Understanding the Ukraine Crisis

Resources for Educators

August 13, 2014
Outline

• Background information
• Causes of the crisis
• Trigger of the crisis
• Key Groups in Ukraine crisis
• Interests of Russia, Europe and the US
• International response
• Conclusion
What is Ukraine?

- Ukraine, is the biggest frontier nation separating Russia and the European Union.
- The name “Ukraine” literally translates as “on the edge” or “on the border”.
- Ukraine has been on the edge of empires for centuries, frequently divided.
- A religious experience in Ukraine defines as a division between Greek Catholicism (western part) and Russian Orthodoxy from 1596 until the present.

Map source: [http://www-db.in.tum.de/teaching/ws1112/hsufg/ukraine_kpi/images/map_eur.gif](http://www-db.in.tum.de/teaching/ws1112/hsufg/ukraine_kpi/images/map_eur.gif)
What is Ukraine?
The Soviet period of Ukraine history is controversial (1922-1991)

- The Ukrainian national territory was united
- In 1954, Crimea, was shifted from Russia to Ukraine
- The Ukrainian economy underwent massive industrialization
- "Ukrainization" policy – an attempt to introduce Ukrainian language into all spheres of public life
- *Purges* – extermination of the national intelligentsia
- The peasantry fell victim to forced collectivization
- *Holodomor* – millions starved to death in 1932-33
- World War II – population declined from 41.6 million in 1941 to 27.4 million in 1945
- The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant exploded in 1986
What is Ukraine?

- The second largest country in Europe
- Population of 44.3 million
- Multiethnic, multilingual, multi-confessional society

http://www.nationsonline.org/maps/countries_europe_map.jpg
Causes of the crisis

• Unresolved political identity crisis; lack of unity among political elite
• Widespread government corruption, kleptocracy and embezzlement of state funds
• Weak economy, unequal access to economic resources, and social dissatisfaction
• Competition between Russia and the EU over geo-economic orientation of Ukraine
Political and Linguistic divide

Ukraine's divide
2010 election results

Russian as native language

Tymoshenko: 70%+  50-69%
Yanukovych: 70%+  50-69%

Less than 20%  20-50%  50%+

Source: 2001 national census

http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/73094000/gif/_73094671_ukraine_divide_2.gif
Competition between the EU and Russia over geo-economic orientation of Ukraine

• **Eastern Partnership Program** launched in 2009 to associate Ukraine economically and politically with the EU

• **Eurasian Customs Union**, energized in 2009, tried to attract Ukraine to a Russian-led community in Eurasia to promote further economic integration.
### Perceived Economic Benefits of Association with the European Union vs. Membership in Russia-led Customs Union, April 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>EU Association is Good for the Economy</th>
<th>Customs Union Membership is Good for the Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Ukraine</td>
<td>52.50%</td>
<td>43.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>76.30%</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>57.90%</td>
<td>39.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>36.10%</td>
<td>58.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>40.40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Razumkov Center poll, April 2013, national sample of 2010 respondents.
Trigger of the crisis

Pro-EU protest in Independence Square in Kiev, December 2013

- then-President Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign a historical political and trade agreement with the EU in November 2013

- The wave of protests and civil unrest began in November 21, 2013 leading to “revolution” after a series of violent events culminating with the ousting of Yanukovich in February 2014

[http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/73683000/jpg/_73683361_4a15676e-af54-4e30-8b86-6cace8dc5a9f.jpg]
Dynamics of the international crisis

- Russia invaded and annexed Crimea in March
- Pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk declare independence in May.
- The relationship between Russia and the West dropped to its lowest points since the Cold War
- Petro Poroshenko elected as a fifth President of Ukraine in May
- Ongoing fighting between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian security forces
- Malaysian passenger airplane MH17 was shot down in July
Human Death Toll

• At least 1,300 people have been killed during the on-going conflict

• 298 passengers of the flight MH17

• 285,000 others forced to leave their homes

• The fighting between pro-Russian rebels and Ukrainian government troops has created a lawless environment where armed militants control the population using arbitrary detentions, torture, and executions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex-Pro-Government</th>
<th>Current government</th>
<th>Opposition to ex-government</th>
<th>Other actors, Ukraine</th>
<th>Foreign Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ex-President Yanukovich</td>
<td>President Petro Poroshenko</td>
<td>EU supporters</td>
<td>Verkhovna Rada - Parliament</td>
<td>Russia, President Putin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchs and the Party of regions</td>
<td>Arseny Yatsenyuk</td>
<td>“Fatherland” party, Yulia Timoshenko</td>
<td>Ukrainian Media</td>
<td>Germany, Poland, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Service</td>
<td>Fatherland party</td>
<td>Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for reforms (UDAR)</td>
<td>Ukrainian Olympic Athletes</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilantes</td>
<td>Parliament, Oleksandr Turchinov</td>
<td>Far-right nationalist party “Svoboda”</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avazov, Minister of Internal Affairs</td>
<td>Ultra-nationalist and neo-fascist group Right Sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why does Ukraine matter to Russia?

- Geographic location of Ukraine is strategically vital to Russia as a buffer against the West
- Crimean Peninsula is a strategically important for Russia’s navy and commercial exports
- A critical pipeline route to deliver energy to Europe
- Without Ukraine there is no Eurasian Union
- Ukraine is considered as a breadbasket (30% of the world’s black soil)
- Russia considers Ukraine within its sphere of influence
- Russia’s pressure on Ukraine are deeply rooted in economics, history and culture
Why Does Ukraine matter to the EU?

• Ukraine is significant for the EU in terms of political stability and security
• Ukraine is significant for the potential for greater economic and trade links
• Ukraine remains the most important energy transit country and it’s one of the biggest producer of electricity in Europe
• The Russia factor: Moscow’s pressure on Ukraine may complicate EU trade and other relations with Ukraine
Why Does Ukraine matter to the US?

• Ukraine is significant for the US in terms of strategic geopolitical interest averting Russian domination in the region.
• The crisis illustrates that Europe is still not politically stable and secure.
• The Ukraine crisis has serious global implications: Russia’s behavior in Ukraine, if left unsanctioned, will have a negative impact on the international norms of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.
International Response

• Sanctions against Russia have been the centerpiece of the U.S. and EU response to Putin’s interference in Ukraine
• Sanctions intended to end Russian support for insurgency in eastern Ukraine
• US and EU support Ukrainian government military action against separatists in civilian areas
Russian Response

- Trade sanctions on western agricultural products
- Future restrictions on gas supply
- Continued support for frozen conflict
- Increase Eurasian orientation and develop links with countries of Asia-Pacific region, China and India, among others
Conclusion

• The Ukraine crisis has led Russia openly challenge the post-Cold War settlement in Europe
• Violation of international law – sanctity of borders and territorial integrity
• Dramatic shift in Russian-Western relations; trust that existed in US-Russia relations has been shattered
• Russia created obstacles for future accommodation with Ukraine, the United States and Europe
• Russia’s goal to keep Ukraine as neutral ground, a buffer, between Russia to the east, and the EU and NATO to the west probably will remain
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