

Ukraine in Turmoil

1. What is your past Model UN experience?

I have been participating in Model UN since my freshman year of high school and am now a senior. PMUNC will be my thirteenth conference and I attended both PMUNC 2012 and 2013. Most of the committees I have been on have operated as continual crisis committees or incorporated crisis elements. I particularly enjoy crisis committees because of their fast pace and ability to tackle current and past world issues from all angles.

2. What interests you about the Ukrainian crisis?

The Ukrainian crisis presents a return to many of the tensions that defined the 20th century. All though I certainly wouldn't go as far to say that those tensions are to the same level as cold war era ones, they have a similar tone. Similar issues constrain western actions in response to blatant aggression by Putin. Although the US is imposing increasingly aggressive sanctions, they have thus far fallen on deaf ears. Putin does not seem in tune to the pressures of the international community. This poses significant challenges to the US and other western nations in aiding Ukraine. These tensions were further heightened when plane MH17 was shot down over Ukraine. The act of shooting down a civilian aircraft violates international norms on many levels and although Russia was not directly responsible, they certainly ought to be implicated as the likely source of the missiles used by rebels. It will be interesting to see how these tensions continue to play out.

3. What are some of the major factors that influence Ukraine's relationship with both the West and with Russia?

Ukraine is obviously influenced by its Soviet past. Balancing its integration with Europe and relationship with Russia define a much of its foreign policy and ultimately led to its current conflict. When Yanukovich reneged on a trade and cooperative agreement with the EU in favor of strengthen its ties to Russia, protests broke out, escalating into the current situation. Yanukovich also weakened ties with Ukraine and NATO by taking the possibility of Alliance membership off the table. That being said NATO and Ukraine have a history of collaboration and NATO has provided support to Ukraine during this current crisis. Ukraine's relationship with NATO led to Putin directly threatening Ukraine if they became a member, suggesting that Ukraine's relationship with NATO is at odds with their relationship with Russia. Ukraine is also not a member of the EU, though it is part of the EU's European Neighborhood Policy which seeks to strengthen EU relations with neighboring countries. Thus while Ukraine is acting to strengthen its relations with the west it is still not part of many of the influential organizations in the west increasing the benefits of a strong relationship with Russia.

4. The annexation of Crimea—justifiable or a crime? Why? Be concise, be specific.

The annexation of Crimea by Russia was a crime. It violated international norms and showed an aggressive Russia seeking to expand and maintain its sphere of influence. The behavior of Russia in annexing Crimea reflected a return to the goals and methods of the Soviet era. The Soviet Union was not shy about invading countries, such as Afghanistan, with a weak cover story. In the case of Afghanistan the USSR stepped in to prop up a Communist government and expand its sphere of influence. While the Soviet Union did not acknowledge it as such, it was clearly viewed as an invasion and violation of national sovereignty by a large portion of the international community. The case of Crimea is no different. Past claim to the land does not change the circumstances; there are many territories previously controlled by the UK (including Afghanistan) that it would not attempt to lay claim to today. Russia committed a crime in annexing Crimea.