



COMMUN VIII  
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

INVASION OF CRIMEA

*Background Guide*

Authored by Co-Chairs Parth Garg '23 and Alex Choi '23

Dear Delegates,

Our names are Alex Choi and Parth Garg, and we will be your chairs at COMMUN VIII 2023! We are currently seniors at the Commonwealth School, and have participated in various Model UN conferences throughout middle and high school. We are very excited to guide your discussion and to hear your opinions and ideas for solving this very complex problem: the Crisis in Crimea.

In the past years, the current geopolitical situation in Russia and Eastern Europe has been much discussed. We remember watching the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 and the latter invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and wondering what could be done to heal the political divide without shedding unnecessary blood. This committee is centered around the ideas of governance and human rights. We hope that you get the opportunity to take a deep dive into these issues, and craft a unique solution together that acknowledges all the facets of this crisis. As a part of the UN Security Council, you will get to experience one of the more interesting aspects of the UN. You must not only try to come up with a solution that benefits a single population, but you must craft a resolution that satisfies all five nations (including the Russian Federation), who hold veto power on the UNSC.

Position papers are required for rewards, as they are an invaluable tool for delegates to understand how their country might act in a real committee. If you have any questions, please feel free to send them to either [pgarg@commschool.org](mailto:pgarg@commschool.org) or [achoi@commschool.org](mailto:achoi@commschool.org).

Parth Garg  
Commonwealth '23

Alex Choi  
Commonwealth '23

Note: This committee will NOT be discussing the current Russian invasion of Ukraine. While the situation in Ukraine in the present day demonstrates the severity of tensions already existing between Ukraine and Russia at the time, the committee is set in December 2014 and not April 2023. This conference is intended to explore diplomatic solutions to international conflicts, and not the hot war that is currently raging in Ukraine.

## **Introduction:**

*“War is so unjust and ugly that all who wage it must try to stifle the voice of conscience within themselves”*

*- Leo Tolstoy*

This committee will look to address the conflict in Crimea, following Russia’s annexation and invasion in the winter of 2014. The goal of the UN Security Council here will be to establish a diplomatic solution that will uphold the values of human rights throughout the region. The UNSC will have to use its power to adopt binding resolutions to create a solution to quell the dangerous situation in Crimea, while appeasing the five states (the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France) who can veto resolutions. The major problems that the international community must address are that of armed conflict and humanitarian crisis. The Security Council must also design a framework for governing the concerned region while upholding safeguarding the citizens of Crimea and greater Ukraine.

## **Background:**

The annexation of Crimea by Russia was a major international crisis that had far-reaching consequences. In November 2013, then President **Viktor Yanukovych** declined a deal that would strengthen Ukraine’s economic and political relationship with the **European Union**. That decision sparked mass protests throughout the country from pro-EU supporters; a movement known as the **Revolution of Dignity** or the **Euromaidan Uprising**. Starting in November of 2013, Ukrainians risked repressive police action to peacefully demonstrate in Kyiv’s Independence square—known as **Maidan**—against pro-Russian Yanukovych’s decision. The protests were both about the decision and also a rejection of Ukraine’s corrupt post-Soviet bureaucracy. In February of 2014, President Viktor Yanukovych was ousted from power after the

deaths of more than a hundred protestors. Seven days later, gunmen in Crimea seized government buildings, and then conducted a **referendum** on annexation by Russia. The validity of the referenda was disputed by Ukraine and Western Powers, as were the identities of the forces responsible for the initial takeover in Crimea: Russia claims they were pro-independence separatists while the Western powers generally maintain that they were supported and joined by Russian special forces. Subsequently, Russia sent troops into the Crimean peninsula to quell violence and to “support Crimean self defense forces” (Putin, 2014) in the lead up to the referendum on annexation. The annexation was met with widespread condemnation from the international community, including from the **United Nations** (UN). The UN General Assembly passed **Resolution 68/262**, affirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and the **UN Security Council** called on all states to refrain from any actions that could be seen as supporting the annexation.

The annexation of Crimea was also met with **economic sanctions** from the **United States** and the **European Union**. These sanctions targeted key sectors of the Russian economy, including energy, banking, and defense. Special consideration must be given to the Russian **energy market**, as it remains one of the largest energy sources for Europe. In particular, Russian imports of **oil and natural gas** are critical to the functioning of industrial European economies without other access to oil reserves, and EU countries disagreed about the extent to which they were willing to hurt their own economies in order to put pressure on Russia. The sanctions were intended to pressure Russia to withdraw its troops from Crimea and respect the sovereignty of Ukraine. One of the main impacts of the sanctions was to limit Russia's access to **international financial markets**, making it more difficult for the country to borrow money and access **foreign investment**. The restrictions on exports of certain energy-related equipment and technology

made it more difficult for Russian energy companies to access the technology they needed to explore and develop new oil and gas fields. Russia's defense sector was also impacted by the sanctions, which restricted Russia's access to certain types of military equipment and technology. This made it more difficult for Russia to **modernize** its military and hindered its ability to respond to military threats.

Prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine and Russia were united under one flag, which led to deep demographic links between the two countries. After the breakup of the USSR, the newly **autonomous** region of Crimea was left with a large population of ethnic Russians, even to the point that Russia maintained a **naval base** in the region. Moreover, and unlike the rest of Ukraine, a majority of Crimean citizens spoke Russian rather than Ukrainian as their primary language. In the years leading up to the conflict, there were increasing tensions between Russia and Ukraine, such as Ukraine's push to eliminate the teaching of the Russian language or Ukraine's refusal to join Russian security alliances. In 2004, Ukraine's pro-Western **Orange Revolution** sparked concerns in Moscow about the possibility of Ukraine joining **NATO**. In 2010, President Viktor Yanukovich, who was understood to be more pro-Russian, was elected in Ukraine. While he was in office, Russia's relationship with Ukraine appeared to be stabilizing. The anti-Soviet, pro-European Maidan protests, however, threatened to push Ukraine towards the west and demonstrated the depth of support among the Ukrainian population for stronger ties with Europe. Russia, seeking to return to its Soviet glory and great power status, had been looking to expand its sphere of influence particularly over Ukraine.

Russia responded to the change in government by annexing Crimea and supporting separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea was not recognized by the international community, and it led to a series of economic sanctions against Russia by the

United States and the European Union. The conflict has had significant implications for the region and beyond. It has strained relations between Russia and the West and has contributed to a broader destabilization of the region. It has also had far-reaching consequences for the people of Crimea, many of whom have faced significant challenges since the annexation.

There have been reports of **human rights violations** by Russian forces in Crimea, including arbitrary detention and torture. Human rights groups have also reported instances of discrimination against Ukrainian speakers in the region. The annexation of Crimea has had significant economic consequences for the region. The sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union have hurt the economy of Crimea, and the region has become more reliant on Russia for economic support. Tourism, which was one of Crimea's largest industries, saw a 50% decrease in revenue. In addition, the agricultural yields of Crimea have declined due to Ukraine's refusal to supply water to the region following the Russian annexation. The health care system in Crimea has also been impacted by shortages of medical supplies and a lack of access to specialized care. The quality of care has also declined, with some hospitals and clinics struggling to meet the needs of the population and the soldiers in the region.

Western powers have been extremely critical of the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. The United States and the EU have called for the respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. They have also supported the Ukrainian government in its efforts to defend its territory and maintain control over its borders. In addition to the economic sanctions, the United States and the EU have also provided economic and military assistance to Ukraine. This has included financial aid to help Ukraine stabilize its economy and modernize its military, as well as **non-lethal military equipment**, such as body armor and night-vision goggles.

The Russian government has consistently defended its actions in Crimea, arguing that it was necessary to protect the rights of ethnic Russians in the region. In the years leading up to the annexation, there were reports of discrimination against ethnic Russians in Crimea by the Ukrainian government, and Russia has pointed to this as one of the reasons for its intervention. Additionally, the Russian government has argued that the annexation was necessary to respond to what it sees as the illegitimate overthrow of Ukraine's previous pro-Russian government. Russia has claimed that the protests that led to the overthrow of President Yanukovich were instigated by Western powers and were illegal, and it has justified its intervention in Crimea as a means of protecting Russia's interests in the region. In addition to these arguments, Russia has also pointed to the fact that Crimea had been part of Russia until 1954, when it was transferred to Ukraine by the Soviet government, as justification for its annexation. Russia has argued that this transfer to Ukraine was illegitimate and that it has the right to reclaim Crimea as part of its territory. Russia argues that as such, Crimea should be considered Russian territory. This argument, however, has been rejected by many in the international community, who have pointed out that the transfer took place within the context of the Soviet Union and was not a violation of international law. The Kremlin also cites deep cultural links that exist between the Crimean and Russian people, and additionally claim that the referendum on annexation was both legitimate and democratic. Both Russia and Western powers accuse the other of interfering in Ukrainian politics, and both suggest that the other presents grave security threats to their respective side.

#### Questions to Consider

- What are the most important goals of international intervention in Ukraine?
- Under what circumstances can foreign troops intervene in violent circumstances?

- How should the international community balance security concerns and the principle of national sovereignty and security?
- Under what circumstances can an independence or annexation referendum be considered legitimate under international law?
- What, other than armed forces, determine whether a group of people and a territory belong to one nation or another?
- How should the security council approach compromise and progress given its structure of permanent member veto power?

Committee Members:

Permanent Security Council Members:

- 1) USA
- 2) China
- 3) Russia
- 4) France
- 5) UK

2014 Rotating SC Members:

- 6) Chad
- 7) Nigeria
- 8) Rwanda
- 9) Jordan
- 10) South Korea
- 11) Chile
- 12) Argentina
- 13) Australia
- 14) Luxembourg
- 15) Lithuania

States with interests in the region:

- 16) Belarus
- 17) Iran
- 18) Kazakhstan
- 19) Armenia
- 20) Syria
- 21) Hungary
- 22) Poland



- 23) Finland
- 24) Latvia
- 25) Estonia

Further Reading:

- [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)
- [Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine](#)
- [Explanation of Ukrainian War](#)
- [Understanding the Protests that Lead Up to the ousting of Pro-Russian President](#)

We strongly encourage delegates to research primary sources from the Russian annexation of Crimea, or secondary sources written BEFORE the start of last year's invasion.