

Committee: SECURITY COUNCIL

Topic: The question of Russia and Crimea

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Summary

In 1954, the Soviet Union transferred Crimea from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, both of which were part of the larger USSR. This transfer was largely symbolic at the time, as all these territories were under Soviet control. However, the situation changed dramatically in 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved, and Ukraine became an independent country.

Crimea remained part of Ukraine, but its predominantly Russian-speaking population created tension. In 2014, following Ukraine's political turmoil, Russia controversially annexed Crimea, claiming it was protecting Russian-speaking residents and historical ties. This move was widely condemned by the international community, leading to sanctions against Russia. The situation has since remained a major source of tension between Russia and Ukraine, with Crimea's status as a disputed territory still unresolved.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Annexation:** The forcible acquisition of one state's territory by another state, typically through military means or political coercion.
- **Budapest Memorandum:** A diplomatic agreement signed in 1994 by Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine.
- **Euromaidan:** A series of protests and demonstrations that took place in Kyiv, Ukraine, and other cities in late 2013 and early 2014.
- **Minsk Agreements:** A set of ceasefire agreements aimed at resolving the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The two main agreements are Minsk Protocol (2014) and Minsk II (2015), brokered by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
- **Kerch Strait:** A narrow passage connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov, controlled by both Russia and Ukraine.

- **Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic:** Self-proclaimed entities in Eastern Ukraine that declared independence from Ukraine in 2014. They are not recognized as independent states by the international community.
- **Crimean Peninsula:** A region located on the northern coast of the Black Sea. It was part of Ukraine until Russia's annexation in 2014.
- **UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262:** Passed in March 2014, this resolution affirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity and declared the Russian annexation of Crimea invalid. It was supported by a majority of UN member states.
- **OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe):** An international organization that has played a role in monitoring and facilitating negotiations in the Ukraine conflict, including efforts to uphold the Minsk Agreements.
- **Ukraine-EU Association Agreement:** An agreement between Ukraine and the European Union (EU) that was signed in 2014 and ratified in 2017. It aims to promote political and economic cooperation, as well as deeper integration between Ukraine and the EU.
- **Diplomatic Quartet:** A group of four countries and organizations involved in diplomatic efforts to address the Ukraine conflict. The Quartet includes representatives from Ukraine, Russia, the OSCE, and the Trilateral Contact Group.
- **Trilateral Contact Group:** A group composed of representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE, established to facilitate negotiations and reach a peaceful settlement in Eastern Ukraine.

Background Information.

Crimea, situated on the northern coast of the Black Sea, the history of Crimea traces its roots back to ancient times when it was inhabited by various peoples, including Greeks, Scythians, and Sarmatians. This region's strategic location and fertile lands made it extremely important for many civilizations. The 15th century brought transformation as Crimea became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. For several centuries, it remained under Ottoman control and

served as a crucial centre for the empire's expansion into Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In the late 18th century, the Russian Empire, under Catherine the Great, began to expand its territories. Crimea was annexed by Russia in 1783



after a series of military campaigns against the Ottoman Empire. This event marked a turning point as it brought Crimea under Russian rule. Under Russian control, Russians became the dominant ethnic group. The Russian language and culture were promoted, and the city of Sevastopol, gained significance as a vital naval base for the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The 20th century brought further changes to Crimea's status. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing Civil War, Crimea briefly became an independent state before being incorporated into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) in 1921. However, in 1954, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, both of which were part of the larger USSR. This transfer, often considered symbolic at the time, was largely administrative and did not carry significant implications.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 saw Ukraine gain its independence, with Crimea remaining part of Ukraine. The Budapest Memorandum, signed by Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and the United Kingdom in December 1994, committed the signatories to respect Ukraine's post-Soviet borders, while Ukraine pledged to transfer its massive stockpile of Soviet-era nuclear weapons to Russia for decommissioning and, with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership (1997), Crimea was once again affirmed as Ukrainian territory. In 2014, following political turmoil in Ukraine and the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich, Russia annexed Crimea. Russia cited the need to protect the rights of Russian-speaking residents and safeguard its strategic interests in the region as reasons for this move. However, this annexation was widely condemned by the international community, leading to sanctions against Russia.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Russia: Russia played the central role in the annexation of Crimea. Russian forces were involved in the military takeover of the region, and the Russian government officially annexed Crimea following a disputed referendum.

Ukraine: Ukraine is the country from which Crimea was annexed. The Ukrainian government continues to claim sovereignty over the region.

United States: The United States condemned Russia's actions and imposed sanctions on Russian officials and entities in response to the annexation of Crimea. The U.S. has been a vocal supporter of Ukraine throughout the crisis.

European Union (EU): The EU also condemned Russia's actions and imposed sanctions on Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea. The EU has been involved in diplomatic efforts to address the crisis.

United Kingdom: The UK joined the international condemnation of Russia's annexation of Crimea and imposed sanctions on Russian individuals and entities.

NATO: NATO expressed concern over Russia's actions in Crimea and reinforced its presence in Eastern Europe in response to the crisis, with a particular focus on the Baltic States.

United Nations (UN): The UN General Assembly passed a resolution in March 2014 affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity and declaring the Russian annexation of Crimea invalid. However, Russia vetoed a similar resolution in the UN Security Council.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE): The OSCE deployed monitors to Ukraine, including Crimea, to assess the situation and promote dialogue. Their presence aimed to reduce tensions and facilitate diplomatic efforts.

G7: The G7 group of major industrialized nations (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) condemned Russia's actions and suspended Russia's participation in the group, which was previously the G8.

Ukrainian Government-in-Exile: Following the annexation of Crimea, the Ukrainian government established a government-in-exile to represent Ukrainian interests in the region.

Timeline of Events

1991 - Ukrainian Independence:

- August 24, 1991: Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union, Crimea was among the regions that became part of independent Ukraine.

1994 - Budapest Memorandum:

- December 1994: The United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances. This agreement provided security assurances to Ukraine in exchange for its commitment to denuclearization and safeguarding its territorial integrity, including Crimea.

1997 - Russian-Ukrainian Treaty:

- May 1997: Russia and Ukraine signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership, which recognized Ukraine's territorial integrity, including Crimea.

2004 - Orange Revolution:

- Late 2004: Protests and the "Orange Revolution" erupted in Ukraine following disputed presidential elections. Viktor Yushchenko was eventually elected president.

2010 - Yanukovich's Election:

- February 2010: Viktor Yanukovich, who had strong ties to Russia, was elected president of Ukraine.

2013 - Euromaidan Protests:

- November 2013: Pro-European Union protests began in Ukraine, known as the Euromaidan movement, after Yanukovich's decision to abandon an EU agreement in favour of closer ties with Russia.

February 2014 - Yanukovich's Ouster:

- February 2014: Violent clashes in Kyiv led to Yanukovich's ouster, and he fled to Russia.

Late February 2014 - Russian Military Presence:

- Late February: Unidentified armed men, later confirmed to be Russian soldiers, began appearing in Crimea. Pro-Russian demonstrations took place in the region.

March 2014 - Russian Annexation:

- March 1: Putin received authorization from the Russian parliament to use military force in Ukraine.
- March 16: A referendum was held in Crimea, leading to its annexation by Russia.
- March 17: Putin officially recognized Crimea as part of the Russian Federation.

2014 - Ceasefire Agreements:

- Several ceasefire agreements were brokered in 2014 and 2015, including the Minsk Protocol and Minsk II Agreement.
- However, ceasefires were often short-lived, with violations and renewed fighting occurring periodically.

2015 - Downed Russian Fighter Jet:

- In November 2015, Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet near the Turkish-Syrian border, leading to tensions between Russia and NATO. This incident had indirect implications for the conflict in Ukraine, as it strained Russia's relations with Western countries.

2018 - Naval Incident near Crimea:

- In November 2018, a confrontation occurred between Russian and Ukrainian naval vessels in the Kerch Strait, which connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Russia captured Ukrainian sailors and ships, further escalating tensions in the region.

2019 - Election of President Zelenskyy:

- Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a comedian and political newcomer, was elected as President of Ukraine in April 2019.

2020 - Renewed Ceasefire Efforts:

- In July 2020, another attempt at a ceasefire was agreed upon by the parties involved in the conflict.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- **UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 (2014):** This resolution, passed in March 2014, affirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity and declared the Russian annexation of Crimea invalid. It reflected the international community's stance on the issue.
- **UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine:** The UN established a human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine to document human rights abuses and violations in the region, including Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.
- **UN Special Envoy for Ukraine:** The UN appointed a Special Envoy for Ukraine to engage in diplomatic efforts.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

- **Minsk Protocol (2014):** The Minsk Protocol, signed on September 5, 2014, was one of the earliest diplomatic initiatives aimed at ending the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. It outlined steps for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry, and the release of prisoners. However, the ceasefire agreed upon in the protocol was frequently violated, leading to further negotiations.
- **Minsk II Agreement (2015):** Building upon the Minsk Protocol, the Minsk II Agreement was signed on February 11-12, 2015, with the participation of Ukraine, Russia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the separatist leaders. It laid out a comprehensive roadmap for a ceasefire, political reforms in Ukraine, and the restoration of Ukrainian control over its eastern border. Like its predecessor, Minsk II faced challenges in implementation.
- **Normandy Format Talks:** The Normandy Format is a diplomatic framework involving the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France. It was established to address the Ukraine conflict. Several rounds of talks have taken place within this format, including discussions on ceasefire arrangements and the exchange of prisoners. The Normandy Format has experienced periods of progress and stalemate.
- **Trilateral Contact Group:** The Trilateral Contact Group includes representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE. It was established to facilitate diplomatic negotiations and conflict resolution efforts in Eastern Ukraine. The group has worked on various aspects of the conflict, including ceasefire agreements and political dialogue.

- **Minsk III Talks:** While not an official term, "Minsk III" refers to ongoing efforts to revive and implement the Minsk agreements, particularly after the 2020 ceasefire agreement. These efforts involve discussions on ceasefire violations, troop withdrawal, and political reforms.
- **Diplomatic Quartet:** The Diplomatic Quartet includes representatives from Ukraine, Russia, the OSCE, and the Trilateral Contact Group. It has been involved in diplomatic efforts to address the Ukraine conflict, focusing on measures to reduce hostilities and advance a peaceful resolution.

Possible Solutions

1. Restoration of Territorial Integrity:

- This solution involves recognizing and reaffirming Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea and working towards the eventual return of the region to Ukrainian control through diplomatic means.

2. Autonomy or Special Status:

- Granting Crimea and the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine a significant degree of autonomy or special status within Ukraine.

3. Demilitarization:

- Pursuing measures to demilitarize Crimea and the conflict zones in Eastern Ukraine.
- This includes the withdrawal of military forces, control over weaponry, and international monitoring.

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