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“World in Crisis”



**Deciding a coordinated response to Russia  
in regard to the annexation of Crimea**

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President Chair



**Committee:** NATO

**Issue:** Deciding a coordinated response to Russia in regard to the annexation of Crimea

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## Introduction

In February 2014, the Russian Federation annexed the Crimean Peninsula. The peninsula was within the borders of Ukraine and after the unrest brought on by the Ukrainian Revolution, President Vladimir Putin ordered that Crimea be returned to Russian authority. This was widely seen as Russia taking advantage of the unrest, since it is believed that they had always wanted to take control over the coveted Crime region. The annexation began indirectly, with Russian provocations and undercover military involvement, and then led to Russia's seizing of Crimea's political authorities. A questioned referendum led to Crimea establishing an independent republic, which was then acceded to Russia as a federal subject.

Despite taking almost five years ago, the annexation of Crimea remains a crucial issue –certainly contributing to a “World in Crisis”. Russia's military intervention continues to be seen as breaking international law and treaties, as well as undermining democracy and human rights. The Crimean Peninsula remains a disputed territory, and is an issue that needs urgent resolve.

## Key Vocabulary

**Association agreement:** Treaty between the European Union and a non-EU country that creates a framework for co-operation between them.

**De facto / de jure:** State of affairs that is true in fact, but that is not officially sanctioned / state of affairs that is in accordance with law.

**Coup d'état:** Illegal and overt seizure of a state by the military or other elites within the state apparatus.

**Military insignia:** A badge or distinguishing mark of military office or honor.

**Breakaway republic:** A secession of a number of people from a republic, resulting in the establishment of a new republic.

## Focused Overview

### Ukrainian Revolution

Since separating from the Soviet Union, Ukraine had a constant dilemma between leaning East or West –more specifically, between being close to either Russia or the European Union. This dilemma was intensified by issues regarding corruption and mismanagement, which deeply weakened the central government's authority and credibility. In 2013, Ukrainian President Yanukovich announced his intention to sign an association agreement with the EU, which would have provided funds to Ukraine in exchange for liberal reforms. When Yanukovich backed out at the last minute, the protest

later named “Euromaidan” began. The government tried to suppress Euromaidan by using brutal police force, which only escalated the movement.

The breaking point was when a clash between protestors and police in Kiev resulted in the death of almost one hundred people, causing the Euromaidan movement to head to the Parliament in a mission to return to the old constitution. As media outlets reported of an impending civil war, a de facto state of emergency was established and the use of live ammunition on protestors was authorized. The civil unrest led to the government making a compromise with the opposition; agreeing to amending the constitution and promising early elections. However, this did not stop the protests, and President Yanukovich fled to Russia. He was subsequently impeached and ordered to be arrested by the parliament.

### Russia’s Indirect Involvement

US State Department analyst William Varettoni had said, “Russia wants to annex Crimea and is merely waiting for the right opportunity, most likely under the pretence of defending Russian brethren abroad.” When the Ukrainian Revolution took place, Russia called the event a coup d’état and described the interim government as illegitimate. After an all-night meeting with his security chiefs, President Putin prioritized the task of taking back the Crimean Peninsula to Russian territory.

Russian involvement first began indirectly, with the organizing of pro-Russian demonstrations in Crimea. The demonstrators rejected the Ukrainian government, pledging alliance to Putin and refusing to pay taxes to the government in Kiev. They also blocked with protest the referendum scheduled to vote on whether making Crimea an independent state and illegally installed a Russian mayor – chanting “A Russian mayor for a Russian city!” The police forces continued following Ukrainian orders, which resulted in clashes between pro and anti-Russian protestors. The Supreme Council also stated support for Ukraine, accepting Yanukovich as the de jure president and requesting the United Nations to provide security.

### Military Annexation

After the clash between protestors, Russian military forces took control of the route to Sevastopol. Special forces then proceeded to seize control of the Supreme Council and Council of Ministers (government cabinet) buildings, raising Russian flags and erecting barricades. The parliament, which was controlled by the Russian government through threats and bans on MP’s and journalists’ communication, voted to remove the Crimean government and elected Sergey Aksyonov, a member of the Russian Unity Party – which had received 4% of the vote in the last election, as prime minister.

Donetsk People's Republic separatist Igor Girkin even claimed that MP’s were being locked in and held at gunpoint, actions which the Crimean government declared to be illegitimate. Russian troops, assisted by Berkut riot police, established security checkpoints and effectively separated Crimea from Ukrainian mainland. Aksyonov announced that the new government would take over Ukrainian all military forces in the peninsula and asked Russia for assistance in ensuring security.

On March 1, 2014, Putin received authorization from the Federation Council of Russia for an official military intervention, "until normalization of a socio-political environment in the country". Ukrainian General Staff claimed that the involvement of Russian special forces, instead of the normal operating of Russian Black Sea Fleet personnel, violated international agreements, most importantly the

Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances – to which Russia responded by denying the deployment of special forces since they did not have insignias. However, Putin later acknowledged that they were backing Crimean separatist militias and described the involvement as necessary "to ensure proper conditions for the people of Crimea to be able to freely express their will".

## The Republic of Crimea

Following Russia's military annexation, the Supreme Council scheduled a referendum to decide on the extent of Crimea's autonomy – a referendum which Ukrainian courts deemed illegal. The illegitimacy of the referendum was increased by the fact that the date was abruptly moved up and was changed to include the question of whether Crimea should accede to Russia. The highly questioned results of the referendum showed a 95% approval for Russian annexation. The results led to a declaration of independence, establishing a breakaway republic called the Republic of Crimea.

The new parliament asked Russia to allow the republic's entrance to the federation, adapting Russian currency and time zone. Putin recognised the Republic of Crimea 'as a sovereign and independent state' and approved their admission as separate federal subjects of Russia. The Treaty on Accession of the Republic of Crimea to Russia was signed to formalize this relationship. The treaty was approved by the Russian Constitutional Court and was ratified by the State Duma. The Ukrainian government subsequently withdrew its military forces from the peninsula, with Russia denouncing the 2010 Kharkiv Pact and Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet. The Republic of Crimea went onto adopt a new constitution, and in July 2015, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev declared that Crimea had been fully integrated into Russia.

## Reactions and Aftermath

The National Geographic Society has described the current situation in Crimea to not portray any political reality. The United Nations and the international community continue to reject the annexation as an illegal occupancy and the peninsula is viewed as disputed territory. As response to the Russian Federation's actions, they have been suspended from the G8 organization and economic sanctions resume to this day.

Russia's authority as a superpower has deemed many of these sanctions as obsolete, and their veto power in the Security Council has left the UN ineffective. The annexation is not only a political crisis, as it has greatly affected the world economically and socially, and has led to countless violations of democracy and human rights.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Crimean Government

Throughout the Ukrainian Revolution and the subsequent unrest, the Crimean government loyally supported the government of Ukraine and strongly rejected the idea of joining the Russian Federation. However, when a new prime minister was installed de facto by the Russian government, the Crimean government completely shifted views and supported becoming a federal subject of Russia. Much like the Russian Revolution during World War I, the annexation effectively established a new major party involved in the issue.

## Russian Federation

Especially after more information was gathered following the annexation, it is clear that Russia – for its own benefits - wanted to annex Crimea, and saw the Ukrainian Revolution as the perfect opportunity of chaos. The annexation, detailed in the Focused Overview section, resulted in Russia gaining control over the peninsula, while being sanctioned by the international community.

## Ukraine

The government of Ukraine wanted to retain their control over the Crimean Peninsula, and fought back against Russian involvement using their military as well as appealing to legal and international channels. However, Russia’s strength as a superpower proved to be unproportioned to that of Ukraine, and the government had to eventually withdraw their forces from the region.

## United Nations

While the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution affirming their support for Ukraine, Russia’s veto power in the Security Council prohibited them from taking any effective action.

## United States, United Kingdom and Germany

The US, UK and Germany led most of the international community in addressing Russia’s actions as not only inappropriate, but illegitimate. This resulted in various international sanctions being imposed on Russia, including the suspension of its G8 membership. While these actions somewhat hurt Russia economically, they did not prevent President Putin from continuing his established order of annexing Crimea.

## Timeline of Events

Date of Event	Description of Event
February 18 <sup>th</sup> 2014	The Ukrainian Revolution officially began with the Euromaidan protestors marching to the parliament.
February 20 <sup>th</sup> 2014	The use of live ammunition against protestors were authorized, resulting in the escalation of the revolution movement.
February 21 <sup>st</sup> 2014	President Yanukovich signed the compromise deal with opposition leaders promising constitutional changes and an early election.
February 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2014	Yanukovich fled to Russia, leaving the peninsula with no formal authority.
February 25 <sup>th</sup> 2014	Pro-Russian demonstrators blocked a referendum from taking place and clashed with the Euromaidan protestors.
February 27 <sup>th</sup> 2014	Russian special forces seized the parliament of Crimea, forcing MPs to install a new prime minister.
March 1 <sup>st</sup> 2014	The new prime minister announced allegiance to Russia, and President Putin received authorization for an official military intervention.
March 14 <sup>th</sup> 2014	A questioned referendum showed 95% support for accession to Russia.
March 17 <sup>th</sup> 2014	The new Crimean parliament established a new independent republic and requested admission to the Russian Federation.

March 21 <sup>st</sup> 2014	The Treaty on Accession of the Republic of Crimea laid out the terms for the admission of Crimea territories as federal subjects of Russia.
March 24 <sup>th</sup> 2014	The Ukrainian government withdrew military forces from Crimea.
April 11 <sup>th</sup> 2014	The Republic of Crimea established a new constitution.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

- [Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances](#)

Three identical political agreements signed at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe conference in Budapest on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1994, in which Russia, the US, and the UK agreed to refrain the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. Russia ignored this agreement by annexing Crimea, which the Crimean government used to declare the military involvement as illegal.

- [Territorial Integrity of Ukraine \(68/262\)](#)

The UN General Assembly Resolution was passed, affirming “its commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders”.

## Possible Solutions

It is no question that the only goal should be to allow the people of Crimea to freely decide their own future and autonomy. However, the current situation is an unprecedented breach of all international norms and contracts, and thus has virtually transcended what the United Nations General Assembly can accomplish with condemning resolutions. An organizational body such as NATO must take extraordinary actions to ensure the achievement of this goal.

It must be kept in mind that the Russian Federation is a superpower – currently, arguably the strongest superpower in the world - so whether it is sanctions against Russia, raising awareness within the people of Crimea, or even direct military involvement in the peninsula, the nations of NATO must come together to reach a mutual solution and take multilateral measures.

## Further Reading

- [Institute for Politics and Society – Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation](#)
- [UC Santa Barbara Global Societies Journal - Annexation of Crimea: Causes, Analysis and Global Implications](#)
- [Vox – Why is Russia invading eastern Ukraine?](#)
- [Newsweek International – How Russia Annexed Crimea \(Explanatory Video\)](#)

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