

Committee: Special, Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

Issue: The Crimean Crisis

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INTRODUCTION

The term “Crimean Crisis” refers to the events that have taken place in Ukraine and the area of Crimea in the aftermath of October 2013, that ultimately led to Crimea’s Annexation by the Russian Federation in March 2014. Prior to the annexation, Crimea had formed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 1991, formally being part of Ukraine. Crimea has traditionally been populated by an overwhelming majority of ethnic Russian residents and a minority of Crimean Tatars along with ethnic Ukrainians, thus fostering one of Ukraine’s largest ethnic Russian populations.

Crime has long been of paramount importance to both Russia and Ukraine. More specifically, Crimea has a key geostrategic placement for Russia, granting the latter access to the Black Sea. This is seen as a threat by Ukraine and European States, which are afraid of

Russia’s possible expansionary policy. More specifically, Crimea is seen as a pressure point, whereby Russia allegedly shows its desire to expand to the rest of Ukraine and the bordering states. Russia’s annexation of Crimea has only further intensified such fears, leading to heavy political and economic tension between the EU and Russia, whilst leaving Crimea in a state of political and economic decay.



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Annexation

According to Hofmann Rainer, annexation is the political transition of a territory from the control of one country to another. This word can also be used to describe incorporation of an unclaimed area into a state's sovereignty. Under International Law, annexation is considered the forcible transition of one country's land by another country or a legal process by which a state acquires territory.

Verkhovna Rada

Verkhovna Rada in Ukrainian translates to Supreme Council and is the Ukrainian Parliament. It is located in Kiev, Ukraine's capitol city, and is composed of 450 deputies presided by the Chairman. The main functions of the Verkhovna Rada are legislative. It appoints the Ukrainian Prime Minister, adopts laws, amends the Constitution of Ukraine, and most importantly declares war and peace among others.

Supreme Council

Officially named the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Supreme Council was Crimea's legislative body prior to the 2014 annexation by Russia.

Referendum

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the widely accepted definition of a referendum is a direct vote in which the citizens of a country or a state are asked to give their opinion or decide on a topic that concerns an important political or social question on a national level. It is important to mention at this point that referendum need to be conducted in line with the democratic principles of fair vote, representation and free choice to be considered valid.

Euromaidan

Euromaidan refers to the wave of demonstrations and generally the civil unrest in the Ukrainian territory that began in October/November 2013. The protests were triggered by the government's last minute decision to withdraw from an Association Agreement with the EU, and fueled further by the notions of government corruption and power abuse. The protests escalated through to February 2014, resulting in the ousting of the President, Viktor Yanykovich.

Crisis

Crisis is considered to be a period of uncertainty during which decisive changes might be impending. As far the Crimean crisis is concerned, the crisis isn't restricted just to the time that elapsed between Yanukovich's ousting and the annexation of Crimea. Instead, it runs through to today, taking into account the tension between the parties involved, as well as the state of Crimea today.

Governorate

According to the Oxford Dictionary the term "Governorate" is used to describe an administrative division of a country, that is ruled by a governor.

Oblast

The word "Oblast" is used to define the governorates of the region of Russia and the former Soviet Union.

New Union Treaty

The Union treaty, also known as the New Union Treaty, was the attempt by the Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev of renegotiation of the terms of the initial treaty of 1922 regarding the establishment of the USSR.

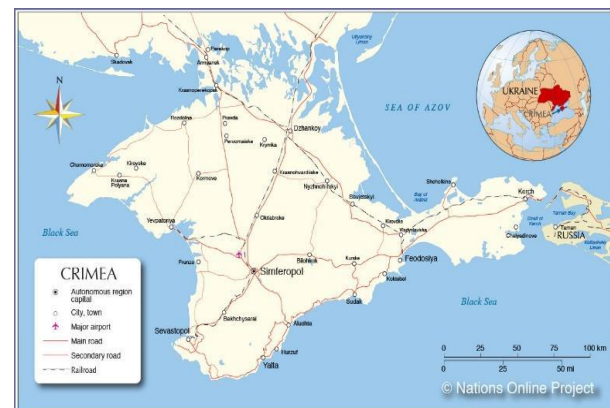
Crimean Tatars

Tatars are considered to be a Turkic ethnic group. They inhabited the Crimean Peninsula during a large period of time, namely from the 13th to the 17th century. They formed the largest ethnic population of the region until 1944 when their removal was ordered by the USSR State Defense Committee. In 1989, they were allowed to return to the Crimean Peninsula and nowadays approximately 12% of Crimean population is comprised by them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of Crimea

The Crimean Peninsula located on the northern coast of the Black Sea in Eastern Europe was integrated into the Russian Empire in the year 1783 after the Crimean Khanate's annexation and remained under the Russian



influence being a part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialistic Union until 1954. In the first years of its incorporation into the Empire, it was named the Taurida Oblast. In 1795, it merged with the Novorossiysk Governorate, and in 1802 it became the Taurida Governorate.

During the initial years of the Russian civil war, which started in 1917, many short-lived governments were established in the peninsula, such as the Crimean People's Republic, the Crimean Regional Government and the Crimean SSR, which were followed by the South Russian Government. Thus, as one may have already ascertained, the status of Crimea during its course of history never had political stability or permanence. The roots of the crisis that Crimea is facing nowadays might lie within this fact.

Moving forward, in October of 1921, a new government was established in the region, namely the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialistic Republic of the Russian SFSR (Soviet Federative Socialistic Republic). The Crimean ASSR was deprived of its autonomy in the year 1946 and its status was altered to one of an oblast of the Russian SFSR, right after the end of the Second World War and the deportation of all the [Crimean Tatars](#) ordered by Joseph Stalin. In 1954, the Russian SFSR transferred the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR by decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union.

36 years ahead, namely in 1990 the restoration of the Crimean ASSR was proposed by the Soviet of the territory and therefore a referendum was conducted in 1991. Following the referendum, as well as the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, Crimea was awarded autonomous status within Ukraine. Thus, one can discern that Crimea has shared a large part of its history with Russia and Ukraine.

In the years prior to the Crimean Crisis, there were multiple instances of tension between the two countries in regards to the status of Crimea and its relations towards Ukraine and Russia respectively. More specifically, in 2008, Volodymyr Ohryzko, the then acting Minister of Ukrainian Foreign Affairs, commented on the problem that was being created in the region of Crimea, namely the provision of Russian passports to people located in the area by the Russian Government. In doing so, he expressed his concerns regarding this issue, bearing in mind the Russian declared policy of military intervention abroad, so as to protect its citizens.

One year later, ethnic Russian residents of Crimea held anti-Ukrainian demonstrations and some Members of the Parliament, such as Sergei Tsekov, expressed

their hope that Crimea would enjoy similar” treatment” by the Russian Federation to the one of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Tsekov was referring to the 2008 Ossetia War, which resulted in the victory of the Abkhazian, Ossetian and Russian military against the Georgian one. Since then the Russian government and other five United Nations Member States have recognized the regions as sovereign states.



Map depicting the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions and their close proximity to Crimea

2014 Ukrainian Revolution

The 2014 Ukrainian Revolution was sparked in Autumn of 2013, when the legally elected Ukrainian President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich of the Party of the Regions, withdrew from signing the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement, opting instead for the package of economic and financial assistance offered by Russia. This deprived Ukraine of its long-awaited economic integration and closer political association with Europe. This is the point when the [Euromaidan protest movement](#) came to the fore in Kiev in November 2013, protesting against this specific act of the government, as well subsequent corruption and power abuse by promoting demonstrations and rallies in Kiev and other part of Ukraine.

Viktor Yanukovich, who was elected President of Ukraine in 2010 with strong support from the community of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and generally eastern and southern Ukraine, condemned the protest. Crimea's government supported the President by saying that these protests were "threatening political stability in the country". Moreover, the Crimean government was in favor of the decision to suspend negotiations on the Agreement, so as to ensure maintenance of friendly ties to the Russian Federation. This Agreement would harm the relations of Ukraine, alongside with Crimea, to the Russian Federation by integrating Ukraine into an alliance that Russia strongly opposes.

The animus of Crimea's government to strengthen ties with Russia "emerged on the surface" in the beginnings of 2014, when its Supreme Council attended to Russia to guarantee the voting procedures in case of a referendum on the Crimean status. Sixteen days after this incident, namely on 20 February 2014, Vladimir Konstantinov, Chairman of Crimea's Supreme Council, quoted that "the 1945 transfer of Crimea from the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic had been a mistake because of the majority of ethnically Russians in the Crimean region".

The 22nd of February has been signalized as the day of Yanukovich's and other minister's fleeing from Ukraine, as the Euromaidan protests had reached their peak. The Ukrainians, however, managed to create a parliamentary quorum and vote on the removal of Viktor Yanukovich from his position, despite legislative complications. The formation of the new temporal government by the Rada with Arseniy Yatsenyuk as the Head, "enjoyed" international recognition, except by the Russian Federation, where the events were considered to be a "coup d'état" and the government therefore lacked legitimacy.

The Beginning and the Development of the Crimean Crisis

The Crimean Crisis started as a political crisis that was sparked by the revolution October, November 2013. This eventually led to the ousting of the Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich, and to the creation of demonstrations against the new interim government.

The Members of the Crimean Parliament called for a meeting in the morning of the 21 of February 2014 that was arranged, in order to discuss a possible Russian intervention in the Crimean Peninsula. The Security Service of Ukraine acted upon that by stating that

severe measures would be used in order to prevent actions against the diminishment of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

The city of Sevastopol became the center of pro-Russian demonstrations, that began on the 23rd of February. In response to that Anatolii Monyliov, the Crimean Prime Minister stated that the Crimean Government did indeed recognize the new interim government and would carry out all laws that would be passed by the Verkhovna Rada. Following this, 5,000 to 15,000 a Pro-European rally in the city of Simferopol in support of the new Ukrainian Government. On the same day, the mayor of Kerch (refer to the map of Crimea provided) said that Crimea is Ukrainian territory, after the attempt of protesters to replace the Ukrainian flag of the City Hall with a Russian one.

Meanwhile, protests against the new government had also been sparked in Sevastopol. These led to the creation of a new parallel administration, namely civil defense groups aided by the Russian motorcycle Club, the Night Wolves. On the 24th of February, pro-Russian protesters in Sevastopol requested for the election of a Russian citizen as mayor waving Russian flags and being accompanied by Neo-Cossacks.

The demand of a referendum regarding Crimea's independence came to the fore on the 25th of February. On the same day, demonstrators in Sevastopol elected unofficially a Russian citizen as a mayor, namely Alexei Chaly. This election was immediately rendered illegal by Ukrainian authorities, since the mayor of the city of Sevastopol has to be appointed by the President of Ukraine. However, officers refused to carry out the arrest of Alexei Chaly, who remained at his position.

On 26 February 2014, opposing rallies clashed in the city of Simferopol near the Supreme Council building. The Supreme Council Chairman Vladimir Konstantinov, stated that the parliament would not consider the requests of the pro-Russian demonstrators, namely the separation of the region from Ukraine.

The United Nations became involved when the SBU chief Valentyn Nalyvaichenk requested the provision of monitoring of the region by the UN.

On orders from the Russian President Vladimir Putin Russian, troops marched and took control of the route to the city of Sevastopol. Meanwhile, a military checkpoint was established between Sevastopol and Simferopol.

The next day, Russian special forces took control of the Crimean Supreme Council. The parliament then, held an emergency session and the Members voted to suspend the government and replace the former Prime Minister with Sergey Aksyonov. These actions were considered illegal by the new Ukrainian interim government.

On the 1st of March, the new Prime Minister of Crimea, Sergey Aksyonov affirmed that the military installations of Ukraine on the peninsula would be controlled by the de facto Crimean authorities. Moreover, he asked President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, for aid so as to ensure stability and peace in the region of Crimea. Due to this request Putin was able to receive authorization by the Federation Council in Moscow for the military intervention in the declared territory of Ukraine. However, Putin's "move" sparked demonstrations against the use of military in the case of Ukraine and Crimea in Russia's capitol city, Moscow.

Fear and unease "ruled" for the next days in the area. On the 16th of March, the secession referendum took place and 97% of the voters supported the union of Crimea with the Russian Federation. The vote was not recognized and in some cases even condemned by Western countries, due to the strong presence of Russian forces in monitoring the referendum.

The following day, the European Union and the United States introduced the first round of sanctions on the Russian Federation, which include travel bans and the freezing of assets of some Ukrainian and Russian officials.

The result of the referendum was recognized and applauded by Russia that suggested the signing of a treaty, the so-called Accession Treaty, which would formally recognize the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as federal subjects of the Russian Federation and as part of the country. Three days later, namely on the 21st of March, the Federal Assembly ratified the Accession Treaty.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

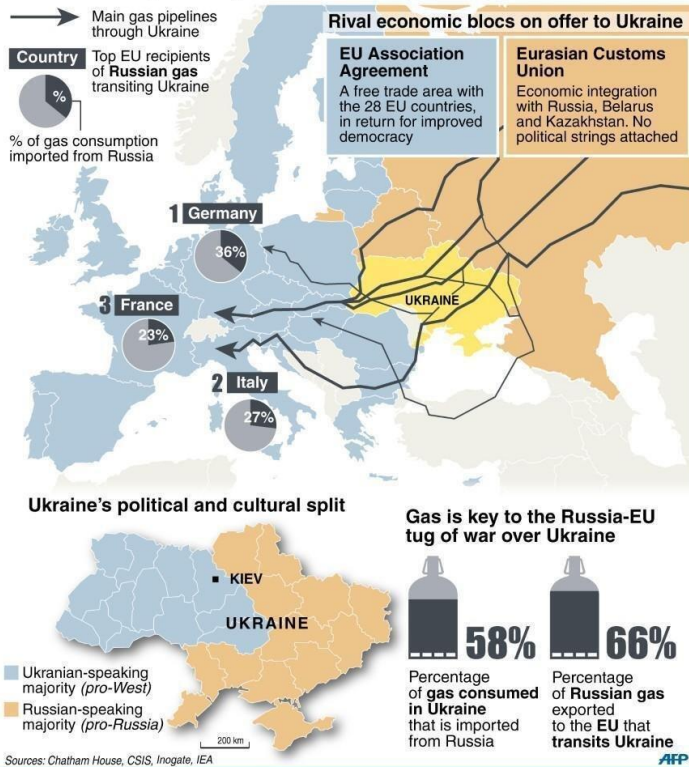
Ukraine

The Ukrainian government does not recognize the Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and considers it a "temporary occupation" of the region by Russian military

forces. The Verkhovna Rada has condemned the Accession Treaty and has urged other governments not to recognize the Republic of Crimea. The Ukrainian Supreme Council has stated that this action is an enormous violation of the international law and the annexation is therefore rendered illegal. In an attempt to solve this issue, the Ukrainian government established a new ministry, namely the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Areas and IDPs on the 20th of April 2016. (IDP= Internally Displaced Person)

Ukraine torn between East and West

Moscow slashes the price it charges Ukraine for Russian gas, will invest in Ukrainian bonds



Russian Federation

The referendum of the 16th of March 2014, as well as the military intervention in the Crimean region, had support from the Russian Parliament. Due to this fact, the Russian government was met with disapproval from the international community because it had, according to Ukrainian and other governments, violated international law. Therefore, sanctions were imposed on Russia that included travel bans and asset freezing. What still remains a question to this day are the reasons behind Crimea's annexation. It might be that the Russian Federation acted quickly upon a possible "threat", Ukraine joining the EU and the NATO. This desperate move was

Compilation of images depicting the gas situation in Crimea

conducted in fear of NATO expanding, thus rendering Russia fearful about the military-naval bases it possesses in the region since the era of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Russian Federation would have to take the fact that it was facing a major strategic loss in serious consideration, should Ukraine join the Western Military Alliance. Another interpretation of the events would be that Russia wanted to "repatriate" former Soviet Union areas, hence the annexation. There is also a third version, as to why the Russian President, Vladimir Putin decided to incorporate Crimea in the Russian territory. As mentioned before, Crimea is

comprised of an ethnic Russian majority of citizens and therefore the Russian state proceeded with the annexation considering it a “liberation” of their own citizens.

European Union

The European Union has rendered the annexation illegal and does not recognize the Republic of Crimea, neither the region as a federal subject. In response to the Crimean Crisis, the EU has imposed restrictive measures since March 2014. Specifically, besides travel bans and economic asset freezing, the European Union suspended bilateral EU-Russian Federation meetings and also ended the negotiations concerning Russia’s entry in the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and the International Energy Agency (IEA). Moreover, since June 2014 the G8 group has been “reduced” to the G7 group that does no longer include Russia. However, sanctions on behalf of the EU were not only imposed on the Russian Federation, but also on the city of Sevastopol and the Republic of Crimea. These sanctions include a full ban of investment in the region and import bans. Those restrictive measures were settled to be in force until the 23rd of June 2017, but were prolonged for another six months.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1954	Transfer of Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.
1995	Limitation of Crimea’s autonomous status by the Ukrainian authorities.
21 st November 2013	The suspension of the signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU.
22 nd February 2014	The flee of President Yanukovich.
23 rd February 2014	Election of a new interim government.
25 th February 2014	Unofficial election of Alexei Chalyy, as Sevastopol’s mayor
26 th February 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call by the SBU chief for monitoring of the region by the

	<p>UN.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The invasion and march to the city of Sevastapol by Russian troops
27 th February 2014	Replacement of the former Crimean Prime Minister with Sergey Aksyonov.
1 st March 2014	Authorization of the actions of the Russian government by the Federation Council.
15 th March 2014	Security Council resolution on the topic is vetoed by the Russian Federation.
16 th March 2014	A referendum took place in the Crimean territory, which indicated that the majority of the residents of the peninsula voted for the incorporation of the area into the Russian Federation.
17 th March 2014	The first round of sanctions on the Russian Federation by the European Union and the United States were introduced.
21 st March 2014	Ratification of the Accession Treaty by the Russian Federation.
27 th March 2014	Adoption of the UNGA resolution number 68/262 on the Recognition of the Republic of Crimea

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Since the Crimean Crisis is still considered to be a recent event in the course of modern history, the United Nations' involvement- although immediate- was mild.

A non-binding resolution was drafted in the General Assembly Forum regarding the recognition of the Crimean Republic as a part of the Russian Federation. The only countries that opposed the Resolution 68/262 were the Russian Federation, Afghanistan, Cuba, Kyrgyzstan and Nicaragua.

On the 15th of March 2014, the United Nations' Security Council debated on a US-sponsored resolution concerning the territorial integrity of Ukraine, that was eventually vetoed by the Russian Federation.

As far as the referendum is concerned the United Nations General Assembly rendered it illegal after a resolution with the title “The territorial integrity of Ukraine” passed on 27 March 2014.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS

The issue of the Crimean Crisis has not only affected the major countries involved, but also the stability of the Euro-Atlantic States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which has attempted to resolve the issue along with the European Union. The Ukrainian-Crimean crisis could cause long-term disputes and conflict and therefore, NATO’s Secretary General did not just call for ceasefire in the region by calling the Russian Federation, which hypothetically had considerable influence over the separatist rebels, to put an end to this situation of violence. Despite the fact that Russia’s government denied any involvement with the rebels and the general escalation of violence in the region, NATO’s Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, proceeded and in a further future comment stated that the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation by the EU should not be removed; This triggered Russia into replying that NATO’s resolute policy against the Russian Federation could have consequences for the Organization.

Despite these attempts, not any considerable progress has been made in resolving the issue leaving the international community with a blunt violation of international law, and instability, along with halting economic and political progress within Crimea.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

This topic needs to be addressed from a political perspective, thus a possible solution would be to promote intergovernmental dialogue and negotiations involving the affected countries. Since it is an issue of multiple aspects and sides, it is **essential** that both alliances create resolutions that will provide with effective, beneficial and constructive proposals. There will certainly not be the same approach on the topic by both alliances, however both sides should find a middle ground when creating resolutions, in order to be able to have their resolution accepted by the opposing alliance. It is important to bear in mind at this point that different Member States have varying degrees of interaction with and dependency on Russia and the EU, possibly enabling greater compromise.

That said, politically it becomes crucial that Crimea's referendum and large Russian population are taken into consideration; Through negotiations, the two governments could try and find a middle ground. That would include concepts such as the introduction of the Russian language as an official language and eased access to Russian visas for Crimean citizens. Another solution could be to abide by the result of the International Court of Justice over case of the Annexation of Crimea. Moreover, resolutions drafted on this topic also need to address not just the political, but also the economic and humanitarian aspect of the problem considering the sanctions already imposed on Russia and Crimea. In particular, the the international community must negotiate about whether and how to provide assistance to Crimea, whose economy and political progress are at great risk, due to uncertainty, isolation, and high prices. Moreover, Russia might need to ensure that if Crimea were to be part of Russia, Russia would not adopt an expansionary policy towards the rest of Ukraine and the bordering states; this would decrease tensions in the relations of the NATO and Russia, and Russia and the EU.

As far the economic aspect is concerned, discussions about the reasonable exploitation of the region's natural resources by both sides and the enhancement of trade between the states is imperative, so as for both "enmeshed" parties to establish friendly ties. Lastly, I would highly encourage all delegates to use their own ideas and develop their thinking perspective, by not using only the aforementioned solutions, so as for the debate to be fruitful and bold.

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