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NATO

# Negotiating the Resolution to the War in Ukraine

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## Introduction

On February 24th 2022 Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. Officially, in his speech, Putin has started a “special military operation” with the goal of “denazifying” Ukraine from its “fascist leaders placed by the West” in order to “liberate” the people of Ukraine and specifically the Donbas region. Over 2 years as the Russian military has failed to achieve its original goal of “taking Kyiv in 3 days” the goals have become more blended out with no specific target in sight anymore. For Ukraine, the war has led to countless civilian deaths, economic & political instability and millions of people immigrating. For Russia the war has led to a split of the society into unmixable groups; pro-war, anti-war and radically apolitical.

## Key Terms

**Euromaidan:** A wave of mass-scale protests in Ukraine from the fall of 2013 to February 2014. Euromaidan started when the president at the time Viktor Yanukovich sabotaged membership of Ukraine into the European Union. Euromaidan ended with the suspension of Yanukovich and an urgent election.

**Verkhovna Rada:** Ukrainian Parliament that is situated in Kyiv. Verkhovna Rada has over 450 deputies and a speaker overseeing them.

**Coup d’etat:** An overthrow of a current government. This can be done by the military, the political opposition, a government elite or as a result of a revolution by the people of a state. Coup d’etat is a sign of extreme instability of all government institutes, the economy and social sentiments.

**NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, was founded in 1949 in order to oppose the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics (USSR) and later Russia. NATO has 31 member states, mostly European countries and the United States of America.

## General Overview

## History of Conflict

The conflict started in 2014 after pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich lost the presidential chair as a result of multi-month protests of Euromaidan. As a result of Euromaidan, the government of Ukraine announced an early election in February 2014 due to the suspension of Yanukovich as president (followed by his fleeing from the country). Petro Poroshenko won the elections with 54.7% of the voters. Poroshenko was set to step into office in June of the same year with Oleksandr Turchynov (Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada) temporarily assuming the office following the revolution. Using the opportunity of political instability in Ukraine, Vladimir Putin who has recently stepped back into the presidential office after his inauguration has invaded and captured the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea. Putin has capitalised on a couple of factors that made the invasion possible; after Euromaidan, the government institutes were in a state of shock at a new non-functioning government, and the people of Crimea saw the suspension of Yanukovich as a coup d'etat and were mostly turned against the new government with the radicalisation of local pro-Russian groups. The events of Euromaidan also highlighted a split in Ukrainian society between pro-Ukrainian North and West and pro-Russian South and East of the country. After capturing Crimea Putin has annexed the region into the territory of the Russian Federation, an action that was not recognised by the majority of the world. A small group of military Russians who participated in the annexation of Crimea entered the territory of Ukraine on the 12th of April capturing the administration of Sloviansk. After that with large support and participation of local separatists and pro-Russian Ukrainians, the groups continued to capture administrations in the East of the country in cities such as Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv and others. The Russian government also continued to fund and distribute weaponry among the population and separatists in the region. The Ukrainian government at the time started an "Anti Terrorist Operation". Because of the unprepared Ukrainian military and unorganised chaos of the plan of action, the Ukrainian military was forced to retreat on the 23rd of April. The local government has created referendums in Donetsk and Luhansk regions hoping for the Russian administration to notice the striving for separation and annexation of the territories to Russia. However, Russia has not recognised the referendums and instead continued to hold the positions in Donbas to cause chaos in Ukraine and prevent its membership in NATO. Over the next 8 years, the conflict went on with occasional attempts to call a ceasefire such as Geneva negotiations, Minsk Agreement 1 & Minsk Agreement 2. Even though the conflict has experienced exacerbations and consolation



the region was under danger and fights throughout the entirety of 8 years. In February 2022 the self-proclaimed heads of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) (both assigned their seats by the Kremlin) made a speech to Vladimir Putin asking him to recognise regions as sovereign states. Putin has made a speech announcing his recognition of DPR and LPR and calling for Ukraine to leave the territories of both. A couple of days later, on 24th February 2022, Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine with the proclaimed goal of “denazifying” and “freeing” the people of Ukraine from its “fascist” government. The invasion was launched from the territories of Russia, Belarus and Crimea.

### **Political developments for Ukraine**

As mentioned before, Euromaidan has led to a worsening split within the Ukrainian society between the pro-Ukrainian West and the pro-Russian East. The escalation of the conflict into a full-scale war has led to the radicalisation of said society split into far left and far right. Now the Ukrainian territory has political views such as ultra-Ukrainian-nationalistic margins and Fascist pro-Russian separatists. It is important to understand that both groups, although holding completely different viewpoints, with only the death and destruction of the opposite side with no chance of peaceful conflict resolution therefore neither should be encouraged in their beliefs and ideas. Zelenskiy has also become an increasingly unpopular politician as he was unable to provide a quick victory and has made a series of unpopular political/military decisions. For example, Zelensky made any negotiations with Russia impossible by banning them in their entirety in the constitution of the country. The country is also under very strict military censorship and propaganda.

### **Political developments for Russia**

As soon as the Russian government invaded Ukraine in 2022, it passed a series of oppressive laws creating strict military propaganda with prison sentences in case of any opposition even if it is just a social media anti-war post. Repressions have led to millions of people immigrating outside of Russia in fear of political prosecution for viewpoints. The Russian opposition has been divided in two: the ones that have immigrated in fear of warrants given out against them and the ones imprisoned due to their anti-war standpoint. All political rallies are immediately shut down with all of the participants imprisoned on the spot. On the 16th of February 2024, the leader of the Russian opposition Alexey Navalny was killed in a maximum security prison causing mass funeral

attendance on the 1st of March 2024 with thousands of people showing all to pay respect and farewell to a politician they hoped once would be their president. On the day of his death, all around the world millions of Russian immigrants participated in political rallies in memory of Navalny.

### **International reactions**

On the 12th of October 2022, the United Nations called for an 11th emergency special session on the question of war in Ukraine. General Assembly debated a resolution condemning the Russian Federation's annexation of four eastern Ukraine regions. Belarus, DPRK, Eritrea, Russia and Syria have voted against said resolution. Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe have abstained from the vote. The resolution was passed with 141 member states voting for it.

### **International consequences**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to 45 countries imposing sanctions against the Russian government, the Russian economy and the Russian people. Over 1,000 companies have left Russia as a result of protesting against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has issued a warrant for president Vladimir Putin for his war crimes, banning his entrance in the majority of the world.

## **Major Parties/Countries Involved**

**Ukraine:** Ukraine is one of the most important parties involved as the conflict depicted in this research report is taking place in Eastern Ukraine and impacts the entire country bringing it into a military survival mode with endless chaos, horror and danger.



**Russia:** Russian Federation is the main aggressor in the war. Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014 and launched a full-scale invasion in 2022 causing the biggest war in Europe since World War II.

**United Nations:** The United Nations plays an important role in conflict resolution. It can provide a platform for negotiation and an opportunity for every state to express its opinions and admit resolutions. Although resolutions in the General Assembly are not legally binding, resolutions passed in the Security Council are.

**NATO:** NATO is a crucial actor in the conflict as it has been said by both sides that the hidden goal of the war (ever since 2014) was to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO. By joining NATO Ukraine would bring the alliance right to the Russian border “posing a threat to sovereignty” according to Russian propagandists.

**United States of America:** The United States of America plays a crucial role in conflict for a couple of factors. The USA is the biggest weaponry sponsor of Ukraine, helping the country to keep fighting for its sovereignty. The Russian government sees the States as the main “enemy” on the world stage and started the conflict in order to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and falling “under American influence”.

## Timeline of Key Events

**1991:** Ukraine gained independence with the fall of the USSR

**20 Feb - 21 Mar 2014:** Russia invaded Ukraine annexing Crimea

**12 Apr 2014:** Russia has captured Slavyansk starting the Donbas conflict

**23 Apr 2014:** The defeat of the Ukrainian army by separatists sponsored by the Russian government

**11 - 12 Feb 2015:** The Minsk agreement was signed calling for a cease-fire in Donbas The agreement was signed by leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, France and Germany (the last two were present as a matter of peacekeeping)

**24 Feb 2022:** Russia invades Ukraine from existing pre-captured territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Crimea and the territory of Belarus



**16 Feb 2024:** Alexey Navalny was killed in a maximum security prison by Russian authorities

**1 Mar 2024:** Funeral of Alexey Navalny

## Possible Solutions:

Creating negotiations between the head of Ukraine Vladimir Zelenskiy and the head of Russia Vladimir Putin. Negotiations can help reach a cease-fire and negotiate a solution in order to instil peace and stability in the region to prevent civilian deaths and the destruction of critical infrastructure.

Imposing harsher sanctions on the Russian government and economy. The sanctions should target the elites and presidential administration instead of the oppressed Russian population. Sanctions imposed currently have a prolonged effect instead of immediate consequences that help solve the conflict.

Imposing an international peacekeeping mission with the use of the United Nations peacekeepers. International neutral peacekeepers can be deployed in the area in order to monitor the ceasefire and the protection of civilians.

Supporting reforms within Ukraine in order to strengthen the Ukrainian society and the democratic spirit. Currently, the Ukrainian public is divided on where the conflict should be prolonged and how it should be resolved.

Confidence-building measures between states could be a potential way to resolve the issue. Encouraging and supporting war prisoners' exchange, humanitarian corridors and other means of cooperation from both sides can help strengthen trust between the fighting sides and de-escalate not only the civilian deaths but also the conflict itself.

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