



General Assembly First Committee Topic Background Guide  
***Topic 1: Strengthening Security and Cooperation in Europe***<sup>1</sup>

18 August 2014

According to Chapter I, Article I of the United Nations (UN) Charter, the purpose of the UN is to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian.<sup>2</sup>

As the General Assembly (GA) subcommittee charged with security issues, the General Assembly First Committee (GA-1) considers ways to strengthen international security and cooperation. Thus a frequent topic is how the three goals listed above fit together in particular regions.

The European continent has relatively high levels of human and national security. On average adult mortality rates and life expectancies, as rough indicators, are higher than regions such as Africa, the Middle-East, and Asia, and are only matched by those in North America.<sup>3</sup> European states are also, as a rough measure of national security, more stable (i.e. less likely to become failed states) than every region on average, except North America.<sup>4</sup>

Still, since the end of the Cold War, conflicts between Russia and states that seceded from Russia have represented a significant security concern in the region. As Jeffrey Mankoff, Deputy Director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations, notes:

Russia's invasion of [Crimea] is at once a replay and an escalation of tactics that the Kremlin has used for the past two decades to maintain its influence across the domains of the former Soviet Union. Since the early 1990s, Russia has either directly supported or contributed to the emergence of four breakaway ethnic regions in Eurasia: Transnistria, a self-declared state in Moldova on a strip of land between the Dniester River and Ukraine; Abkhazia, on Georgia's Black Sea coast; South Ossetia, in northern Georgia; and, to a lesser degree, Nagorno-Karabakh, a landlocked mountainous region in southwestern Azerbaijan that declared its independence under Armenian protection following a brutal civil war. Moscow's meddling has created so-called frozen conflicts in these states, in which the splinter territories remain beyond the control of the central governments and the local de facto authorities enjoy Russian protection and influence.

According to Mankoff, the key to these disputes have been Russian fears of increased EU and US influence over these states. Thus, from this view, while Russia often states that it seeks to protect the rights of minorities in former Soviet Republics, it actually intervenes when it believes that its influence is waning in favor of the West. The most recent consequence of Russia's actions has been Russia's annexation of Crimea (diverging from its strategy of merely supporting secession in the past)<sup>5</sup> and a crisis in Ukraine, where a conflict has emerged between the Ukrainian central government, and secessionist ethnic Russian groups in the east.

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<sup>1</sup> This background guide was written by Karen Ruth Adams, Nicholas Potratz, and Eric Hines. Copyright 2014 by Karen Ruth Adams, Nicholas Potratz, and Eric Hines.

<sup>2</sup> "Charter of the United Nations," June 21, 1946, available at <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>

<sup>3</sup> See WHO, "Global Health Observatory Map Gallery," 2014, available at <http://gamapserver.who.int/mapLibrary/app/searchResults.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> "Failed States," *Foreign Policy*, 24 June 2013 [statistics from 2012], [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/24/2013\\_failed\\_states\\_interactive\\_map](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/24/2013_failed_states_interactive_map).

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Mankoff, "Russia's Latest Land Grab," *Foreign Affairs* 93:3 (May 2014).

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Many influential actors on the issue (Russia, the United States, Germany, and France) have agreed that they prefer an end to violence in Ukraine, though Russia has noted that it will use force to intervene if necessary to protect ethnic Russians in the state. Russia's statements to other states have focused on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine, such as increasing refugees, and their need for assistance during fighting. In response to Russia, in June 2014 European leaders (notably France and Germany) gave Russia an ultimatum to follow Ukrainian President Poroshenko's peace plan or face further sanctions.<sup>6</sup> With Russia's failure to meet their demands, European states, along with the US, have continued to place increasing sanctions on Russia.<sup>7</sup>

This background guide will focus on the emerging unrest in Ukraine, and the UN and international debate surrounding the crisis. How can UN Member States in the GA-1 cooperate to resolve the conflict in Ukraine and resultant interstate tensions before they further escalate and imperil international and human security?

### ***History and Current Events***

Europe is the second smallest continent in the world (the smallest being Australia). Europe spans from the Atlantic Ocean in the West to the Ural Mountains (about one-fifth of the way across Russia longitudinally). It also has a number of islands and archipelagoes, the largest being Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef Land, Svalbard, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, the British Isles, the Balearic Islands, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, Crete, and Cyprus.<sup>8</sup> Fifty-one European states hold UN membership in either the Western or Eastern European Groups.<sup>9</sup> The Holy See (Vatican City) and the European Union also hold Permanent Observer statuses as a non-member state and intergovernmental organization respectively. This gives them access to UN documentation and meetings, but means they are unable to vote on resolutions.<sup>10</sup>

Europe comprises a rich variety of cultures, languages, and religions. There are approximately 160 distinct cultural groups in Europe. Excluding the Jewish and Roma communities, major European cultural groups live in geographically concentrated areas. Most European languages fall into three major or three minor groups of languages. The three major groups are romance, found in western and Mediterranean Europe, and deriving from Latin (e.g. French, Spanish, Romanian, and Italian); Germanic in Central Europe and Scandinavia (e.g. German, Dutch, Norwegian, and Swedish); and Slavic in Eastern Europe (e.g. Polish, Czech, Russian, and Ukrainian). The three minor languages are modern Greek (used in Greece and Cyprus), a derivative of ancient Greek; the Baltic languages (e.g. Lithuanian and Latvian); and the Romany Language, used by the Roma. Christianity is the most practiced religion in Europe. The most widely practiced variations of Christianity are Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodox Christianity. Beyond Christianity, Judaism is practiced by a large number of Jewish immigrants throughout Europe, and Muslim communities can be found in the Balkans and Russia.<sup>11</sup>

To address the situation in Ukraine, it is important to understand the history of great power conflicts in the region, the influence of WWI and WWII on the region, the impact of the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union and

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<sup>6</sup> David Herszenhorn, "Russia and Others Confer on Ukraine Fighting, Which Goes on Despite Cease-Fire," *New York Times*, 29 June 2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/world/europe/ukraine.html>. Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, available at <http://csis.org/ukraine/index.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> "Ukraine crisis: US and EU boost sanctions on Russia," *BBC News*, 16 July 2014, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28338897>.

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Europe," available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/195686/Europe>.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, "United Nations Regional Groups of Member States," available at <http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml>.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, "About Permanent Observers," available at <http://www.un.org/en/members/aboutpermobservers.shtml>.

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Europe."

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rise of the US as the world's sole superpower, and recent alienation between the West (particularly the US and EU) and post-Soviet Russia over their relationships with former Soviet Satellites and USSR territories in Eastern Europe.

### *A Brief History of Conflict and Cooperation in Europe*

The era of the modern state began at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia, wherein European states agreed to respect the sovereignty of other European states. This allowed for the consolidation of modern nation-states like the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy.<sup>12</sup> The UK formed early with the gradual incorporation of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland into a centralized political system based in London.<sup>13</sup> In France, the *ancien régime* gradually decayed until the government finally consolidated and centralized the state as a result of the French Revolution in 1789. By contrast, Italy and Germany were established relatively recently with Italy unifying in 1861 and Germany in 1871.<sup>14</sup>

The rise of nation-states in Europe set off a drive for European expansion.<sup>15</sup> While colonialism existed prior to 1763 (e.g. in the Americas), a "new stage" of colonialism appeared after 1763 when various European states began to aggressively expand colonies in Africa and the Pacific. Eager to avoid conflict at home, Europe's great powers established a system known as the Concert of Europe to preserve the political and territorial status quo.<sup>16</sup> Colonies in Africa grew particularly during the "Scramble for Africa" following the great power consultations at the Berlin Conference in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> The disruption of the Concert of Europe system by the rise of Italy and Germany and their exclusion from the early scramble for colonies helped spark the First World War in 1914.<sup>18</sup>

World War I, although centered in Europe, was the first truly global war with all of the world's great powers eventually joining one of two alliances — the Allies or the Central Powers. The four-year conflict had major consequences for security and cooperation in Europe. More than 16 million soldiers and civilians died in the conflict, it resulted in the collapse of four European empires, and it established the League of Nations, the first collective security organization.<sup>19</sup> The war's high body count was sustained by a long stalemate between the two sides and the first major deployments of modern weaponry like machine guns, chemical weapons, airplanes, and tanks. The stalemate was finally broken when the United States joined the Allies in 1918 and the war ended with the surrender of the last Central Power, Germany, on November 11, 1918. The allies, France in particular, pushed for harsh reparations on Germany based on a "war guilt" clause in the Treaty of Versailles, which was the treaty that legally ended the conflict. The clause embarrassed Germany and provoked strong German nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s that was skillfully manipulated by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Karen Mingst and Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *Essentials of International Relations 5<sup>th</sup> edition* (New York: Norton, 2011), pp. 21-24.

<sup>13</sup> Daniele Canamari, *Comparative Politics 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 514.

<sup>14</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Italy," available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/297474/Italy>; Encyclopedia Britannica, "Germany," available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/231186/Germany>

<sup>15</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Colonialism, Western," available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/126237/colonialism-Western>.

<sup>16</sup> "Concert of Europe (European History)," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed August 19, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/195884/Concert-of-Europe>.

<sup>17</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Colonialism, Western. Saul David, "Slavery and the 'Scramble for Africa,'" *BBC History*, updated 17 February 2011, available at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/scramble\\_for\\_africa\\_article\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/scramble_for_africa_article_01.shtml).

<sup>18</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Germany."

<sup>19</sup> H. P. Willmott, *World War I*, 1st American ed (New York: DK Pub, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Henry Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations : Power, Institutions, and Ideas*, 3rd ed. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2011).

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After establishing a totalitarian regime in Germany in 1933, Hitler renounced the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. He withdrew Germany from the League of Nations in 1933, remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936, and annexed Austria in 1938 with little reaction from Europe's other major powers. Fearful of another conflict and struggling through the Great Depression, France and Britain adopted a policy of appeasement towards Germany that ultimately emboldened Hitler after France and Britain agreed to the German annexation of the Sudetenland at the Munich Conference in 1938.<sup>21</sup> After Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939 that included a secret protocol outlining the partition of Poland between the two powers, Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 beginning the European dimension of the most destructive war in world history.<sup>22</sup>

Eventually, all of the world's great powers again joined one of two alliances — the Axis or the Allies — between 1939 and 1941 as a result of Germany's invasion of Poland and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Initially, Italy and Japan were neutral in the conflict but ultimately agreed to form the Axis alliance with Germany. Although offered a place in the Axis, the concessions demanded by the Soviet Union led Germany to withdraw its offer and violate the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact by invading the Soviet Union in June 1941. This caused the Soviet Union to join France and Britain's alliance against Germany. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Dec. 1941, the United States and China, already engaged in a war with Japan since 1937, joined the Allies as well.

Eventually the five Allied powers defeated the Axis powers with Germany and Japan both agreeing to an unconditional surrender in 1945. To preserve the unity of the Allied nations, the Allies established the United Nations on October 24, 1945 with the five major Allied powers — the U.S., U.K., France, Soviet Union, and China — becoming permanent members of the UN's Security Council.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, the European alliance had begun to deteriorate even as the war was ending. The allies had agreed to partition Germany and Austria into zones of occupation with four-power control over the capitals of Berlin and Vienna and the division of other liberated or occupied states into Western and Soviet spheres of influence.<sup>24</sup> Following the Soviet's blockade of Berlin in 1949 and the Western Allies' response, known as the Berlin airlift, the alliance ended with Germany becoming divided into two separate countries and countries occupied by the Red Army openly becoming satellites of the Soviet Union.

The post-war division of Europe into East and West and the beginning of the Cold War between was firmly established by the creation of two new collective security alliances, the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. Until the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, the Cold War between NATO and the Warsaw Pact dominated questions of security and cooperation in Europe. Both sides developed other institutional relationships to promote economic and political cooperation within their respective alliances. Western efforts led to the formation of the European Union, while Eastern efforts created the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.

Largely due to the development of nuclear deterrence, neither side directly engaged the other during the Cold War, but it was not always peaceful for smaller states within the spheres of influence of the superpowers like Korea in 1950-1953, Hungary in 1956, Vietnam from 1955-1973, Chile in 1970, or Afghanistan from 1979-1989. John Lewis Gaddis explains why using several "rules of the superpower game" including respect for spheres of influence. Gaddis says, "Neither the Russians nor Americans officially admit to having such 'spheres,' but in fact much of the history of the Cold War can be written in terms of the efforts both have made to consolidate and extend them."<sup>25</sup> After the Cuban Missile Crisis almost led to nuclear war between the two Cold War-era superpowers, a number of mechanisms were introduced and arms reductions treaties developed to try to reduce tensions.

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<sup>21</sup> "Appeasement," *History*, accessed August 19, 2014, <http://www.history.co.uk/study-topics/history-of-ww2/appeasement>.

<sup>22</sup> "German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact - World War II," *HISTORY.com*, accessed August 19, 2014, <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/german-soviet-nonaggression-pact>.

<sup>23</sup> "History of the United Nations," accessed August 19, 2014, <http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/history/index.shtml>.

<sup>24</sup> Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations*.

<sup>25</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security* 10, no. 4 (Spring 1986): pg. 121, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538951>.

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The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism brought about significant changes to the security structure of Europe. The Soviet Union dissolved into 15 separate states and its economy tanked, while its satellite states quickly left the Warsaw Pact and sought membership in the Western military and economic alliances. NATO invited the first post-communist states to join NATO in 1999, with additional post-communist states joining in 2004 and 2009.<sup>26</sup> The EU welcomed most post-communist states in 2004.<sup>27</sup>

The expansion of NATO and the EU into the Soviet Union’s former sphere of influence (See Figure 1) has not gone unnoticed by Russia. According to Sean Kay,

The central problem with NATO enlargement was not so much the first round (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic)—but rather a consequent logic of an “open door” that came with it. ... the open door approach emphasized principles and idealism rather than hard geographic and military foundations. The process thus inevitably put NATO activity deep into Russia’s long-stated areas of vital interests (as Moscow saw it) and was, thus, eventually destabilizing..<sup>28</sup>



Figure 1: NATO goes east (Source: [Der Spiegel](#))

<sup>26</sup> “NATO - NATO Enlargement,” *NATO*, accessed August 19, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49212.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm).

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, “From 6 to 28 Members,” *Europa*, accessed August 19, 2014, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/from-6-to-28-members/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/from-6-to-28-members/index_en.htm).

<sup>28</sup> Kay, “Understanding—and Misunderstanding—NATO’s Role in the Ukraine Crisis.”



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Thomas De Waal, a journalist and expert on Russia, claims Russian President Vladimir Putin's greatest legacy will be "soft annexation," or the use of all of Russia's political, economic, and military tools short of invasion to exploit ethnic conflicts in countries that used to be in its sphere of influence to gain influence and prevent expansion of Western interests.<sup>29</sup> As tensions between Russia and the West rise over the conflict in Ukraine, "One of the most consequential questions now is whether Putin's gambit in Ukraine will follow the model of Russia's previous support for secessionist movements in former Soviet states (and particularly in the Black Sea region), or whether it represents a break with that approach."<sup>30</sup>

### *Ukrainian History and Current Events*

Ukraine, in its modern form, has only existed as an independent unified state for about 25 years. For centuries, Ukraine was a divided territory with ever shifting borders under the control of larger empires and states. Most recently, Ukraine constituted a dependent territory of the Soviet Union. The modern borders of Ukraine were established at the end of World War II, when Eastern Poland was annexed by the Soviet Union as Western Ukraine. With the addition of new citizens following annexation, Stalin became particularly paranoid about opposition in Ukraine and used tactics of terror (e.g. purges, staged trials, Siberian concentration camps, and the killing of opponents, real or imagined) to gain totalitarian control over the area, oust Western influence, and push collectivization and industrialization. This was followed by desalinization under Khrushchev, who took particular interest in Ukraine because he had previously been head of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which included the transfer of the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine from Russia.<sup>31</sup>

While movements such as the Ukrainian People's Army (UPA) opposed Soviet control beginning under Stalin, it was not until 1986, when the Soviet Union began the processes of Perestroika (economic and political restructuring) and Glasnost (political opening), that an independent Ukrainian state became possible. From 1986-89, Mikhail Gorbachev's new policies contributed to growing national sentiment in Ukraine. This, in turn, facilitated protests and movements for Ukrainian independence. Despite resistance and propaganda campaigns by the Soviets and the Ukrainian Communist Party, support for independence grew amongst Ukrainians and within Ukraine's parliament. In December 1991, Ukraine held a referendum and voted overwhelmingly to secede from the Soviet Union, though it did sign a treaty to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with Russia and Belarus.<sup>32</sup>

Some initially saw Ukraine as the most likely former Soviet Republic to integrate with the West. In the following decades, however, it began to develop economic and political problems that made this difficult. Ukraine did consolidate its independence and develop its state structure (e.g. creating a military and building infrastructure), normalize relations with its neighbors, make initial inroads towards democratization, and establish itself as a member of the international community with "good standing." These were accompanied, however, by domestic and foreign problems. On the domestic side, Ukraine's dependence on oil exports, declines in trade with former Soviet Republics, and loss of subsidized pricing on energy harmed economic growth and stability for the state. In foreign policy, Ukraine asserted that it was a "European state," as opposed to a "Eurasian state," and perceived the CIS as a loose organization to ensure a peaceful separation of the former Soviet Republics. By contrast, Russia considered the CIS to be the USSR's successor, which would keep the states tightly integrated, and allow them to resist Western intervention.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Alexander Jackson, "Soft Annexation of Abkhazia Is the Greatest Legacy of Putin to His Successor": Interview with Thomas de Waal Expert on Russia and Caucasus," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Summer 2008, [http://cria-online.org/4\\_7.html](http://cria-online.org/4_7.html).

<sup>30</sup> Uri Friedman, "Putin's Playbook: The Strategy Behind Russia's Takeover of Crimea," *The Atlantic*, March 2, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/03/putins-playbook-the-strategy-behind-russias-takeover-of-crimea/284154/>.

<sup>31</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ukraine," available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/612921/Ukraine>. See also Andrew Higgins, "A Battle in Ukraine Echoes Through the Decades," *New York Times*, 26 June 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/27/world/europe/world-war-i-battle-in-ukraine-echoes-through-the-decades.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ukraine."

<sup>33</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ukraine."

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Ukraine's economy grew steadily in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, but still suffered from political turmoil. Ukrainian leaders improved relations with the West (e.g. joining NATO's partnership for peace and fostering better relations with the EU), but tensions resulted as many wanted to retain affiliation with Russia and the CIS. Tensions also began to emerge between Ukraine and Russia. Russia contended that the Ukrainian government was treating ethnic Russians in Ukraine poorly. Ukraine began to suspect that Russia had expansionist hopes for Crimea.

Political tensions first peaked during the 2004 Presidential election. Viktor Yushchenko, a pro-Western economic reformer who served as Prime Minister from 1999-2001 and pushed for closer relations with NATO and the EU, opposed the current PM (2002-2004), Viktor Yanukovich, known for his connections to Russian President Vladimir Putin. After the initial results of the elections showed Yanukovich as the winner, supporters of Yushchenko (mostly ethnic Ukrainians in western Ukraine) claimed that the results were fraudulent. Millions of Yushchenko's supporters led massive protests against the election results that became known as the "Orange Revolution," because protesters wore orange (Yushchenko's campaign color). Eastern Ukrainians (comprised of large numbers of ethnic Russians) threatened to secede if the elections were overturned. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Supreme Court annulled the results and declared Yushchenko the Ukrainian president. No secession occurred.<sup>34</sup>

In the 2010 election, Yushchenko received only 5% of the vote, while Yanukovich gained 35% of the vote, and Yulia Tymoshenko (PM during Yushchenko's presidency and a leader of the Orange Revolution) garnered 25% of the vote. Yanukovich subsequently overtook Tymoshenko in a runoff election. Tymoshenko protested the results, claiming the results fraudulent, though external observers declared the results fair. Under Yanukovich, Ukraine began to lean towards Moscow. For instance, it extended the lease of a port in Sevastopol to Russia, set to expire in 2017, until 2042. Ukraine also formally ended its pursuit of NATO membership in June 2010. This lurch toward Moscow coincided with efforts to repress political opposition. In 2011 and 2012 respectively, Tymoshenko and her interior minister, Yuri Lutsenko, were convicted of abuse of power related to a 2009 natural gas deal with Russia. Tymoshenko received 10 years in prison and Lutsenko was given four years in prison. Most observers claimed that the convictions had political motivations, initiated by Yanukovich to suppress the opposition.<sup>35</sup>

In November 2013, Yanukovich declined to accede to an Affiliation Agreement and a Deep Comprehensive Trade Agreement with the EU. While the EU expressed disappointment, Russia welcomed the decision as an indication of Ukraine's desire to build trade and economic cooperation with Russia.<sup>36</sup> In response, millions of western Ukrainians began another protest against the rejection of the agreements with the EU.<sup>37</sup> Protests escalated as Yanukovich defied protesters by signing a deal with Russia in December 2013, in which Russia promised Ukraine \$15 billion in aid and agreed to decrease natural gas prices to one-third of their cost.<sup>38</sup>

The crisis escalated when Yanukovich and Members of Parliament from his party passed legislation that allowed the state to fine or detain individuals for protesting, such as using "unauthorized... tents, stages or amplifiers in public places."<sup>39</sup> In February 2014, police killed a number of protesters in an effort to quell the uprising. In mid-February, protesters abandoned government offices over which they had gained control due to a settlement between the government and protesters that would hold early presidential elections and return the Ukrainian Constitution to its 2004 form (in which the president's powers would be greatly reduced). Some of the protesters, however, refused

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<sup>34</sup> Adrian Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84 no. 2, (March/April 2005). Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ukraine."

<sup>35</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ukraine."

<sup>36</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

<sup>37</sup> "Ukraine in Maps: How the Crisis Spread," *BBC News*, 8 May 2014, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27308526>.

<sup>38</sup> "Ukraine Crisis Timeline," *BBC News*, last updated 5 July 2014, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>.

<sup>39</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

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to accept the agreement, stating that they would only end their protests when Yanukovich agreed to step down. By the end of February, the Ukrainian parliament had used constitutional provisions to remove Yanukovich from office. After fleeing to eastern Ukraine (some argue he fled to Russia), Yanukovich referred to his removal as a coup. Meanwhile the parliament agreed to hold elections on May 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>40</sup>

As unrest in western Ukraine subsided, protests erupted in eastern Ukraine in response to the removal of Yanukovich, where ethnic Russian Ukrainians decried the removal as another act against the Russian minority's interests. In Crimea, unmarked militia's (later confirmed as Russian military<sup>41</sup>) occupied key buildings, such as a military airport in Sevastopol. With Russian support, the Crimean regional parliament held a referendum in March, with the results indicating that 97% of Crimeans desired to secede from Ukraine and join Russia (though some claim only 50-60% of Crimeans supported secession). In response to the proposed referendum and its implementation, Ukraine called the referendum "illegitimate" under the Ukrainian Constitution, withdrew from the CIS, and signed an association agreement with the EU. Meanwhile, the US and EU levied sanctions against Russian leaders and oligarchs that provided financial backing to Russian leaders.<sup>42</sup>

Protests again emerged in eastern Ukraine (e.g. in Donetsk, Kharkov, Lugansk, and Odessa), many of which called for further referendums for the eastern regions to secede from Ukraine and join Russia, or for Ukraine to move to a federal system that would give greater autonomy to regions and declare Russian as an official language. In April 2014, pro-Russian protesters stormed government offices in eastern Ukraine. In Donetsk, separatists declared the region's independence from Ukraine and called on Russia to send peacekeepers.<sup>43</sup> This was followed by an offer of amnesty by the Ukrainian government to pro-Russian protesters. Despite this offer, pro-Russian forces overtook several Ukrainian military forces, and began to seize weapons. The Ukrainian government responded with an "antiterrorist" operation to regain control, although the effort initially struggled.<sup>44</sup> On 30 May, the government announced the official continuation of the anti-terrorism effort.<sup>45</sup>

On 7 June 2014, the Ukrainian government inaugurated Petro Peshenko as the new President of Ukraine. On 20 June, Peshenko announced a unilateral weeklong cease-fire aimed at halting the violence in the state. Rebels accepted the ceasefire on 23 June. Although Peshenko considered extending the ceasefire initially with a second agreement, Ukraine quickly changed course, and since July 1 the Ukrainian government has resumed its anti-terrorist operation. The Ukrainian military had made significant progress, recapturing most of the local regions in the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces including parts of Lushank itself. Since then, much of the operation has focused on Donetsk, where the Ukrainian government has begun to close in on remaining rebels.<sup>46</sup>

On July 17 2014, Malaysian Flight MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine, killing 298, mostly Dutch, civilians on board. In the weeks following the crash, the leader of the Ukrainian rebel Voltok Battalion admitted that separatists had access to an S-11 "BUK" surface to air launcher from Russia, the type of missile launcher used in the MH17 attack, supporting accusations from Kiev and the West that rebels, and possibly Russia, were involved. In

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<sup>40</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

<sup>41</sup> David Herszenhorn, "Away from Show of Diplomacy in Geneva, Putin Puts on Show of His Own," *New York Times*, 17 April 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/18/world/europe/russia-ukraine.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline." "Ukraine Crisis Timeline," and "Ukraine in Maps," *BBC News*.

<sup>43</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

<sup>44</sup> Alec Luhn, "'Anti-terrorist' campaign in peril as Kiev's writ fails to reach Ukraine's east," *The Guardian*, 14 April 2014, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/14/ukraine-antiterrorist-campaign-doomed-kiev-authority>. Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

<sup>45</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

<sup>46</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."



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early august, a team from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, headed by the Netherlands, began an investigation into the attack on the plane and the crash.<sup>47</sup>

As of August 2014, more than 1,500 people in Ukraine, including civilians, had died as a result of the conflict, and 50 people die every day on average. About 120,000 people in Ukraine were internally displaced in the state. According to the UN, the humanitarian situation has also worsened due to increasing clashes in rebel strongholds. This includes lack of access to sanitary water and electricity, attacks on journalists and the manipulation of the media, and damage to property and civilian infrastructure due to fighting in populated areas.<sup>48</sup>

The Russian response to the crisis has been mixed. At times, Russia has called for pro-Russian Ukrainians not to escalate the conflict by pressing for secession, but Russia has also tacitly or explicitly supported the rebels.<sup>49</sup> According to some, Russia's contradictory stance derives from Putin's role as attempting to appease conflicting Russian interests, as opposed to acting as a leader with absolute power. As Kimberly Marten, an expert on Russia from Columbia University, noted in an interview with the Council on Foreign Relations:

President Vladimir Putin is in many ways a "great balancer," trying to maintain the support of various factions in Russia... On the one hand, he cannot risk a "major Ukrainian war" that would draw new international sanctions and further dent Russia's economy. On the other, "he has to deal with Russian ethnic nationalists who are begging for blood" in Ukraine.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to multiple rounds of sanctions and political pressure (e.g. removing Russia from the G8 and ending NATO-Russian military and civilian cooperation<sup>51</sup>) on Russia, as noted, the US and Europe have called for separatists to abandon the revolution. The US has accused Russia of contriving the crisis in Ukraine and escalating conflict by sending paid operatives across the border and encouraging ethnic Russian separatists. In an effort to address the crisis, the US has threatened further sanctions if Russia does not convince separatists to discontinue their fight against the Ukrainian government.<sup>52</sup> European states, particularly influential members of the EU (France and Germany), have also placed and voted to expand sanctions on Russia. In June, the leaders threatened that they would increase sanctions if four demands remained unmet. These included: (1) The release of all hostages by Eastern Ukrainian pro-Russian rebel groups; (2) the return of control of three border checkpoints to the Ukrainian government; (3) Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring of the Ukrainian ceasefire; and (4) the initiation of discussions regarding President Poroshenko's 15-point peace plan.<sup>53</sup> After determining that

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<sup>47</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline. "Ukraine: UN alarmed by intensifying clashes, mounting casualties in country's east," *UN News Centre*, 8 August 2014, available at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48445#U-kV1\\_lDXIs](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48445#U-kV1_lDXIs).

<sup>48</sup> "Ukraine: UN alarmed by intensifying clashes," *UN News Centre*.

<sup>49</sup> Kieth Johnson, "Russia Cuts Gas to Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, 16 June 2014, available at [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/16/russia\\_cuts\\_gas\\_to\\_ukraine](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/16/russia_cuts_gas_to_ukraine).

<sup>50</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, "Putin's Balancing Act," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 3 July 2014, available at <http://www.cfr.org/ukraine/putins-balancing-act/p33206>. See also Neil MacFarquhar, "Putin Attempts to Straddle Divide He Helped Open in Ukraine," *New York Times*, 22 June 2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/23/world/europe/putin-attempts-to-straddle-a-divide-he-helped-to-pry-open-in-ukraine.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

<sup>52</sup> Michael Gordon and David Herszenhorn, "Kerry Turns Up Pressure on Russia Over Ukraine, Warning of New Sanctions," *New York Times*, 27 June 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/27/world/europe/kerry-warns-russia-over-ukraine-separatists.html>.

<sup>53</sup> David Herszenhorn, "Russia and Others Confer on Ukraine Fighting, Which Goes on Despite Cease-Fire," *New York Times*, 29 June 2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/world/europe/ukraine.html>.

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Russia had “failed to fulfill its promises,” the EU, in coordination with the US, increased sanctions in Mid-July to a “broad” array of areas not included in more narrow sanctions implemented earlier in the year.<sup>54</sup>

The West has also tried to reduce economic difficulties for Ukraine since it lost access to Russian loans and its energy costs, as a result of swelled natural gas prices, have increased. The IMF has agreed to provide Ukraine \$17 billion, which comes with the possibility of an additional \$15 billion from states in the West. The US also offered \$50 million intended for electoral reforms prior to the May elections.<sup>55</sup>

### ***Previous Committee Work on This Topic***

The Ukrainian crisis has become a major issue in the UN. Among many other members of the UN Secretariat, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has stated that

[he] remains deeply concerned over the situation in eastern Ukraine but he welcomes recent measures toward de-escalation of hostilities, including consultations among all sides and the extension of the reciprocal cease-fire for a further period of three days. The Secretary-General expects all sides to strictly adhere to their commitments and urges concerned parties to work toward a definitive cessation of violence through a political process.<sup>56</sup>

In April 2014, interim Ukrainian President Oleksandr Turchynov spoke to Ban Ki-Moon, requesting that the UN send peacekeeping forces to help with “antiterrorist operations.” Discourse between states in the Security Council (SC) (and the General Assembly), however, remains divisive on the issue, reflecting the competing interests of powerful states in the region, notably the US and Russia. Hence, it is unlikely that Ukraine will acquire a UN peacekeeping force, because it will require Security Council approval, which Russia can veto.<sup>57</sup>

As of August 2014, the SC has taken no action on Ukraine beyond condemning the downing of Flight MH17. Russia has called several meetings to discuss the issue, and Ukraine’s permanent representative to the UN has called SC Members to assist it in addressing the crisis,<sup>58</sup> but the SC has considered only one resolution on Ukraine broadly. The resolution would have required states to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and reject the Crimean referendum to join Russia because it was “not authorized” by Ukraine. It also would have obliged Ukraine to respect the rights of ethnic Russians, while noting its satisfaction with Ukrainian leaders’ recent efforts to do so.<sup>59</sup> Russia, however, vetoed the resolution. In later Security Council debates, Russia argued that other states “had not objectively evaluated” the situation in Ukraine. It noted that any agreement or ceasefire must respect the concerns of all parties, particularly ethnic Russians in southern and eastern Ukraine. Russia further states that the Ukrainian peace plan was unrealistic, as the crisis occurred directly as a result of the “illegal” coup against Yanukovich, and that Russian efforts at peace had only “been met with obstructionism from the West.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Ukraine crisis: US and EU boost sanctions on Russia,” *BBC News*.

<sup>55</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, “The Ukraine Crisis Timeline.”

<sup>56</sup> Ban Ki-Moon, “Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Ukraine,” UN Secretary-General, 27 June 2014, available at <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=7823>.

<sup>57</sup> Russia and Eurasia Program, “The Ukraine Crisis Timeline.”

<sup>58</sup> “UN Documents for Ukraine,” Security Council Report Website, available at <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/ukraine/>, accessed 10 August 2014.

<sup>59</sup> UN Security Council Draft Resolution 2014/189 (S/2014/189), available at [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2014\\_189.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_189.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Department of Public Information, “Peace Plan, Unilateral Ceasefire Offer Hope for Resolving Crisis in Ukraine, Political Affairs Official Tells Security Council,” 24 June 2014, available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2014/sc11448.doc.htm>.

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The mandate of the GA is limited by the existence and powers of the SC. The GA (specifically the First Committee) can address issues related to international peace and security only if they are not currently under consideration by the SC.<sup>61</sup> In principle, this provision would seem to enable the SC to dominate the UN's deliberations on security matters. In fact, however, disagreements between the five Permanent Members of the Security Council (P-5) often stymie action from the SC. Had the SC adopted the draft resolution, it would have decided to remain "seized of the matter," indicating that the GA could not address the issue.<sup>62</sup> Without SC agreement, though, it has not claimed its prerogative on Ukraine. Thus, disagreements between Russia and Western P-5 members on the Ukraine crisis make it possible for GA-1 to adopt non-binding resolutions (as opposed to binding SC resolutions) on the issue.

In fact, due to SC paralysis on the issue, the majority of UN Member States (through the GA) have criticized Russia's annexation of Ukraine. In March 2014, following the failure of the SC resolution, the GA adopted Resolution 68/262 (A/RES/68/262), in which the General Assembly "[a]ffirm[ed] its commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders," and requested that states avoid "inflammatory rhetoric" that might increase tensions in the region.<sup>63</sup> Of those attending the session, only 11 opposed the resolution, while 100 voted in favor and 56 abstained.<sup>64</sup> Still, the GA resolution primarily focuses on denouncing the Russian annexation. The UN General Assembly and Security Council have done little to address the emerging crisis and encourage a peaceful resolution to Ukrainian violence.

### **Conclusion**

Emerging domestic conflicts within Ukraine and between interested states at the international level could threaten the stability of Ukraine and the European region. What can the GA-1 do to encourage peaceful resolution of these conflicts?

In researching your country's position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- Is your country in the European Region? If so, what are its security concerns, and what is its perspective on the situation in Ukraine? What is its level of development, and how does this affect national and human security in the country? How are other countries helping or hindering its progress?
- If your country is not a member of the region, what are its security concerns, and what is its perspective on the unrest? Has it historically contributed to or detracted from security, development, and human rights in the region or in the country? What allies, trading partners, and other interests does your country currently have in the region or in Ukraine, and what has it done to protect them?
- Which aspects of the conflict are most pressing, and how should they be addressed?
- How can your country in particular and the UN in general contribute to the resolution of these conflicts? In particular, how can the GA ensure the security of both the Ukrainian state and ethnic-Russians in eastern Ukraine? Can the GA find a resolution that satisfies eastern both Ukrainians/Russia and Kiev/Western states? Should states consider Ukraine as part of Russia's "sphere of influence? Or should Ukraine have autonomy in its alliances, such as building ties with NATO?
- Should the GA endorse efforts to mediate the conflicts? If so, which states or international organizations should take the lead?

### **Recommended Reading**

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<sup>61</sup> United Nations, "Charter of the United Nations," Chapter IV, Article 12.

<sup>62</sup> UN Security Council Draft Resolution 2014/189 (S/2014/189).

<sup>63</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 (A/RES/68/262), available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/262](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/262).

<sup>64</sup> Department of Public Information, "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling Upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region," *United Nations*, 27 March 2014, available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2014/ga1493.doc.htm>.

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Center for Strategic International Studies. “The Ukraine Crisis Timeline.” Available at <http://csis.org/ukraine/index.htm>.

This page features a detailed timeline of events throughout the Ukraine crisis. Use it to advance your understanding of past actions and key issues related to the crisis. Also see the more brief overview from BBC News, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>.

Department of Public Information. “General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling Upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region.” United Nations, 27 March 2014. Available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2014/ga11493.doc.htm>

This news article discusses the resolution passed by the General Assembly on the territorial integrity of the Crimean region of Ukraine, and the denunciation of Russia’s annexation of the region.

Gwertzman, Bernard. “Putin’s Balancing Act.” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 3 July 2014. Available at [http://www.cfr.org/ukraine/putins-balancing-act/p33206?cid=rss-analysisbriefbackgroundundersexp-putin%E2%80%99s\\_balancing\\_act-070314](http://www.cfr.org/ukraine/putins-balancing-act/p33206?cid=rss-analysisbriefbackgroundundersexp-putin%E2%80%99s_balancing_act-070314).

This article discusses the domestic pressures in Russia that some argue have guided its policies towards Ukraine and the need for dialogue between the Russian and Ukrainian governments.

Kay, Sean. “Understanding—and Misunderstanding—NATO’s Role in the Ukraine Crisis.” <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/understanding%E2%80%94misunderstanding%E2%80%94nato%E2%80%99s-role-the-ukraine-10375>.

In this article, Sean Kay, Political Science Professor at Ohio Wesleyan University discusses how NATO’s “open door” policy and its enlargement have affected Western relations with Russia. In particular, it notes how these policies may have influenced, and continue to influence, the situation in Ukraine.

New York Times. “Times Topic: Ukraine.” Available at <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/ukraine/index.html>.

This page from the New York Times provides a brief overview of the current status of Ukraine at the top. Below, it features a chronological list of events in Ukraine, and recent news stories related to the state.

“Ukraine: UN alarmed by intensifying clashes, mounting casualties in country’s east.” *UN News Centre*, 8 August 2014. Available at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48445#.U-kV1\\_lXIIs](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48445#.U-kV1_lXIIs).

This article from UN News provides an overview of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, as well as remarks from UN officials regarding the situation and emerging concerns.

“Ukraine in Maps: How the Crisis Spread.” *BBC News*, 8 May 2014. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27308526>.

This BBC page features discussion of some of the events included in the above guide and recommended timeline readings, but also includes helpful illustrations regarding the history of Ukrainian politics and the Ukrainian crisis.