

## **North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

### **Topic: Crisis in Ukraine**

#### **I. Background**

Geographically, Ukraine is divided between fertile lands in the East and forestland in the West, a split which lines up well with the socio-cultural lines. As Russians began to settle in the region, the region began to be known as “Novorossiya” (New Russia) and Russian leaders banned the Ukrainian language in hopes of making the territory permanently Russian. Under Soviet control, Ukraine blossomed into an industrial powerhouse. The country was a major producer for the Soviet arms industry. Ukraine gained independence from the USSR during its break up in 1991.

In 2004, protests ensued following internal reports of voting fraud and government corruption after an election between Viktor Yushchenko and Yanukovych where reports stated that the election had been rigged in the favor of Yanukovych. The conditions for these protests (called the Orange Revolution) were volatile due to decreased economic performance and sporadic reports of government sponsored assassinations of reporters. The national protests were successful and another election was held, leading to Yushchenko’s victory in early 2005.

In 2010, however, Yanukovych won a fair election and promised to “clear the debris of misunderstanding and old problems that emerged” in previous years. In early 2011, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, was arrested for abuse of powers, and eventually jailed in October 2011. President Yanukovych, seen as a pro-Russian supporter, came from the Eastern half of Ukraine. The western half of the Ukraine, however, leans more towards the rest of Europe.

In 2013, Yanukovych abandoned a treaty with the EU that would bring Ukraine closer to Europe and instead stated that Ukraine would seek closer relations with Russia. This occurred as

Russia, under the leadership of Putin, promised Ukraine \$15 billion in return for becoming a part of their free trade area, the Eurasian Economic Community, consisting of former soviet nations Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Following these events, pro-European supporters hit the streets and protests in droves measuring those of the Orange Revolution.

In early January 2014, Ukraine passes strict anti-protest laws resulting in the deaths of 2 from gunshot wounds as violence begins to intensify. Later that month, Parliament forces the resignation of the Prime Minister and repeals the anti-protest laws and passes a bill providing amnesty to protesters who have occupied government buildings. Protesters reject this proposal and violence begins to intensify throughout the month of February.

On February 22, protestors overtake the presidential building as the president disappears and parliament votes to hold an election on May 25 to remove Yanukovich from office through new presidential elections. Yanukovich's most hated rival, former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko is released from jail on the same day Yanukovich appears on television to denounce the coup. In the final days of February, pro-Russian gunmen seize important buildings in the Crimean capital of Simferopol. In the same hours, unidentified gunmen using elite combat tactics overtake airports in Crimea.

On March 1st, the Russian Parliament approves the use of force in order to protect Russian interests in Crimea. The United States, in complete opposition to Russian intervention in the region, denounces the Russian advance into Crimea. The interim president of Ukraine announces the next day that Russia has effectively declared war on Ukraine as Crimea is effectively controlled by a combination of pro-Russian protesters, unidentified gunmen, and Russian forces.

In the following days, the Crimean government voted to hold a referendum to decide whether or not it should become a part of Russia. The United States and the European Union scramble to offer Ukraine trade incentives to stop Russian aggression and move NATO forces to neighboring countries. In the UN, Russia vetoes a resolution criticizing the events occurring in Crimea. Following the referendum in Crimea, 97% of voters agreed for secession from Ukraine in order to join Russia. Russian parliament approves to absorb Crimea 3 days after the vote is held. In the midst of these conflicts, Russia threatens to cut off oil supplies to Kiev, which would also mean a far smaller supply to Europe.

In the month of April, pro-Russian supporters continue to multiply and begin taking large cities on the eastern half of Ukraine. NATO accuses Russia of forming large forces on the borders of Ukraine and acting through subversive agents in Ukraine, but Russia adamantly denies those allegations. Donetsk and Lugansk, two oblasts (provinces) on the fringes of eastern Ukraine have voted to become independent republics. But have been reintegrated into the country following a brief civil war.

## **II. Article IV Concerns with Regards to Russia**

The recent instability in the Ukraine, involving Russian support for ethnic Russian separatists, and the annexation of the Crimean peninsula; has led several members of NATO to request consultations under Article 4 of the North Atlantic treaty. Article 4 reads: “The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.”

The parties to make requests were Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. Invoking article 4 is very rare, with this occasion marking the first time in the history of the alliance that a nation other than Turkey has asked for consultations. Of particular concern was a Russian military

exercise that saw Russian troops massing near the borders Kaliningrad Oblast, on the Baltic Sea between Poland and Lithuania. Consultation is important to NATO because it must make all of its decisions by consensus. Thus all members must be on the same page if NATO is to serve its primary purpose, the protection of its constituent parties.

In response to the requests for consultations the United States, United Kingdom, and France have moved troops and jet fighters into Poland and the Baltics. NATO has scheduled a major summit meeting in Newport, Wales, UK on September 4th-5th and will likely use the opportunity to reassure the member states that border Russian and the Ukraine and potentially invite more members into the alliance. Potential new members include Sweden, Finland, and Macedonia, among others. Though there would have to be major changes in attitude for the former two countries and geopolitical situation for the second two. Macedonia in particular is an excellent demonstration of the effect of NATO's consensus rules, being blocked only by Greece due to a naming dispute. Some polls show that joining NATO is unpopular in Sweden and Finland, though the latter is going to put it to a referendum.

### **III. Questions to Consider**

1. What is my country's relationship the other NATO members (look for potential disputes)?
2. What is my country's relationship with Russia (Identify whether Russia supplies your country with oil, natural gas, or other important resources)?
3. What are my countries military assets?
4. How quickly can my forces be mobilized?
5. Does my country have troops near Russia or Russian backed separatist?
6. Which nations should be let into NATO?

### **IV. Suggested Sites**

<http://www.nytimes.com> - New York Times

<http://www.reuters.com> - Reuters news wire

<http://www.theguardian.com> - The Guardian

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk> - The Telegraph

<http://www.bbc.com/news> - BBC

<http://www.aljazeera.com> - Al Jazeera

<http://www.economist.com> - The Economist

<http://rt.com> - Russia Today

<http://www.ibtimes.com> - International Business Times

<http://www.defensenews.com> - Defense News

<http://www.globalresearch.ca> - A Canadian Think Tank