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“World in Crisis”



**De-escalating the Civil War in Eastern Ukraine**

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**Committee:** General Assembly 1<sup>st</sup> Committee

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## Introduction

Ukraine is a country that is wedged between the Russian Federation and Europe. In 1991, Ukraine broke out from the Soviet Union and became an independent country. Since 1991, Ukraine has had a weak economy and foreign policy that wavers between pro-Russian and pro-European.

The civil war in Eastern Ukraine is an ongoing-armed conflict in the Donbas Region between the Russian-backed separatist rebels and the Ukrainian military since April 2014. The first indications of the civil war in Eastern Ukraine were noticeable when Viktor Yanukovich, the 4<sup>th</sup> president of Ukraine, rejected to sign an agreement with the European Union and, instead, became closer to the Russian Federation. This sparked mass protests in Ukraine; the anti-Russian citizens (mostly the west of Ukraine) were not satisfied with Yanukovich's decision.



Picture 1: The Donbas Region

Since then, The Russian Government annexed and invaded Crimea, the Russian-backed separatist rebels seized territory in Eastern Ukraine, the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics were formed and, overall, the war between the Ukrainian military and the Russian-backed separatist rebels intensified.

## Key Vocabulary

**Donbas Region:** Can also be written as the "Donbass Region". This region is a historical, cultural and economic region in Eastern Ukraine. The Donbas Region covers and refers to Luhansk and Donetsk. The Donbas region was the second most populated region after Kiev, the capital of Ukraine.

**Euromaidan:** Euromaidan is the name of the protests that took place in the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2013 and continued on for several days when the then-president Victor Yanukovich rejected to sign an agreement with the European Union (EU) and strengthened ties between Ukraine and Russia. The Euromaidan led to the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution.

**Ukrainian Revolution:** The Ukrainian Revolution is a series of violent events that includes protests and unknown shootings in 2014 as a result of the Euromaidan that took place in Kiev. Because of the Ukrainian Revolution, then president Victor Yanukovich was ousted, and the government was overthrown.

**Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic:** The Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk

People’s Republic (LPR), in the spring of 2014 in the aftermath of the Ukrainian Revolution, declared independence from Ukraine. Their declaration of independence followed an armed conflict between the two self-declared Republics and the Ukrainian government. To this day, the United Nations and its Member States do not recognize the LPR and DPR.

**Pro-European:** Pro-European is a person or a government who advocates/defends the views of the European Union.

**Pro-Russian:** Pro-Russian is a person or a government who advocates/defends the views of the Russian Federation.

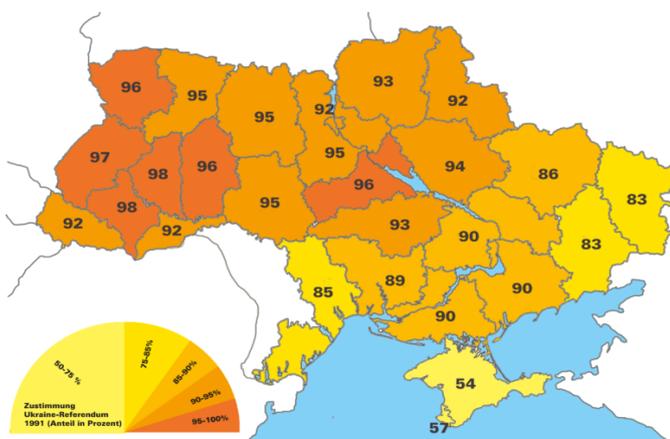
## Focused Overview

Ukraine’s foreign policy has wavered between pro-European and pro-Russian since the First World War. However, in order to understand the civil war in the Donbas Region or eastern Ukraine and de-escalate it, the historical context of the issue should be taken into consideration.

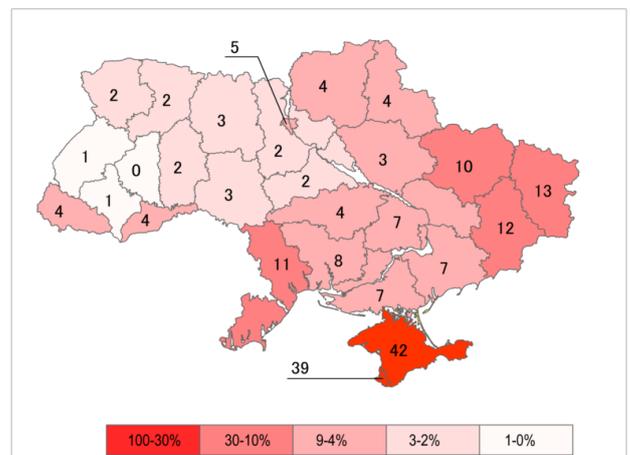
### 1) Ukraine in and after the 1991 Referendum

Before 1991, Ukraine was a part of The Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). In between the 1920s and the 1940s, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was highly involved in the Second World War. It is important to highlight that although Ukrainians populated the majority of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, there were Russians in the territory of Ukraine, especially in the Donetsk region.

In 1991, a referendum was held in Ukraine, asking, “Do you support the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine?” to the voters. Citizens of Ukraine highly supported Ukraine’s independence and 92.3% voted “yes” in this referendum. However, the Eastern and the Southern regions of Ukraine (such as Luhansk, Donetsk, Crimea) had a lower percentage of “yes” votes. The independence was adopted by the Parliament on 24 August 1991. This referendum led to a significant distinction of ideologies in Ukraine by regions.



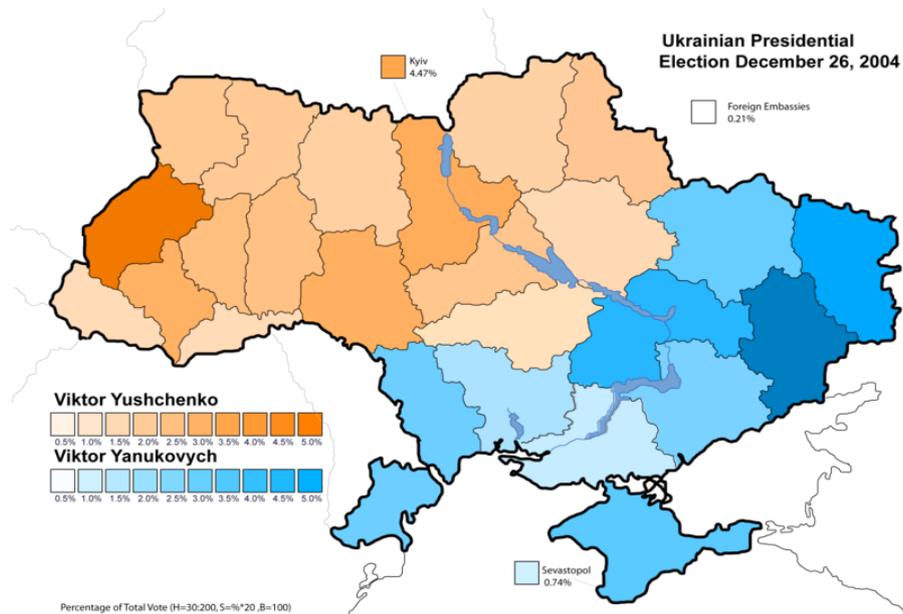
Picture 2: “Yes” votes in the 1991 Referendum by region, in percent.



Picture 3: “No” votes in the 1991 Referendum by region, in percent.

## 2) The Victor Yanukovych situation, Euromaidan, and The Ukrainian Revolution

Ukraine is bordered by Belarus to the North, Russia to the East, the Black Sea to the South and Poland to the West. Evidently, the Eastern region of Ukraine, which consists of Luhansk and Donetsk, and the southern region of Ukraine, which includes Crimea, has the majority of the Russian population in Ukraine (nearly 20%). It is also important to remember that there was a pro-Russian Ukrainian population in the aforementioned regions.



In the Presidential Election that took place in 2004, Viktor Yushchenko, who had similar ideologies with the European Union and Viktor Yanukovych, who had similar ideologies with the Russian Federation, were the presidential candidates. Viktor Yushchenko won the election by getting 52% of the votes. However, the 2004 election distinguished the ideologies of Ukraine by dividing Ukraine into two.

Picture 4: Result of the 2004 Presidential Election in Ukraine.

It is clear that the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine wanted a president who had a pro-Russian view. On the other hand, the Western and Northern regions of Ukraine wanted a president who had similar interests with the European Union.

When Yushchenko left the office in 2010, Yanukovych was elected as the next president. Many citizens argued that Yanukovych was not the right president for Ukraine since he only represented a specific group that had pro-Russian ideologies. On November 2013, Yanukovych rejected to sign an agreement to strengthen the ties between the European Union and Ukraine but instead increased connections with the Russian Federation. Upon this decision, there was a major uproar by the citizens especially in the Western and Southern regions of Ukraine. This uproar led to Euromaidan and then the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution, which ousted Victor Yanukovych.

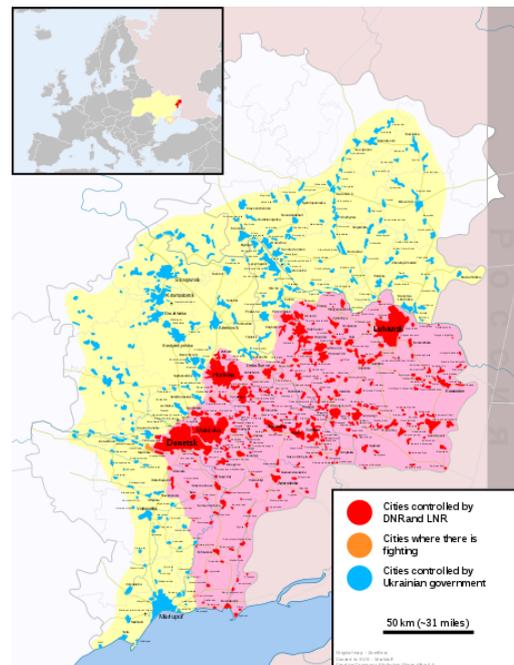
## 3) The Civil War in Eastern Ukraine

As the aftermath of the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution and the Euromaidan, several protests took place in the Donbass Region by the anti-government and pro-Russian demonstrators. Following these protests, on March 2014, approximately one month after the Ukrainian Revolution, Russia annexed Crimea. Many Russian troops occupied territories in Crimea and on March 16, 2014, a public referendum was held in Crimea to join Russia or not. 97% of Crimeans voted “Yes” to join the Russian Federation, however, since this referendum was not recognized by Ukraine or the United Nations, Crimea remained and still remains a part of Ukraine.

In March 2014, pro-Russian armed groups seized parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which resulted in the Ukrainian Government's interference in the region. This sparked an armed conflict between the Ukrainian Government and the pro-Russian armed groups. Following this, the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics were established. The pro-Russian protesters also supported the DPR and the LPR.

On May 11, 2014, both the DPR and LPR held referendums in order to declare independence from Ukraine. These referendums were and are still unrecognized by Ukraine and the United Nations. The DPR and LPR, with the pro-Russian protesters,

seized government buildings and police stations. Most of the DPR, LPR and their leaders were Russians.



Picture 5: The military situation of Ukraine in 2018

On July 17, 2014, Malaysia Airlines flight 17 was shot down by a Russian-made surface-to-air missile and burned in Eastern Ukraine. All 298 people on board died in the crash. The Russian Federation originally gave the surface-to-air missile to the self-declared militia forces (LPR and DPR) and the crash of the Malaysia Airlines flight 17 was a consequence of the misuse of this surface-to-air missile by the militias. The Russian Government held the Ukrainian Government accountable for the crash; however, it was later discovered that the crash was a result of a Russian-made surface-to-air missile crashing into the plane.

Between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2014, a Russian humanitarian convoy entered Ukrainian territory without the permission of the Ukrainian Government. On September 2014, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) confirmed that Russian troops and heavy military equipment entered Ukrainian territory, once again without the government's permission.

Since 2014, the civil war in the East of Ukraine between the Russian-backed armed forces and the Ukrainian Government continues with millions of deaths each year. Throughout these four years, the EU and Ukraine agreed on loans and aid packages, G7 leaders held summits without the Russian Federation, many bans and sanctions were imposed by the EU, Ukraine, and Russia, and local elections have been held. There were many ceasefire attempts in the past aiming to end the war one of the most important one's being the Minsk Agreements, but none of them were successful. The Civil War is still ongoing and is a dangerous threat to the world.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Ukraine

Ukraine's government describes the seized territory of LPR and DPR as a "temporarily occupied territory" and considers both of them as terrorist organizations. Ukraine sees Russia's interference as a "direct invasion by Russia of Ukraine" in the territories of both eastern Ukraine and Crimea and has

initiated several International Court cases against the Russian Government.

The Ukrainian Government has also applied sanctions, alongside many members of the European Union on Russia. Ukraine has tried to reintegrate the Donbas Region into Ukraine, however because of the civil war and different ideologies, all of them have failed.

Most recently, in January 2018, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law, which defined areas seized by the LPR and DPR as “temporarily occupied by Russia” and called Russia an “aggressor” state.

### The Russian Federation

Russia’s interference started on March 16, 2014, when they annexed Crimea. Later on, in April, pro-Russian separatist rebels seized territory in the Donbas region and declared themselves as independent “People’s Republics”- Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics. Many of these rebels were backed by Russian military and, in fact, were Russians living in that territory.

Throughout years, Russia aided LPR and DPR economically and in the forms of heavy weaponry, and military sources. The main reason behind Russia’s interference on Ukrainian territory, in their perspective, was to protect the Russian speaking population. Russia also argued that Crimea was their “rightful territory”.

To this day, LPR and DPR are still being supported by the Russian military and Russia itself. Thus, Russia has been recognizing specific documents issued by the DPR and LPR, although they don’t recognize the LPR and the DPR completely, alongside the United Nations Member States.

### The European Union (EU)

The European Union has kept its relations strong with Ukraine throughout the years. On 2012, the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement was initiated, which established a political and economic association between the EU and Ukraine. However, on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013, former president Viktor Yanukovich suspended preparations being made to sign the agreement and strengthened relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Therefore, the signing of the agreement was postponed and was finally signed on June 27, 2014. Since then, the Ukrainian government has tried to support the integration of the EU into Ukraine as a whole, while the Eastern region of Ukraine has had pro-Russian views.

Throughout the years, the European Union has granted aid to the Ukrainian Government in many forms and has implemented sanctions on the Russian Federation for annexing Crimea and for aiding LPR and DPR.

### Timeline of Events

Date of Event	Description of Event
August 24 <sup>th</sup> , 1991	Ukraine declares independence from the USSR
2004	Victor Yushchenko and Victor Yanukovich run for president, Victor Yushchenko wins the election
2010	Local elections are held, Victor Yanukovich is elected as the new president

September 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2013	Yanukovych rejects to sign the EU Association Agreement and instead strengthens ties between Ukraine and Russia
September 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2013	Citizens in the western part of Ukraine are not satisfied with Yanukovych's decision. Euromaidan protests start
December 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2013	Euromaidan partially ends
February 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Euromaidan leads to the Ukrainian Revolution which ousts Yanukovych from power
February 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2014	Yanukovych flees the country after parliamentary impeachment
February 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2014	The Ukrainian Revolution ends
March 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Russia annexes Crimea. The referendum is held in Crimea for becoming a part of the Russian Federation
March 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Putin recognizes Crimea's independence. EU imposes sanctions on Russia
March 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	A/RES/68/262 is published
March-April, 2014	Pro-Russian armed groups seize parts of Donetsk and Luhansk
May 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	The EU and Ukraine sign the Association Agreement
July 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Malaysian Airline flight 17 is shot down by Russian surface-to-air missile, all aboard are dead
August 22-25, 2014	Russian humanitarian convoy enters Ukraine without permission
September 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Minsk Agreement is signed
September 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	EU and Ukraine ratify the Association Agreement
September 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	The follow-up to the Minsk Agreement is agreed to
September 2014	NATO confirms Russian troops and heavy military equipment entered eastern Ukraine
November 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	EU implements sanctions on Russian backed separatists
February 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	Minsk II enters into force
February 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	S/RES/2202 is published
March 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	EU extends sanctions over actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity
May 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2015	EU and Ukraine agree on a \$2 billion loan to revive Ukraine's economy
June 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	OSCE notes increased breaches of the ceasefire
October-November 25-15, 2015	Local elections are held in Ukraine
December 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	Minsk II is agreed to be extended to 2016
January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2016	Russia cancels free trade privileges for Ukraine
January 2018	The Ukrainian parliament passes a law, which defines areas seized by the LPR and DPR as "temporarily occupied by Russia" and calls Russia an "aggressor" state.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

- [Resolution on Ukraine's Territorial Integrity \(A/RES/68/262\)](#)

This was the General Assembly's resolution on Ukraine's territorial integrity. The resolution states that the referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on 16 March 2014 is unrecognized and was not authorized by the government of Ukraine. It also elaborates on Russia annexing Crimea and calls upon the Russian Federation to "refrain from actions aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine..." Considering that Russia is still interfering to Ukraine's territory, this resolution failed to solve the issue/conflict.

- [The Minsk Agreement/Protocol \(5 September 2014\)](#)

The Minsk Agreement is a ceasefire for the war in the Donbas Region. Representatives from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, LPR and DPR were present during the extensive talks. It was signed in Minsk, Belarus, under the supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This Agreement consisted of 12 points and ensured monitoring of several regions by OSCE, release of hostages, withdrawal of "illegal armed groups and military equipment" and such. However, by the monitoring of the Donbas Region and NATO's confirmation on violations, it was evident that both parties in the conflict made frequent violations of the ceasefire. Thus, a follow-up to the Minsk Agreement was agreed to on 19 September 2014; however, this didn't restrict both parties to, once again, violate the ceasefire.

- [Minsk II \(12 February 2015\)](#)

On January 2015, after the collapse of the first Minsk Agreement by the violation of the Agreement by the LPR and DPR, the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, Germany and the leaders of LPR and DPR agreed on a new package of measures to alleviate the civil war in Eastern Ukraine. These measures included the revival of the first Minsk Protocol. This summit was held, once again, under the supervision of OSCE.

It was evident that this Agreement had too failed to meet its goal and by 16 February 2015, it was on the verge of collapse. After many armed conflicts between the two sides, Minsk II is agreed to be extended to 2016. As the conflict still continues in 2018, the Minsk II has also failed to meet its goals and alleviate the civil war.

- [S/RES/2202 \(17 February 2015\)](#)

This was the Security Council resolution on endorsing the "Package of measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements". This resolution calls on all parties to fully implement the "Package of measure" issued by the Minsk Agreements. Once again, this resolution has failed to settle the current civil war.

## Possible Solutions

The civil war in Eastern Ukraine initiated when the Russian Federation, more specifically Vladimir Putin, launched "an unprecedented invasion" of Donbas in April 2014. He validated supplying military equipment to both the LPR and DPR and sending Russian military offices to the territory of Ukraine. The Russian Federation argued that this intervention was to "protect the Russian-speaking

citizens of Ukraine”. Throughout the years, many ceasefires have been established but none of them retained the Russian Federation of providing military equipment and/or humanitarian aid to the LPR and DPR.

One could argue that the reason why Russia never stopped supplying equipment and/or giving aid to the pro-Russian separatist rebels, was because they didn't have a reason to. In their perspective, they were and still are protecting their citizens from the pro-European inclined government of Ukraine. One of the arguments that were asserted by the international community is that the civil war will not stop unless the Russian Government finally accomplishes their goal and is satisfied with the outcomes.

However, it is important to find a common ground between countries, especially Russia and Ukraine. This common ground should seek both States' benefits and should harm neither the international community nor the States themselves. It is important to understand that this common ground should include demilitarization, reintegration, restoration of local authorities' power, the return of land and property to displaced persons and such. The Donbas Region should no longer be a corrupted zone, which means the Ukrainian government using their power to preclude the LPR, and the DPR from abusing their power with being cautious with the strategy they follow since the actions they will take might backfire and/or cause a bigger uprising. To summarize, the pro-European and pro-Russian views should learn to exist together and live peacefully within the borders of Ukraine with the cooperation of all sides in the conflict.

Long-term solutions should also be focused on since they are also very important in the de-escalation of the civil war. An example of a long-term solution is that the infrastructure of Donbas should be improved. New schools and hospitals should be opened, and international trade should be made. This will show the citizens in the east that the war only caused great suffering and damage. Thus, it will prove to the international community that Ukraine is a place to be invested in. Second of all, foreign and domestic investors should support new industries and businesses to uplift the Ukrainian economy.

As it can be seen, the de-escalation of the civil war in eastern Ukraine can only be accomplished if both long-term and short-term solutions are issued at the same time. Therefore, delegates should come up with solutions that satisfy both of these terms.

## Further Reading

- [The United Nations Security Council Press Statement on deteriorating the situation in the Donetsk region](#)
- [The United Nations Security Council Draft Resolution on Ukraine vetoed by the Russian Federation](#)

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