

# research report 1

Overcoming obstacles to optimize our approach to human rights standards

Forum: The Security Council

Issue: The Situation in Ukraine

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## **I. Introduction**

Until recently, when young Europeans thought of war, it was often abstract and its consequences of war were theoretical matters. Indeed, the term “Long Peace” describes the time period without war between major powers after World War 2. Today, some international relations experts believe that the Russo-Ukrainian war marks the end of this era.

The conflict has flooded the media because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine; nevertheless, the conflict is one that has been occurring for years. With Western and Russian media reporting vastly different stories, public opinion is divided on how this dispute should be settled. The Cold War history between Russia and the West make this conflict run deep, and resolving it is daunting. Nevertheless, in this year's Security Council, we will seek to find solutions to resolve the ongoing conflict and to dismantle the tense relations between Russia and the West, in the best case even finding a way to initiate a ceasefire between all parties involved. If we fail, the war may escalate: foreign support for Ukraine may be recognized as an act of war; Russia could attack other former USSR states like Georgia; the conflict could even become nuclear. If we succeed, we might establish a template for resolving international conflict.

## **II. Key Terms**

### **A. Sanctions**

Sanctions are “punishments” imposed by countries on a different country often targeting their economy or the export of resources, in the case of Russia. Sanctions have been used extensively by European countries and the US in an attempt to weaken Russia. It is a strong political tool, which aims to weaken a specific country.

### **B. Referendums**

A Referendum is a direct vote by a certain electorate on a certain topic, often a political issue. Referendums were used extensively by Russia to justify their occupation of Ukrainian territories, most notably the territory of Crimea. Whether the actual results of these referendums are accurate is highly disputed, and many suggest that the actual number of votes is different.

### **C. Humanitarian Corridors**

Humanitarian corridors are temporary demilitarized zones, where humanitarian aid can pass through and provide the civilians in the war-torn areas with aid, or help evacuate citizens out of a certain area.

### **III. General Overview**

#### **A. Origin of the Russo-Ukraine War**

Russia and Ukraine share a long history, dating back to the Kievan Rus', a medieval political federation based in modern Russia, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004 and 2005 and the Maidan Protests in 2014 led to ties between member states becoming more heated. With the signing of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty and the Budapest Memorandum (1994), Ukraine hoped to secure its independence and territorial integrity. Russia wants to keep its former Soviet republic Ukraine under its sphere of influence, and the recent eastward expansion of NATO has posed a threat to this. Subsequently, Russia annexed the once Ukrainian peninsula Crimea in 2014 and started a war in the Donbas in Eastern Ukraine.

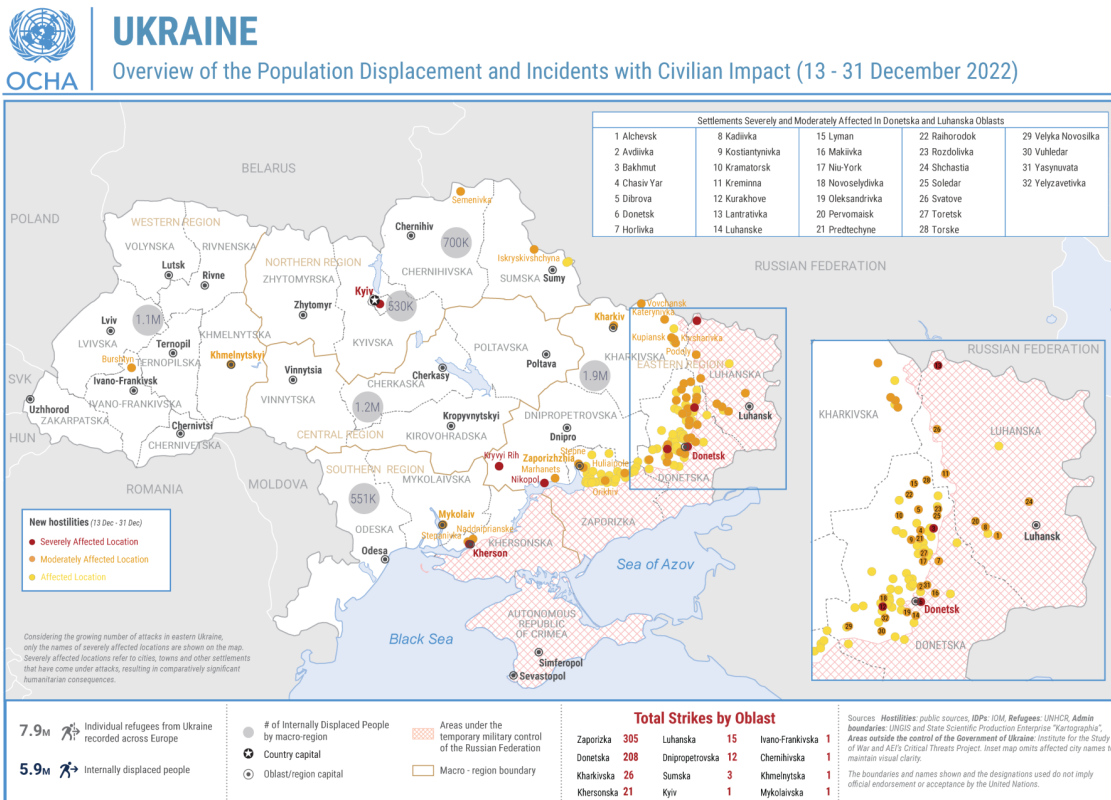
##### **1. Annexation of Crimea**

Following the rejected Association Plan with the EU, which was meant to promote cooperation with the EU, due to extensive pressure by the Russian government, former Ukrainian president Yanukovich faced heavy criticism by the Ukrainian population, and the subsequent Maidan protests led to his impeachment. This was detrimental to Russia because the following president Volodymyr Zelensky was far more pro-Europe than his predecessor. After the impeachment of Yanukovich, unmarked soldiers captured key strategic strongholds in Crimea and eventually had full control of the peninsula. Many suggest that these soldiers were Russian special forces and went against international law by violating Ukraine's territorial integrity. Vladimir Putin eventually justified this invasion by saying that this operation was in the best interest of the Crimean population, after organizing a controversial referendum in which the Crimean people decided to become part of Russia (96.7% of the Crimean population wanted to join Russia). The key geographical and strategic position of the major Crimean city Sevastopol, next to the Black Sea,

would be deemed vital for the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as it is the largest Russian marine base in the Black Sea area.

## B) Current Situation in Ukraine

With the imminent fall of Bakhmut looming in the next couple of days, Ukraine would lose a major city after months of fighting. However, the Russians have made little progress overall and both parties are at a stalemate. Much of the fighting by the Russians has been done by the private military corporation, the Wagner Group, who have also been accused of committing war crimes. Moreover, Ukraine has been preparing a counter offensive, which they plan to launch in the coming months, possibly pushing the Russians back significantly. With more than 300,000 casualties the war seems to have no end and could last for many more months if not years. The humanitarian situation has also worsened in the last months for people in conflict zones, although agreements regarding humanitarian corridors have been made recently to ensure that proper aid reaches the people in need and that civilians in affected regions have a safe way to exit said regions. Russia and Ukraine have not been able to come to terms in order to organize a possible ceasefire, which would be a vital step to help find a long term solution to the Russo-Ukraine War.



#### IV. Timeline of Key Events

18th Century	Poland is divided amongst Austria, Germany and Russia. Most of Ukraine becomes part of Russia, some is part of Austria. In the fight against the Osmanic Empire, Russia conquers southern Ukraine and Crimea. <sup>1</sup>
March 3, 1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Parts of today's Ukraine are deemed independent of Russia. <sup>2</sup>
1932-33	The Holodomor: Stalin's policy to take Ukraine's harvest and provide far too small rations for the farmers, causing a large-scale famine in regions where Ukraine is today. Scholars estimate that there were 3.5-4 million deaths resulting from this famine <sup>3</sup> . Whether this is a genocide or not continues to be debated. <sup>4</sup>
April 26, 1954,	A decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme, an office then occupied by a Ukrainian, orders the Soviet transferring of the Crimea Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. <sup>5</sup>
1991	Fall of the Soviet Union; Ukraine, including their new island Crimea, is independent of Russia. Ukraine suddenly comes into possession of a large stockpile of nuclear weapons.
1994	Budapest Memorandum: Ukraine gives up its nuclear weapons in return for a promise by Russia, the USA, and the United Kingdom "to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine." Weaker individual assurances were made by China and France. <sup>6</sup>
2014	The Maidan protests: Pro-western protests lead to the overthrow of the pro-russian government in Ukraine. Russia

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<sup>1</sup> "Russia's War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict." Russia's War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict | Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 15, 2023.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-war-ukraine-identity-history-and-conflict>.

<sup>2</sup> Bigg, Matthew Mpoke. "A Timeline of the Tensions between Russia and Ukraine." The New York Times. The New York Times, February 18, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/18/world/europe/russia-ukraine-timeline.html>. Accessed May 20, 2023

<sup>3</sup> David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Marples, David (30 November 2005). "The great famine debate goes on..." ExpressNews (University of Alberta), originally published in the Edmonton Journal. Archived from the original on 15 June 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Calamur, Krishnadev. "Crimea: A Gift to Ukraine Becomes a Political Flash Point." NPR. NPR, February 27, 2014. <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/02/27/283481587/crimea-a-gift-to-ukraine-becomes-a-political-flash-point>. Accessed May 5, 2023

<sup>6</sup> "On Assurances without Guarantees in a 'Shelved Document.'" "Антидот" і "детокс" від "Дня". Accessed May 7, 2023. <https://m.day.kyiv.ua/en/article/close/assurances-without-guarantees-shelved-document>.

claims that these protests have been incited and supported by western nations. The pro-western government installed after these protests goes on to sign the EU trade agreement introduced under the previous president.<sup>7</sup>

February 2014	Key government buildings in Crimea are taken over; Russia says these are civilians; the west claims that these are Russian agents in civilian uniforms. A referendum is held; with an overwhelming majority, citizens decide to join Russia. Western states accuse Russia of rigging the vote. Russia reasons that this was always Russian,, and it would therefore make sense for citizens to identify with Russia. <sup>8</sup>
2014 - 2015	Minsk accords: Germany, Russia, France, and Ukraine agree to a series of Peace agreements between separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.
2019	Volodymyr Zelensky is elected
February 21, 2022,	Russia officially recognizes the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic in Eastern Ukraine as independent states. <sup>9</sup>
February 24, 2022,	Russia launches an airstrike on major cities in Ukraine, starting the Russo-Ukrainian war.
January 5, 2023	Germany approves sending tanks to the Ukraine
February 20, 2023	President Biden visits Kiev in a symbolic surprise visit, assuring the continued support of the United States of America.

## V. Major Parties Involved

### A. Ukraine

Ukraine has developed between the eastern and western bloc since its independence in 1991 and is becoming a more liberal and diverse democracy. After fighting between the Ukrainian forces and separatists in eastern Ukraine since 2014, the situation in eastern Ukraine has escalated to a full-blown war with the bigger Russian Army going against the Ukrainian Army. As of June, Ukraine is trying to push Russia back in the southern areas of Ukraine, and

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<sup>7</sup> "Ukraine - The Maidan protest movement - Britannica." Accessed May 20, 2023.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Maidan-protest-movement>.

<sup>8</sup> Shuster, Simon. "Putin's Man in Crimea Sergei Aksyonov Is Ukraine's Worst Nightmare." Time. Time, March 10, 2014. <https://time.com/19097/putin-crimea-russia-ukraine-aksyonov/>. Accessed May 8, 2023

<sup>9</sup> "Russian Parliament Passes Bill on Recognition of Self-Proclaimed Donbass 'Republics.'" Xinhua. Accessed May 12, 2023. <https://english.news.cn/europe/20220215/ab6821835bf8414189ae114cf188b1b1/c.html>.

especially around the city of Kherson. However, Ukraine has lost key locations such as Mariupol and might lose Bakhmut as well. Their president, Volodymyr Zelensky, has proven to be vital and his calls for support and solidarity have demonstrated to be exceptionally effective.<sup>10</sup>

## **B. The Russian Federation**

Russia is the largest country in the world and is a democratic semi-presidential republic, although the government has become more authoritarian in the recent past. Russia has been the aggressor in the Russo-Ukraine War. Starting with the annexation of Crimea and incursion of Donbas, it escalated the conflict to the point of war. On February 24, 2022, Russian troops first entered Ukraine and as of June are pushing towards Kiev and have captured major areas in eastern Ukraine. Russia is also facing accusations of crimes against humanity and other war crimes, such as deliberate attacks against civilians. Due to poor planning and tactics, Russian troops have struggled to gain much territory in the first months of the war. Putin has claimed that Ukraine's leaders have built Ukraine on the negation of what unites them, and emphasized the help Ukraine has received from foreign nations.<sup>11</sup>

## **C. NATO**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has played a crucial role in the development of the war in Ukraine. Their eastward extension has agitated Russia, and after the election of Zelensky and his more pro-NATO stance, Russia feared the increasingly western ideology of Ukraine, deeming a future invasion of Ukraine much more difficult.<sup>12</sup> The United States is one of the major countries in NATO and has supplied Ukraine with weapons worth billions of euros. Following the beginning of the war, Norway and Sweden have applied to join NATO and might become members in the near future.

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<sup>10</sup> "Zelensky versus Putin: The Personality Factor in Russia's War on Ukraine." Wilson Center. Accessed May 11, 2023. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/zelensky-versus-putin-personality-factor-russias-war-ukraine>.

<sup>11</sup> Mankoff, Jeffrey. "Russia's War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict." Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep40567>. Accessed May 11, 2023

<sup>12</sup> "The Accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO." Warsaw Institute, March 29, 2021. <https://warsawinstitute.org/accession-poland-czech-republic-hungary-nato/>. Accessed May 20, 2023

#### **D. United States of America**

The United States of America is one of the biggest global superpowers and is key to the survival of Ukraine. The USA has a long history of feuding with Russia, considering their very different point of views. The USA signed the Budapest Memorandum in 1994 and are bound to assist Ukraine against Russia. Ukraine has relied on major weapon deliveries from the USA, which has helped Ukraine from not being overrun by Russia. The USA has one of the biggest militaries in the world and is currently increasing their presence in the Baltic Sea and Eastern Europe.

### **VI. Previous & Possible Solutions**

#### **A. Minsk agreements**

The Minsk agreements are a set of agreements crafted by the Organization for security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with Ukraine and Russia under the leadership of Germany and France.

The Minsk Protocol aimed to implement a ceasefire between Donetsk and Luhansk and Ukraine. This Protocol was a twelve point plan which included releasing POW, decentralizing power in Donetsk and Luhansk, implementing a permanent monitoring of the Russo-Ukrainian border, and adopting a program for the economic and structural recovery of the Donbass region.<sup>13</sup> This agreement was never fully adopted by either side and in 2015 the ceasefire collapsed,<sup>14</sup> an issue which Minsk II aimed to address. Minsk II had the same basic aims as the Minsk protocol, but was more specific.<sup>15</sup> For example in Minsk I, it is simply stated that there will be a bilateral ceasefire monitored by the OSCE. In Minsk II, an exact date and time is specifically mentioned, the distance between the border and different weapons that must

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<sup>13</sup> "Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe | OSCE." Accessed July 1, 2022.

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/a/123258.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> "Ukraine Forces Admit Loss of Donetsk Airport to Rebels." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, January 21, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/21/russia-ukraine-war-fighting-east>.

<sup>15</sup> "Minsk Agreement on Ukraine Crisis: Text in Full." The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, February 12, 2015. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11408266/Minsk-agreement-on-Ukraine-crisis-text-in-full.html>. Accessed May 13, 2022



be kept is specified; even the time frame for this and where exactly this border is are explicitly stated.

## **B. Possible solutions**

While direct assistance is sometimes the appropriate response, there are numerous non-governmental organizations already striving to mitigate the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis. Government aid plays a crucial role, yet supplementing these efforts with financial or logistical support can bolster the fight against Ukraine's humanitarian crisis.

Achieving enduring peace demands more than just a signed peace agreement; it requires elements such as economic interdependence. To establish this, opportunities for enhancing economic relations need to be explored. Concurrently, treaties to conclude the war at the military level are absolutely vital. Given the overarching context of the conflict as a West versus East struggle, the involvement of the USA is non-negotiable. Historically, Russia has often expressed feelings of exclusion from international decision-making processes. It is thus essential that Russia is once again accorded an equal status.

In an ideal world, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would join forces with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to craft a new, more tailored, and lasting agreement. This agreement should address the root causes of the conflict, including NATO's eastward expansion and Russian imperialism.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine poses a significant challenge to global peace and stability. Managing the humanitarian disaster stemming from this war necessitates robust assistance both within and beyond Ukraine's borders, to effectively deal with the war's long-term impact. Moreover, the potential for nuclear weapon deployment intensifies the urgency for a feasible resolution, even if interim. Previous measures, such as the ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine, provide a viable foundation for future

remedies. Despite the complex historical relationship between Russia and Ukraine, it is vital to devise a solution before the conflict escalates any further. In summary, nations caught between the East and the West face a crucial crossroads: While provoking Russia carries significant economic and political risks, increasing reliance on the West could potentially offer heightened security and safety.

## **VIII. Questions to Consider**

- How can humanitarian aid be delivered to areas most affected by the war (ex: Bakhmut)?
- If you support Russia: How can you discourage foreign nations from providing military support to Ukraine?
- If you support Ukraine: How can you put pressure on Russia to end the war?
- If you support Ukraine: What measures can be taken to bring the cultural and ideological divide between Russia and Ukraine to an end?
- Is it possible to create an armistice between Ukraine and Russia? If so, how?
- Are the alleged war crimes being investigated by an independent UN organization? If these war crimes have been committed, what punishment would Russia have to face?
- What has the UN already done in Ukraine, and what is it already planning on doing?
- How is it possible to prevent the war from escalating further (or even developing into a nuclear war)?

## **IX. Sources for further research**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minsk\\_agreements#cite\\_note-DT12FEBY-38](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minsk_agreements#cite_note-DT12FEBY-38)

This article is well-researched and provides a useful overview of the history of the Minsk agreements and goes into more depth on what they say.

<https://sites.psu.edu/johndavis/2021/12/05/russo-ukrainian-war/>

This international relations analysis provides deep insight on the history of the Russo-Ukrainian War and the increase of tensions between Western and Eastern powers in recent years.

**Institute for the Study of War:** <https://www.understandingwar.org/>

**Council on Foreign Relations:** <https://www.cfr.org/>

**European Union External Action Service:**

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en)

**United Nations News:** <https://news.un.org/en/>

**BBC News:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c5jp9yyw58lt/ukraine>

**New York Times:** <https://www.nytimes.com/topic/destination/ukraine>

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<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>