



NHSMUN I

Northwood High School Model UN



GENERAL ASSEMBLY RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CRISIS

Head Chair: Rutvij Holay
Vice Chair: Aldrin Zheng

WELCOME LETTER

Chair: Rutvij Holay

Delegates,

My name is Rutvij Holay, and I'm honored to be your head chair for this committee. I joined Model United Nations in 7th grade, back when Northwood had a middle school program, mainly because I wanted some speaking activity to do back then. Since then, however, I've realized that MUN isn't just an activity for speakers - due to the variety of topics, ranging from international conflicts to cryptocurrency, as long as you have an interest in something, you will be able to grow that interest through MUN. Even the humble General Assembly, often considered the most basic of MUN committees, often can throw a few surprises your way that help you grow as both a delegate and a person. Thus, no matter why you are here, I'm certain that you will be able to gain something from this conference, and from MUN in general, and I look forward to meeting you very soon!

Kindest Regards,

Rutvij Holay

Vice Chair: Aldrin Zheng

Delegates,

TBD

Best,

Aldrin Zheng

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Russia-Ukraine conflict can be said to have begun in 2013 when Ukraine's president Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign a trade agreement with the European Union and instead chose to improve relations with Russia. This enraged the Ukrainian people who wished to stay independent from Russian control and were concerned with Ukraine's reliance on the Russian economy. This caused the Euromaidan protests in November, resulting in the impeachment of Yanukovich and many violent encounters between the protestors and the government forces. During this crisis, Yanukovich was supported by Russia and the protestors were supported by Europe and the United States. The following year, Russia stormed the Crimean peninsula in order to regain influence in Ukraine and took control of many important government buildings. Under the invasion of Russian forces, Ukraine parliament voted to join the Russian federation, giving up Crimea. (This is known as the Annexation of Crimea).

In 2014, Pro-Russian separatists (people living in Ukraine who are loyal to Russia) seized territory in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine in April and declared their independence. Despite signing of the Minsk agreements which were intended to end fighting in the Donbas region, violent conflict still arose and over 14,000 people have been killed since the signings in 2014 and 2015. Russia has also been supporting the separatist rebels with weapons and has also engaged in small-scale battles with Ukraine mercenaries in the Eastern region. In aims to prevent further Russian aggression, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deployed numerous battalions to protect other Eastern Baltic nations. Under the Trump administration, the United States began to apply more pressure to Russia in 2018 with economic sanctions on key individuals and corporations which could have contributed to reducing Russia's economic growth by 2.5 - 3 percent a year (\$50 billion).

More recently, fighting and tensions have been continuously growing, and legitimate fear of invasion developed when satellite imagery displayed Russian 100,000 troops and military equipment amassing on the border of Ukraine in November of 2021. One poll found that 50% of Russians had a positive view of Ukraine, while about 40% expected the tension to escalate to a war.

This prompted a serious condemnation of Russia's actions from NATO, and a strengthening of defensive measures for Ukraine. The United States pledged to aid \$400 million USD in military support. Russia, on the other hand, issued demands to the United States and NATO to guarantee that Ukraine will never be able to join NATO, which was turned down by the United States and resulted in even greater economic and intelligence support from the United States to Ukraine. Recently, Putin has mentioned the prospect of a nuclear war if Ukraine joins NATO, escalating the tension with a possibility of bigger scale war in Europe. The Biden administration pledged not to send in troops to Ukraine to avoid firefights between the US and Russia, which could easily start World War III. The US instead positioned troops to nearby countries like Poland, to deter further Russian aggression in East Europe.

While Russia claimed that they will be withdrawing their troops, there has not been a sign of withdrawal, and the US reported that Russia actually added 7000 more troops. President Biden announced that he is "convinced" that Putin has made the decision to invade.

PAST UN INVOLVEMENT

The Russo-Ukraine crisis has frequently been a topic of debate at the United Nations, involving not just the two countries but major powers including the United States, and many European nations. Like many other global issues addressed at the organization, the UN's mission is to provide a format where countries can use diplomatic means to gain support for a certain cause, and prevent violence. While it's true that the UN has never succeeded in truly stopping Russian aggression, it did allow Ukraine to make aware of the issue to other countries, and gain global support that helped lessen the Russian threat they were facing.

Following a violent confrontation (Russian separatists seizing Donbas region) in February 2014 that resulted in full-scale conflict between Ukraine military forces and Russian separatists, Russia claimed that their borders at sea had been violated by Ukraine, requesting the UN Security Council for a meeting on the presented issue. This request, however, was rejected through a procedural vote, with 7 countries (including the United States) voting against it (only China and Russia voted *for*). Russian representatives accused Ukraine naval vessels of illegally trespassing Russian territory, while Ukrainian representatives in turn claimed the accusation an "outright lie."

In March 2014 (prior to the annexation of Crimea), the UN council held seven public meetings during which Vitaly Churkin vetoed a resolution that guaranteed Ukraine's continued control over Crimea. In response to this, Ukraine issued a resolution in the General Assembly to reaffirm their sovereignty over the region which gained support from 100 nations.

In 2018, UN Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo called for immediate de-escalation of tensions, specifically urging both Russia and Ukraine to step away from the Sea of Azov and Black Sea, a region of high tension.

Declaring that the UN fully supports regional efforts to reach a peaceful resolution, they called for peaceful approaches in accordance with the UN Charter, while also recognizing the territorial integrity of Ukraine. However, these verbal demands were futile, and with no consequences attached to noncompliance, Russia continued on with the same pattern of aggression in the following years.

In 2020, the Russian delegation hosted four informal Security Council meetings (known as Arria Formula) to present their perspective on the issue, a response to previous Arria Formulas that often challenged Russian interests.

In January 2022, Russia and Ukraine clashed once again at the Security Council, yet this time Russia directly targeted the United States. Russian Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya argued that the U.S. was provoking escalation by falsely accusing Moscow of preparing to invade Ukraine. China came in support of Russia, forcing a vote for private diplomacy, which was turned down by the majority that voted to proceed with public sessions.

BLOC POSITIONS

East Asia: The East Asian nations, including China, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea, are split in their support of Russia and Ukraine. China specifically is one of the biggest allies of Russia, and stands with Russia in opposition to the expansion of NATO. The current crisis provides China with many benefits, namely economic opportunities and diversion from human rights violations. Both countries share the common goal of counteracting the United States on ideological and economic grounds. North Korea has also expressed support in favor of halting US involvement with Ukraine, siding with Russia, their close alliance. Japan and South Korea firmly stand with Ukraine and seek the de-escalation of violent conflict, specifically any nuclear possibilities. India, on the other hand, isolates itself from the conflict, and chose to abstain from the procedural vote on Ukraine at the United Nations Security Council last January.

The Americas: As members of NATO, Canada and the United States are in unyielding support of Ukraine. The United States has stressed the open-door policy of NATO on multiple occasions, which allows for any European state to join NATO if willing to. Furthermore, the US has rejected many Russian requests and has warned that “swift and severe consequences” would be delivered if Ukraine was attacked. Canada has been an ally to Ukraine ever since the conflict first began in 2013, and has provided billions of dollars in economic support and humanitarian aid. The Canadian government is in strong favor of preserving Ukraine’s democratic integrity and has been considering increasing military support through the provision of arms and an extension of a military training program. Meanwhile, Latin America’s role is growing as the tensions between the US and Russia rise. In January, Russian officials suggested deployment of Russian forces to Cuba or Venezuela, which are two close Russian allies. Nicaragua also sides with Russia during this crisis as they previously received support from Russia in various means including arms sales, debt forgiveness, and cryptocurrency collaboration. While Brazil was a close ally of the United States during the Trump administration, the Brazil president Jair Bolsonaro recently declared that Brazil was in “solidarity” with Russia. Putin in

return stated that Brazil is Russia’s most important partner in Latin America.

Europe: The European Bloc, including countries like Britain, Germany, Hungary, and Poland, consists primarily of NATO members that stand with Ukraine in varying degrees of intensity. Britain and Poland are staunch allies of Ukraine, and have supplied Ukraine with weapons for armed conflict and financial support. As Poland borders Ukraine, it is also preparing to house refugees in the event that Russia attacks. Other countries such as Germany support Ukraine as well, but are obligated to be more careful due to significant economic ties with Russia. The Hungarian Prime Minister actually sides a little more with Putin in this instance, and aims to further the two countries’ economic relations.

Africa: Many African nations are choosing to remain neutral in this conflict and are not willing to jeopardize their relations with Russia, as many rely on Russian businesses for their export of natural resources. Russia has also increased their military presence in Africa in recent years, to countries like Libya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Mali. Russia is a primary supplier of arms to Africa and plays a crucial role as a defense ally. Ever since Russia first annexed Crimea in 2014, Africa has never publicly opposed Russia’s actions and has practiced non-interference policies to further more peaceful developments. In January of 2022, the South African government did not provide any responses to the requests for a meeting (with officials from the Department of International Relations and Cooperation) made by Ukrainian ambassadors. Especially as of recently, Russia has made Africa one of the priorities of their foreign relations and has provided economic, political, and humanitarian aid. According to the Federal Customs Service of Russia, the trade between Russia and Africa totaled \$20.4 billion in 2018, with the amount increasing every year.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Ukraine's goal is to use diplomatic means to get Russia to withdraw its troops and cease further military aggression. With more than 100,000 Russian troops amassed at their border, one possible move for Ukraine is entering NATO to gain military backing and discouraging Russia from invading. However, with a threat of nuclear war from Putin, this may be a costly act that could put Ukraine and Europe at the worst state. Of course, the privilege of joining NATO in the first place also depends on whether the alliance will offer its invitation to Ukraine during this time. The "safest" move for Ukraine is convincing other nations to impose economic sanctions on Russia and pressuring economically. Ukraine could also ask its allies for military, or intelligence support. Ukraine must also keep in mind that Russia has a history of withholding petroleum exports to Europe, which makes many European nations reluctant to lend support to Ukraine.

Russia's primary goal is to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO (in addition to Georgia and Moldova). Their nuclear possessions and natural resources are the two key advantages that could be used in diplomacy to their favor. Their biggest disadvantage will likely be economic pressures from many countries and the universal criticisms they face for their aggressions. In addition, the Russian government can expect opposition from its citizens if a war prolongs and results in large Russian casualties. While a large percentage of the older population have past ties to Ukraine and expect a war, much of the younger generations tend to view Ukraine favorably of Ukraine and oppose war. Given the political opposition movements in recent years (most significantly the role Alexei Navalny played in exposing government corruption and leading democratic movements), there could be increased tension between Russia and its people, should Russia suffer from the invasion and the war. In the long

run, Russia desires to claim Crimea and Donbas region, and continue extending their influence over Europe in the coming years.

For all nations, the desired outcome is peace through diplomacy and avoiding war at all costs. The White House has recently argued that Russia may stage a "false flag" (staging an "attack" on their own and putting blame on Ukraine) to provide justification for a war. While the United States vows to impose severe economic sanctions (such as blocking operation of Nord Stream; a natural gas pipeline owned by Swiss company) should Russia invade Ukraine, they have ruled out sending its troops to Ukraine lest a world war starts.

In this complicated situation, it is unlikely that nations will negotiate a resolution that favors all. Russia's hidden intentions and unpredictable move makes it difficult for nations to pinpoint exact actions necessary to establish peace. History has shown that a global war must be avoided at all costs, and it is up to each nation to find creative strategies to settle the Russo-Ukraine conflict in a diplomatic manner.

Questions to consider

1. Is it possible to deter war by building up the military? Or will such action make the situation worse?
2. Should your nation directly support Ukraine in case of invasion? What would be the domestic response from the citizens?
3. If Russia invades, should Ukraine fight back? Or should war be avoided at all cost to save casualties of the citizens?
4. It is widely agreed upon that Russia aspires to take over other prior Soviet states besides Ukraine. What should be done to protect these nations?

WORKS CITED AND SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Bilefsky, Dan, and Richard Perez-Pena. "How the Ukraine Crisis Developed, and Where It Might Be Headed." *The New York Times*, 11 Feb. 2022, www.nytimes.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-europe.html.
- Chadwick, Lauren. "Ukraine crisis: Why now? What's the history? Will Russia invade?" *Euronews*, 4 Apr. 2022, www.euronews.com/2022/02/04/russia-ukraine-border-crisis-explained-why-now-what-s-the-history-what-are-putin-s-motivat.
- "Conflict in Ukraine." *Global Conflict Tracker*, www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine.
- Karklis, Laris, and Ruby Mellen. "Four maps that explain the Russia-Ukraine conflict." *The Washington Post*, 21 Jan. 2022, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/01/21/ukraine-russia-explain-maps/.
- Kirby, Jen, and Jonathan Guyer. "The Russia-Ukraine crisis, explained." *Vox*, 12 Feb. 2022, www.vox.com/22917719/russia-ukraine-invasion-border-crisis-nato-explained.
- Parker, Claire. "Here's where countries stand on the Russia-Ukraine crisis." *The Washington Post*, 2 Feb. 2022, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/02/02/ukraine-russia-international-interests.
- Deutsche Welle. "Germany's Scholz Vows 'Immediate' Sanctions If Russia Invades Ukraine: DW: 13.02.2022." *DW.COM*, 2 Feb. 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-scholz-vows-immediate-sanctions-if-russia-invades-ukraine/a-60763066>.