



# **WrightMUN**

## **High School Model UN Background Guide**

### **Security Council**

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## **Security Council Background Guide**

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

#### **Message from the Director of the Security Council**

Delegates,

Welcome to the WrightMUN! My name is Rama Shtaieh and I look forward to seeing the work you all will put forth as a part of the Security Council (SC). The SC is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Each delegate will represent the 15 Member States that make up the SC and each hold one vote. Five of those Member States (the Permanent Five or P5)-- the US, UK, France, Russia and China – have the additional benefit of the veto: a single negative vote on a draft resolution ensures the defeat of its passage.

Under the Charter of the United Nations (UN), all Member States are obligated to comply with the Council's decisions. The Council will call on the parties involved to settle the existence of a threat to international stability through peaceful means and recommend methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. This may be achieved through the imposition of sanctions or even authorizing the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

This background guide is intended to offer delegates a starting point for research on the Russia-Ukraine Crisis, but not to limit research to the content provided within it. The background guide will offer the necessary information to begin delving deeper into the committee topic and provide delegates with the necessary tools to cooperate with the committee.

Remember to have fun and that the staff are here to support you and to provide you with guidance. Therefore, I invite you to take advantage of us in terms of asking for help and to make the most of your time serving among the rest of your fellow delegates.

Sincerely,

Rama Shtaieh

Director, Security Council

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

### ***Introduction***

By the Spring of 2023, the world had already experienced over a year of war dating to Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. In the ensuing 14-plus months, the world has witnessed and wrestled with various security, economic, and humanitarian concerns. From refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), alleged war crimes, and the economic disruption of grain exports and energy sanctions, to the continued violence and chances for wider and escalating war, the crisis in Ukraine represents the kind of "threat to international peace and security" on which the UN was founded in 1945. The Security Council was specifically designated to identify and respond to such threats. While one may expect Russia's veto to paralyze effective cooperation and problem solving in the Security Council, there are possible areas for negotiation and diplomacy that will test the skills and will of the participating members.

### ***Background***

The status of Ukraine as an independent country has been fraught since the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or Soviet Union) at the end of 1991. The 15 successor states to the USSR, including Russia and Ukraine, underwent diplomatic negotiations about the future of the countries. Most, including Ukraine, joined a loose confederation called the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), maintaining economic ties to Russia while becoming politically independent sovereign states in the United Nations. Some joined a Collective Security Treaty Organization with Russia, and Belarus went so far as to join Russia in a "Union State."

Ukraine's relations with Russia ebbed and flowed based on which leader has been in power, but from the start Ukraine's intent was an independent statehood. This position became increasingly supported by Western powers, who worked with Russia and Ukraine to ensure smooth political and security transitions. The *Lisbon Protocol* (1992) reflected a process by which Ukraine renounced its possession of Soviet-era nuclear weapons, while the subsequent *Budapest Memorandum* (1994) between Russia, US, and UK reaffirmed "their commitment... to respect the Independence and Sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine" as well as to "seek immediate UNSC action to provide assistance to Ukraine ...if Ukraine should become a victim of an act of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used." Both Russia and Ukraine were invited into NATO's Partnership for Peace program, with Russia ascending to membership in a new NATO-Russia Council while Ukraine at various times signaled interest in NATO membership through "Action Plans for Accession."

Russia's 2007 public opposition to NATO expansion to Ukraine and (former Soviet state of) Georgia, led to tensions with the US who had kept the door open for both countries to potentially become future members. Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008 included support for and defense of separatist states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which remain unrecognized by the international community. The US provided military support for the Georgian government in that crisis.

In 2013-2014, pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich faced mass protests over the so-called “Dictator Laws” and his reversal of plans to join an “EU Association Agreement.” French, German and Polish diplomats negotiated a February 2014 deal for Ukraine to rescind the “Dictator Laws,” form a unity government, and call for early elections, but continued protests led Yanukovich to flee the capitol. The so-called “Maidan Revolution” replaced the President with an interim and new elections, which Russia considered a Western inspired coup.

In response, Russia militarily intervened into Ukraine in 2014 with “peacekeepers” approved to stay in Ukraine until “normalization of the socio-political situation.” In March 2014 Russia seized the Ukrainian territory of Crimea after a quick Russia-orchestrated referendum claimed that Crimean citizens wished to join Russia. That same year, rebellions in Ukrainian republics of Donetsk and Luhansk began in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine, with evidence of Russian support to the rebellion.

Out of the war of 2014-2015 came negotiations leading to the Minsk I and Minsk II agreements negotiated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and signed by Russia, Ukraine and representatives of the Luhansk and Donetsk separatists. The UN Security Council endorsed these peace proposals in S/Res/2202 (2015).<sup>1</sup> Both involved ceasefires and calls for the withdrawal of “foreign militias” and the “disarmament of illegal groups”, while advocating both the restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty as well as “decentralization” for the breakaway regions. From 2015-2022, the Russia-Ukraine crisis remained a “Frozen conflict” of low-grade skirmishes and warfare, while the Minsk calls for “regular meetings to fulfill the agreements” continued without success. In 2018 Ukraine formally withdrew from the CIS, and under new Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US President Biden, talks of NATO membership resurfaced.

Russian troop movements and prepositioning around Ukraine began in late 2021 into January 2022, and on February 22 Russia recognized the independence of the Republics of Luhansk and Donetsk. On February 24, Russia commenced what it called a “special military operation” into Ukraine. Over one year later, the war persists and numerous security, economic and humanitarian issues have arisen, in addition to the overarching question of a negotiated peace, as demonstrated by the Security Council’s February 17, 2023 meeting calling for “an implementable peace.”<sup>2</sup>

### ***Existing frameworks***

In response to the military offensive launched in Ukraine by Russia February 23-24, the United Nations (UN) acknowledged the attack as a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and to go against Article 2(4) of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1948).<sup>3</sup> With the Security Council facing a Russian veto, the General Assembly took up the issue and the vote in

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<sup>1</sup>[https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc11785.doc.htm?\\_gl=1\\*fkldc\\*\\_ga\\*MTc5MzE5NzcxNy4xNjc1OTU5OTkw\\*\\_ga\\_TK9BQL5X7Z\\*MTY3Njg0NDIzMy41LjEuMTY3Njg0NDc0My4wLjAuMA..](https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc11785.doc.htm?_gl=1*fkldc*_ga*MTc5MzE5NzcxNy4xNjc1OTU5OTkw*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTY3Njg0NDIzMy41LjEuMTY3Njg0NDc0My4wLjAuMA..)

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133647>

<sup>3</sup> <https://unric.org/en/the-un-and-the-war-in-ukraine-key-information/>

favor of condemning Russia in General Assembly resolution ES-11/1. The action of the General Assembly originally arose when the Security Council was hampered in crisis by the veto through the Uniting for Peace mandate established in the 1950s, and this process has been reaffirmed in *Resolution 377A(V)* for handling the emergency created by the crisis in Ukraine.

In addition to the legality of the war, issues have arisen concerning the annexation of territory, the human rights and charges of war crimes, the security of nuclear facilities, and the matter of economic effects of the war on grain and energy exports. Following the passage of A/Res/ES-11/1, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) adopted a resolution on March 4 calling for the “swift and verifiable” withdrawal of Russian troops and Russian-backed armed groups from Ukrainian territory.<sup>4</sup> The UNHCR established an Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. This Commission of Inquiry was mandated to build upon the work of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) and in close coordination with the HRMMU and the Office of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>5</sup> The HRMMU, deployed in March 2014, monitors and publicly reports on the human rights situation in Ukraine with the aim of strengthening human rights protection, fostering access to justice, and ensuring that perpetrators of human rights violations are held to account. Through their work, the HRMMU has been able to provide training to more than 1,000 state officials throughout the country and aided over 800 individuals affected by grave conflict-related human rights violations to receive legal assistance.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these efforts, multiple other UN bodies have come together to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict and increased efforts to curb the violence within Ukraine. The UN, along with other humanitarian NGOs and regional IOs, have launched coordinated emergency appeals totaling nearly \$1.7 billion to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to people in Ukraine, and facing a worsening crisis, increased the emergency appeal to \$2.24 billion.<sup>7</sup>

Russia’s conduct in the war has come under scrutiny, with the International Criminal Court opening an investigation on allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>8</sup> At the February 2023 Munich Security Conference, US Vice President Kamala Harris accused Russia of committing crimes against humanity, citing several incidents as evidence of a systematic pattern against civilians.<sup>9</sup>

Russia’s annexation of Ukrainian territory, begun with Crimea in 2014, included claims on the provinces of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in September 2022. After the veto of

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<sup>4</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113292>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iic/hr-ukraine/index>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ukraine/our-presence#:~:text=The%20UN%20Human%20Rights%20Monitoring,occupied%20by%20the%20Russian%20Federation.>

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1116882>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2022/the-international-criminal-courts-investigation-in-ukraine>

<sup>9</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/us-russia-ukraine-crimes-against-humanity-harris-cee87f06cbf3fcd37e0bb398360c8ee>

a Security Council draft resolution condemning and nullifying these annexation claims, the General Assembly adopted the equivalent in General Assembly res. ES-11/4.

Nuclear plant security is another issue of concern for the international community and Security Council. UN brokered agreements brought IAEA inspections to Chernobyl in June 2022, and similar inspections were agreed for Zaporizhzhia in September 2022.

The war in Ukraine has affected the world through disrupted energy and grain markets. UN mediated cooperation in July 2022 yielded the *Black Sea Grain Initiative*, creating a humanitarian corridor for exports to world markets. A Joint Coordination Centre was created to monitor the implementation and to respond to matters arising from the initiative, as were two Task Forces to monitor Ukrainian and Russian exports respectively.<sup>10</sup> The renewal of these programs may be considered in the Security Council.

## **Conclusion**

With the situation in Ukraine becoming increasingly desperate and the crimes against humanity going largely unchecked, it is the responsibility of the SC to ensure that proper measures are taken in order to provide Ukraine and its citizens with the humanitarian assistance they need. In order to guarantee the sovereignty of Ukraine and that the parties involved are held accountable, cooperation between Member States is imperative.

## **Questions to consider**

Below are suggestions for research and cooperation in committee. Consider what effective action the Security Council can accomplish given Russia's veto and role in the war. Are there areas of cooperation and compromise?

1. How can the conflict be resolved? What can be done to prevent future threats to territorial integrity in this conflict and the surrounding Member States while promoting an accord between them? Should arms embargoes and sanctions be considered, and in what conditions? Can reparations or compensation be made to Ukraine and its annexed regions as part of a viable solution?
2. How can the Security Council address the needs of refugees and IDPs within the conflict zone?
3. How can the nuclear safety of power plants in the conflict zone be managed?
4. What, if any, war crimes or crimes against humanity, are found to be taken place by combatant parties, and what can be done to address them?
5. What threats to international peace and security surround the shipping and exports out of the Black Sea to world markets?

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<sup>10</sup>[https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative?gclid=Cj0KCQiArsefBhCbARIsAP98hXR88z7C6qL8hf\\_cKH3FwiLOdBYviPtUueF9d5w0IgM\\_2nf4a8rEtAYaAtDeEALw\\_wcB](https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative?gclid=Cj0KCQiArsefBhCbARIsAP98hXR88z7C6qL8hf_cKH3FwiLOdBYviPtUueF9d5w0IgM_2nf4a8rEtAYaAtDeEALw_wcB)