



The situation in Ukraine

United Nations Security Council



Shattered Vows: Tracing the Devastation Caused by
Violating Human Rights



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Introduction

The current situation in eastern Ukraine is one of many. It is an interlacement of classical complaints, regional disputes, geopolitical interests, and economic profits, tracing back to the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The conflict was incited again in 2014 when the Ukrainian government decided not to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, and mass protests known as the Euromaidan commenced. Protesters demanded the impeachment of President Yanukovich as well as the signing of the deal. The clear rebellion against the former SSR caused great dissatisfaction in the Russian government and resulted in the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been under great public scrutiny since February 2022 but has slowly left the main stage of international politics after the escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in October 2023. Ukraine, which has a military that is only a fraction of that of Russia, has been defending itself with struggle and loss. Divided today, many countries in Eastern Europe, Ukraine included, are not adequately equipped to fight such an invasion. This has resulted in the currently unstable situation observed in Ukraine, as military strength is grossly imbalanced, especially considering Russia's permanent status in the UN and its being a nuclear state.

Currently evolving into a modern-day trench war based on the exhaustion of the enemy, offering minimal perspective on improvement or solution, the conflict has been mostly relocated to the eastern Donbas region but remains a day-to-day threat to international security, with the ever-present threat of escalation.



Definition of Key Terms

Annexation

The illegitimate acquisition of territory by appropriation and/or other forceful means.

Armed Conflict

A conflict between two parties that involves weaponry. These conflicts are usually disastrous regarding material damage and impact on civilians. In an armed conflict, military forces get involved, and oftentimes other countries and alliances can get involved as well by providing either party with economic or military support.

Economic Depression

An economic depression is when the economy comes to a standstill. The economy works in a circular flow when consumers buy goods and services from businesses, corporations, and organisations, which can provide jobs to citizens. With jobs, citizens have the financial ability to consume goods and services. When this chain is broken by unemployment, the economy can crash as there is less or no money flowing through it.

Euromaidan

A wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine began on November 21, 2013, with large protests in Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv. The protests were sparked by President Viktor Yanukovich's sudden decision not to sign the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement, instead choosing closer ties to Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union. Ukraine's parliament had overwhelmingly approved of finalizing the agreement with the EU, but Russia had put pressure on Ukraine to reject it.

Humanitarian Aid

Any sort of help or aid that is deployed to improve the lives of people in a certain area that is low on resources is classified as humanitarian aid. Other examples include the supply of food, water, clothes, and medical help. Humanitarian aid is often provided by international



organisations or in multilateral cooperation between countries that are not involved in active combat but want to show support to either party involved in the conflict.

Infringement of Rights:

Denial or partial delivery of human rights from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are usually demeaning and depressing. Denial of rights is deemed a crime against humanity, and those who commit it can face charges in court. Examples are rape of any kind, denial of healthcare, severe bodily injury due to discrimination, or any other non-viable reason.

The Law of War:

The law of war, which is governed by international law, establishes the rights of every party engaged in an armed conflict. Examples include refraining from attacking civilians. History has even established prohibitions against engaging in armed conflict between dusk and dawn, attacking people who are unable to defend themselves (such as soldiers who are already injured, civilians, children, or medical personnel), using torture, and engaging in other inhumane acts or violations of humanity like rape or slaughter.

Sovereignty:

Sovereignty is the principle that guarantees countries the right to control what happens within their borders and prohibits them from meddling in another country's domestic affairs.

Territorial Dispute:

When two or more parties disagree on the division and equality of land or area between certain parties, There are numerous other territorial disputes currently; notable ones are between India and Pakistan, Russia and Kazakhstan, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and Russia and Ukraine. Turkey and Greece also have a territorial dispute and occupy Europe's last divided capital, Nicosia, Cyprus.



War Crimes:

Even in warfare, there are laws (international law) that set guidelines for conduct during warfare. These laws especially protect civilians and uninvolved, unarmed parties. Violations of these laws are called war crimes. Those committing war crimes can be prosecuted for them under the international law of war.



General Overview

Historical context and background (1945-2015)

The conflict in Ukraine is extensive and varied, involving numerous groups and interests. To gain a better understanding of how the situation came to be where it is today, one should first learn about the history of Ukraine, Russia, the United Nations, and NATO.

1945: end of WWII and formation of the UN

The conclusion of World War II marked a pivotal moment in global history. It divided modern history into before and after, but most of all, it exposed the need for a new international order to prevent future conflicts. In 1945, Allied leaders, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin, convened to discuss post-war arrangements and, in contrast to the previously failed League of Nations, lifted on the momentum of the freshly concluded mass destruction to form an international multilateral organisation that would become known as the United Nations.

One key decision was the creation of the UN Charter. This document, drafted during the San Francisco Conference in 1945, outlined the UN's principles and functions and provided the foundation for the working of the UN. The Charter seeks to maintain peace by fostering diplomatic dialogue, promoting human rights, and discouraging aggression. It reflects a commitment to international collaboration, recognizing the necessity of collective efforts in addressing global challenges.

With the creation of the UN came the establishment of its main structure and most powerful organs, including its most influential: the Security Council. Designed with a structure that included permanent members with veto power, it reflected the desire for equal representation among major powers and aimed to prevent any single nation from dominating the organization while encouraging collaboration on matters of international security.

The principles of the United Nations underscored a collective aspiration to learn from the mistakes made in the past with the League of Nations and aimed to always address the root causes of conflict. They represented a commitment to multilateralism and diplomacy as the preferred means of resolving disputes, with an emphasis on inclusive decision-making



processes. In a time of rebuilding after chaos, the establishment of the UN served as a testament to the global community's determination to build a more stable and cooperative world order after the devastation of World War II. However, over eight decades later, many of the core powers, such as the P5 veto, are questioned by many.

1949: NATO

After the establishment of the UN, the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 marked a significant development in the post-World War II geopolitical landscape. Driven by the need for collective security and a counterbalance to the perceived threat posed by the Soviet Union after the war, western countries united in the signing of a military treaty to ensure the safety of all members while also actively encouraging diplomatic relations and talks. NATO's organisational structure includes the North Atlantic Council (NAC), which consists of representatives from each member state, and the Military Committee, which is responsible for providing military advice.

As the Iron Curtain rose soon after the war, the division between Eastern and Western Europe became more than clear. This continued to expand peacefully until the Soviet blockade of West Berlin in 1948 underscored the need for a more robust collective defence strategy among Western nations. The creation of an organization like NATO proved to be almost inevitable.

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed by twelve founding members, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, and numerous other European countries. NATO was founded to provide a cohesive reaction to future Soviet attacks and prevent communism from spreading further throughout Europe. An important aspect of the organisation is the military branch, set up to uphold international peace through a credible collective defence mechanism, emphasizing the importance of military strength and political cohesion among its members.

2013-2014: Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea

When the then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, opted to abandon the European Association Agreement his government was drafting at that moment in cooperation with the European Union, he decided to intensify diplomatic relations and collaboration with the



Russian Federation. This sudden decision ignited a wave of widespread public discontent, as the majority of the Ukrainian people were in favour of a more democratic regime and wanted a shift towards European integration after the Cold War, leading to protests and demonstrations across the country.

The Euromaidan protests gained momentum around the country they stimulated more and more Ukrainians to take the streets and make their voices heard. Meanwhile, in Moscow, Putin's administration watched these developments with growing concern, as they feared the Ukrainian shift towards Europe would be a geopolitical setback, considering the historical ties between the two. They were forced to watch their influence in the region quickly diminish and were eager to counter the growing Western influence in Ukraine.

Taking advantage of the chaos created by the protests, Russia decided to annex Crimea. This Ukrainian peninsula is of great strategic significance: its access to the Black Sea, and its safeguarding of the Russian Black Sea Fleet were important factors in this decision.

Current conflict (2022-present)

Invasion

After a Russian reinforcement of troops near the Ukrainian border, and sometime later a mobilization of troops at the border between Ukraine and Belarus in 2021, tensions rose to a new peak.

Later, a second period of tension build-up started when Russia called for a hold on all NATO activity in eastern Europe and around Ukraine and demanded a ban on former Soviet states from joining NATO. To back their demands, Putin threatened military action if any NATO member state took up their guns. This demand was one going completely against the open-door policy of the Treaty Organization.

When Russian troops were not relocated from the border after repeated efforts from French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in February of 2022, the outbreak of war was suddenly a considerable option. On the 21st of February Russian troops were moved into the Moscow-controlled regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as 'peacekeepers'

Eventually, on February 24th, Russian forces entered Ukrainian grounds around the whole Russo-Ukrainian border and marched up to Kyiv. Here, they were faced with much more resistance than expected, and after a month of combat, Russian forces retreated from the



capital. By September 2022, after heavy battles and the fall of many important landmarks like Mariupol and Zaporizha, all different fronts were brought back to an eastern and a southern front.

2022 Donbas elections

In September 2022 the Russian Federation announced that a referendum would be organized in the Donbas Region, in the eastern part of Ukraine. In this mostly pro-Russian area, consisting of the two self-declared peoples' republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, civilians were asked if they “approved of the Donetsk/Luhansk People’s Republic being incorporated into the Russian Federation with subject rights to the Russian Federation”. 99,23% and 98,42% of the voters in Donetsk and Luhansk, respectively, supported the incorporation of the region into the Russian Federation.

This Referendum and its outcome, although internationally criticized and unrecognized, presented a new phase of the conflict by uncovering the intentions of the Putin administration, and made for the conflict to be mainly concentrated in the East from that point onwards.

2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive

Since the 1st anniversary of the start of the war in February 2023, Ukrainian armed forces had been planning a counteroffensive, set to start as early as April 2023. Nevertheless, due to unfavourable weather conditions and delayed supply delivery, they were forced to push it back to June. By this, the Russian soldiers had been given the present of time: they now had the opportunity to prepare their forces for the offensive and make trenches, artillery positions, or even minefields. Consequently, when the offensive started in June 2023, Ukrainian forces were presented with a much stronger enemy than expected, and by the end of 2023, with winter slowing the troops down even more, none of the initial goals of the invasion was achieved: just over 370 km² of land were retaken, and the main purpose of the attacks, reaching the Sea of Azov in the south and hereby splitting Russian territory in half, was also not accomplished.

In 2024, amid winter, the conflict has come to a standstill, according to the Ukrainian forces, and a new stalemate has been reached.



Major Parties Involved

Belarus

A former USSR state, Belarus still is a major economically to Russia. The office of current President Lukashenko holds great diplomatic relations with President Putin of the Russian Federation, and has until today not failed to support him in their ‘military operation’.

European Union

The biggest alliance on the European mainland, the European Union, has every reason to worry about and involve themselves in this conflict. As the majority of the Union’s member states are NATO members, de-escalation is their main goal at the moment. But as diplomatic talks are a sensible topic to introduce at this stage of the conflict, though it has been attempted, the European Union has been supplying the Ukrainian forces with military supplies to be able to keep defending themselves against the Russian invaders.

NATO

With the conflict playing out relatively close to NATO territory, the organisation and its member states are heavily involved in the conflict, as they have more than enough reason to worry about a possible escalation and invasion of NATO territory. The treaty’s fourth article calls for a military reaction when "the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened". This is often translated into popular language as “an attack on one is an attack on all”, and it forces all members to react with military action when one is invaded.

Russian Federation

As the main aggressor in this conflict, the Russian Federation deployed missiles, drones, and ground troops to invade and occupy Ukrainian territories. Russia has broken many rules of war and allegedly also committed war crimes against Ukrainian civilians. They are heavily aided and enabled by countries such as Iran and Belarus. It is unsure why the Kremlin ordered the initial invasions, however, Russian propaganda media says that they are Ukraine’s salvation and that they are saving Ukraine. Russian media has banned the referral of the war as an ‘invasion’ and instead has encouraged people to call it salvation.



Finland

Finland is one of the countries sharing a direct border with Russia and is the most recent NATO member. With the eastern threat rising, the Finns were, together with Sweden, seeking to sign the North Atlantic Treaty as soon as possible. With this new membership, their position in the conflict has changed dramatically, as a possible Russian invasion of their territory would mean all of NATO will be mobilised under the agreements of the Treaty.

Ukraine

As the main victim of this conflict in population and territorial loss, Ukraine is heavily involved in this conflict. The administration of current President and former comedian Zelensky is on a constant mission for allies, munition and military support. This has been successful for a long time, but as the conflict in Israël and the Gaza Strip escalates, Ukraine is more and more anxious to lose support from military powerhouses like the US and the EU.

United States of America

As the most powerful economic and military state in the world, the USA involve itself in quite a lot of conflicts around the world, by either choosing a side on the diplomatic stage by voting in favour or against certain UN resolutions, or by actively supplying either conflicted party with military goods or personnel. In the Ukrainian conflict, they have, together with the EU, set up a constant supply chain of drones, rockets, tanks or missiles to be used in Ukraine.



Timeline of Events

1945	The UN is founded
1949	Founding of NATO
1991	The USSR collapses and Ukraine is declared independent
November 2013-February 2014	Civil unrest rises in Ukraine following the decision of the Ukrainian government to not sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement under pressure from the Russian Federation
2014	Russia annexes Crimea
24-02-2022	Russia officially invades Ukraine by crossing the eastern border
September 2022	A 'referendum' is organized in the Ukrainian Donbas region by Russia to annex the territory.
04-04-2023	Finland joins NATO
June 2023	A second Ukrainian counteroffensive starts



Previous attempts to solve the issue

Normandy format talks and Minsk agreements

The Normandy format is a group of states consisting of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine, that was created in 2014 to find a solution to the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine, which was already a matter with international attention at that time. Between 2014 and 2019 they met several times.

Sanctions and UN resolutions

The United Nations has debated and passed multiple resolutions in an attempt to resolve the issue. However, none of the solutions proposed has proved effective. As quite some resolutions have been passed, only the most relevant have been included in the 'useful documents' section of this Report.



Possible solutions

Increasing humanitarian aid

Increasing humanitarian aid is a crucial step towards moving the conflict closer to a resolution. As a result of less war-related poverty, humanitarian crises, and homelessness, Ukraine will be in a less dire situation and able to concentrate more on the actual conflict than the rapidly growing number of humanitarian emergencies in the nation.

NATO intervention

But, to avoid an extreme escalation of armed conflict and to prevent Russia from vetoing the resolution, the issue must be resolved carefully. Some examples of this include giving Ukraine a way to gain NATO protection while it is in the process of obtaining membership, and in the same resolution outlining some benefits for Russia. One such benefit could be the lifting of economic sanctions, which are having a detrimental effect on Russia.

An extreme solution would be to fully engage NATO in the conflict, with all (or most) of its member states taking up arms. The allies' massive forces will be sufficient to quickly tip the scales and will probably prove to be the winner of the war soon. NATO members, however, along with other nations, are reluctant to get involved out of fear of chemical warfare as well as the loss of troops, ammunition, and technology.



Useful documents

Treaties and charters

[North Atlantic treaty](#)

GA resolutions:

- [A/RES/74/17](#)

Addressed the issue of the militarization of Crimea and regions around it (Dec. 2019)

- [A/ES-11/L.1](#)

Commented on the aggression against Ukraine (passed 1 Mar. 2022)

As Russia is a P5 member with veto power and voted against all Security Council resolutions regarding the situation in Ukraine, none were passed.



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