was meticulously monitored and declared "fair and free", showing a clear victory for the pro-Western President Viktor Yushchenko against the opposing pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich. On January 23rd of 2005, the day of the new president's inauguration, the Orange Revolution ended.

In the years following, however, little was changed due to the continued corruption and economic problems of the country. The people were generally dissatisfied with the distinct lack of change made by Yushchenko, and in 2010 Victor Yanukovich finally



managed to take his victory in the presidential elections, which were deemed fair by the Central Election Commission and international observers. Skipping to three years later, Ukraine is saddled with massive debt, endemic corruption, and is in general need of assistance. In response to this, the European Union offered a trade deal that, while beneficial for both parties in the long-run, would be painful for Ukraine in the immediately following years. In contrast, Russia offers a 15 billion dollar loan that would

be gradually handed out over the course of several years. Russian President Vladimir Putin also encouraged Ukraine to join a “Eurasian Union”, which is Russia’s alternative to the EU. Yanukovych spends a lot of time debating the merits of both offers until eventually, on the 21st of November, he forgoes the EU’s offer and agrees to Putin’s.

The Ukrainian public was not pleased that President Viktor Yanukovych decided not to sign. Once more, Ukrainians took up the streets of Kiev in peaceful protesting. They take over the



capital’s main square and declare it Euromaidan. Despite several attempts by the police to get rid of them, the Ukrainians stood their ground and build tents, barricades and catapults. Unfortunately, on January 22nd, clashes with the police kill three protestors, and the country is submerged in apprehension. From that point on, tension rises in the country and violence becomes more commonplace. Mysterious groups, such as the Berkut riot police, hired thugs called “titushki”, and far right-nationalists play bigger roles in the conflict, and protestors invade government buildings, not only in Kiev, but also in several different Ukrainian cities.

Attempts at truces are made and regrettably fail. Soon, the protestors must fend off nighttime assaults by their police. Watching with horror, the EU countries broker a truce agreement with Yanukovych. It has been reported that in the midst of the chaos, Yanukovych called Putin for help, who immediately ordered military exercises near the

border. Ultimately, Yanukovych and many of his allies flee the country. The ex-president is impeached by Parliament and a new interim government is formed, with elections scheduled for May 25th.

Russia in Ukraine

The new Ukrainian government was publicly recognized by the United States and European Union, but Russia was vocally against it. Putin, as well as a few other countries, denounced the government, defending that Yanukovych was illegally impeached and remained president of Ukraine. Furthermore, he accused the EU and the US of funding and directing the coup on Yanukovych.

The country barely had any time to recover from the Ukrainian Revolution before another set of protests gripped it. All over the country there were reports of pro-Russian protests that emerged from the south-east. Amongst the more distinctive regions is none



other than Crimea. Soon enough, Russian forces began occupying different regions of Ukraine in both legitimate and illegitimate manners. One of the legitimate ways is through the military agreement between Ukraine and Russia, allowing Russia a military base by the Black Sea. In Crimea, it became common to find Russian plated-trucks and aircrafts. Things became much more serious when men carrying Russian weapons invaded the Crimean parliament and airport, all the while denying that they were Russian. While this happened, the Crimean parliament voted to dismiss the Crimean government and hold a referendum on Crimea's autonomy. This referendum resulted in the vast majority of Crimeans affirming that they wished to join Russia, but was considered invalid by most of the rest of the world.

On February 28th Yanukovych denounced that the Ukrainian revolution was a coup and asked Putin to take action. Putin did so on the very next day, when the Russian parliament agreed to the Russian president's request for military intervention in Ukraine. He claimed that this was done in order to "protect the ethnic Russian minority" in the region. The Ukrainian forces in Crimea refused to surrender, however, even though the Russian military was more powerful and had surrounded them. In response to Russia's bold move, Ukraine's interim president announced that Russia was trying to provoke Ukraine into an all-out war. During this, the UN Security Council calls emergency meetings and US President Barack Obama condemns Putin's actions and threatens sanctions.

Acting upon the previously mentioned referendum, the Crimean Parliament declared independence from Ukraine and announced it would join the Russian Federation. Russia and Crimea then signed a "treaty of accession of the Republic of

Rimea and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation”. Putin and Crimea made several statements indicating their satisfaction on having Crimea officially annexed to Russia. This annexation was officially deemed unacceptable, however, by the UN General Assembly when they passed a non-binding resolution that declared the referendum invalid and the annexation of Crimea illegal. Consequently, Ukraine announced that Crimea was a territory illegally occupied by Russia.

Crimea

It is notable to point out that from the beginning of Ukrainian Independence, Crimea was an autonomous state. Several referenda have been held to determine the status of the region as a sovereign territory. Its sovereignty was strategically challenged by the ratification of the Russian-Ukrainian Partition Treaty signed in 1997, which allows the Russian Black Sea fleet to stay in Crimea until the year 2042.

Demographically, 58% of the total population in Crimea is ethnically Russian. The second largest group is the Ukrainians, which make up about 24% of the total population, followed by the original inhabitants of the region, the Crimean Tartars, which make up 12% of the population. This greatly differs from the rest of Ukraine, which only has 17.3% of its total population be ethnic Russians, while having 77.8% of its population be Ukrainian.

Ukraine by ethnic identity



Crimea by ethnic identity



Note: Some totals may not add up due to rounding
Source: 2001 Ukraine census

Timeline

1991 – Ukrainian parliament declares independence from USSR following attempted coup in Moscow. In a nationwide referendum in December, 90% vote for independence.

2004 - Orange Revolution begins after reports of widespread vote-rigging in presidential election nominally won by pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich. Opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko leads mass street protests and civil disobedience. Supreme Court annuls result of poll.

2010 – Viktor Yanukovich is declared the winner in a presidential election judged free and fair by observers. His main rival, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, is arrested for abuse of powers and eventually jailed in October 2011.

2013:

November 21 – Yanukovich's cabinet abandons an agreement on closer trade ties with EU, instead seeking closer co-operation with Russia. Ukrainian MPs also reject a bill to allow Yulia Tymoshenko to leave the country. Small protests start and comparisons with the Orange Revolution begin.

Late November – Protests gather pace, as 100,000 people attend a demonstration in Kiev, the largest in Ukraine since the Orange Revolution. Police launch first raid on protesters, arresting 35.

December 17 – Vladimir Putin agrees to buy \$15bn of Ukrainian debt and reduce the price of Russian gas supplies by about a third

2014:

January 16-23 – Parliament passes restrictive anti-protest laws, Days later two people die of gunshot wounds as clashes turn deadly for first time. Third death reported as the body of high-profile activist Yuriy Verbytsky is found. Protesters begin storming regional government offices in western Ukraine.

February 22 – President Yanukovich disappears. Protesters take control of presidential administration buildings. Parliament votes to remove president from power with elections set for 25 May. Yanukovich appears on TV to denounce "coup".

May 2 – Acting President Olexander Turchynov says many pro-Russia rebels have been killed, injured and arrested in a government offensive in the eastern city of Sloviansk. Pro-Russians shoot down two Ukrainian military helicopters, killing a pilot and another serviceman. Clashes in the Black Sea city of Odessa leave at least 42 people dead, most of them pro-Russian activists killed when a building they had barricaded themselves inside caught fire. .

May 4 – Pro-Russian protesters attack the police headquarters in Odessa, prompting police to release dozens of people arrested over the earlier unrest. Interim PM

Arseniy Yatsenyuk says "inefficient" police failed to prevent the fire two days earlier.

May 11 – Pro-Russian separatist in Donetsk and Luhansk declare independence after referendums which were not recognized in Kiev or the West.

May 25 – Ukraine holds presidential election but most polling stations in east remain closed. President-elect Petro Poroshenko vows to bring “peace to a united and free Ukraine”.

May 26 – Russia says it is open to dialogue with Poroshenko but insists military action against separatists must stop

June 6 – Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President-elect Petro Poroshenko call for a quick end to the bloodshed in eastern Ukraine.

June 16 – Russia cuts off all gas supplies to Ukraine, as Gazprom says Ukraine has failed to settle its debts.

June 20 – President Poroshenko announces a 15-point peace plan and declares a week-long truce.

June 23 – Rebels agree to observe the ceasefire proposed by the government until 27 June, but say they will not disarm until government troops leave the east.

June 25 - Russia's parliament cancels a parliamentary resolution authorizing the use of Russian forces in Ukraine. EU leaders welcome the move but warn of more sanctions if Russia does not do more to de-escalate tensions in Ukraine.

June 27 - The EU signs an association agreement with Ukraine, along with Georgia and Moldova, in what President Petro Poroshenko describes as the most important day in the country's history since independence in 1991.

July 11-12 - A rebel rocket attack on a village near Russian border in Luhansk region leaves at least 20 soldiers dead. As Ukrainian troops close in on Donetsk, rocket fire kills four civilians

July 17 - Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 from Amsterdam is shot down near the village of Grabove in rebel-held territory close to the border with Russia. A total of 298 people are killed including 80 children. Western nations said the plane was hit by a Russian-supplied SA-11 missile fired by rebels.

July 30 - The EU and US announce new sanctions against Russia with focus on oil sector, defence equipment and sensitive technologies

August 5 - As heavy fighting erupts in Donetsk city, the UN says more than 1,000 civilians are fleeing the conflict zone every day

August 27-28 - Rebels open up a new front, capturing the town of Novoazovsk on the Sea of Azov, a few miles inside the Russian border. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko accuses Russia of moving troops into Ukraine. Rebel leader Alexander Zakharchenko says there are 3-4,000 Russian civilians in their ranks, including many soldiers on leave

September 1 - Ukraine says 700 of its men have been taken prisoner as pro-Russian rebels advance in the east. Government forces retreat from Luhansk airport. Nato announces plans for a rapid response force to protect Eastern European members against possible Russian aggression.

September 5 - Ukraine and pro-Russian rebels in the east sign a truce deal to end almost five months of fighting.

September 8 - Shelling near Donetsk airport raises fears that the ceasefire may collapse.

September 9 - Dutch experts find that Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 broke up in mid-air after being hit by "objects" that "pierced the plane at high velocity" in July. Correspondents say this matches claims that MH17 was hit by missile shrapnel. The 5 September ceasefire is largely holding, but the EU formally adopts new sanctions on Russia, with no word on when they will be put in place.

*Timeline has been taken from BBC and CNN

Key Terms

Orange Revolution – Revolution in Ukraine in 2004-2005, caused by the belief that the presidential election, between Victor Yushenko and Viktor Yanukovich, results were marred by fraud, corruption, and voter intimidation. Peaceful protests were organized for two months until a second run-off that was deemed fair occurred.

Ukrainian Revolution – Revolution in Ukraine in 2014, caused by President Yanukovich's refusal of the EU's offer and acceptance of Russia's. Although starting as peaceful protests, violence started increasing when three protestors died. The revolution resulted in the escape of Yanukovich and the establishment of a new interim government with promises for proper elections in May.

Crimea – Region in south-east Ukraine that is being fought over by Ukraine and Russia. 58.3% of Crimeans are ethnic Russians, 24.3% are Ukrainians, 12% are Crimean Tartars, and 8% are of other ethnicity.

Crimean Tartar – Indigenous Crimean community that was deported in large numbers by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1944. They boycotted the Crimean referendum.

Victor Yanukovich – President of Ukraine during the Ukraine Revolution of 2014 that was forced out of his position due to the violent protests in Kiev. He was pro-Russian and rumored to be corrupt. Furthermore, it was he that refused to agree with an association agreement with the European Union, deeming it to be too austere and detrimental to Ukraine. Instead, he signed a treaty with Russia.

Vladimir Putin – President of Russia and advocate that Crimea should be internationally considered a part of the Russian Federation.

Victor Yushenko – Ukraine president before Yanukovich. He won the presidential elections after the Orange Revolution caused people to demand a revote.

Oleksander Turchynov – The interim President appointed after Yanukovich fled Kiev. This interim government was recognized by both the United States and the European Union.

Territorial Integrity: the principle under international law that nation-states should not attempt to promote secessionist movements or to promote border changes in other nation-states.

Self-determination: the right of the people of a particular place to choose the form of government they will have

Economic Sanctions: domestic penalties applied by one country (or group of countries) on another country (or group of countries). They may include various forms of trade barriers and restrictions on financial transactions.

Guiding Questions

- Should Crimea be allowed to join Russia?
- Should the movement of Russian troops into Crimea be considered an act of aggression?
- What are the consequences of continued conflict in the Crimean region?
- What can each country gain by having access to Crimea?
- Is choosing to belong to Russia a part of the Crimean people's right of self-determination?
- Is the rest of Ukraine at risk of being invaded?
- Are ethnic Russians that live in Crimea at risk from other dangerous factions?
- Should Ukraine change its system to accommodate different peoples?

Further Research

Great timelines of the issue:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>

The conflict:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26387353>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/05/ukraine-russia-explainer>

Orange Revolution:

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/60620/adrian-karatnycky/ukraines-orange-revolution>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kl96t1Xi9cl>

Eastern Ukraine:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/16/us-ukraine-crisis-un-idUSBREA4F05Y20140516>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/28/world/europe/ukraine-russia-novoazovsk-crimea.html>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2014/04/07/after-crimea-eastern-ukraine-city-wants-to-join-russia/>