



NHSMUN

**CRISIS-NATO**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Secretary-General**  
**Terry Wang**

**Director-General**  
**Jordan Baker**

**Delegate Experience**  
**Nastasja Vásquez**

**Global Partnerships**  
**Daniela Maciel**  
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**Kellie Fernandez**  
**Grace Harb**  
**Adiva Ara Khan**

**Anshul Magal**  
**Analucia Tello**  
**Sofia Velasco**  
**Renata Venzor**

Dear Delegates,

I am excited to welcome you to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Crisis Committee! My name is Cacilia Rollet and I am your Session I Director. My co-director and I cannot wait to meet all of you in March and witness an incredible debate. The current war between Russia and Ukraine is a very complex issue and this background guide only covers a subset of ideas to fuel your research and debate. This topic is one of the most pressing issues for the world, especially NATO, with many new events daily. We hope you learn from this topic and better understand the complex relationship between Russia and Ukraine.

This is my second year as a NHSMUN staff member! Last year, I was an Assistant Director for the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). During this time, I had an incredible experience and these experiences led to my return for this year. I have participated in Model UN since I was a sixth grader and even attended NHSMUN as a delegate twice as part of the International Bank for Resources and Development (IBRD) and United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) committees. My Model UN experience covers a large variety of committee types and sizes, including crisis committees, so I hope I can share my knowledge with all of you. Participating in Model UN has helped me grow so much as a person and has given me confidence, especially with public speaking.

I currently attend the University of Delaware as a second year studying Psychology on the Pre-med track with minors in Biochemistry and Photography. At school, I can usually be found attending club meetings or at coffee shops studying with friends. Outside of school, I am a huge ice hockey fan, having grown up around the sport. During games, I am often found in the press box taking photos. Cooking is another passion of mine, with my favorite dish to make being any pasta dish. Although I love cooking, I also enjoy going out for food with friends. Traveling is also a huge part of my life as I visit my family overseas every year.

When deciding on a topic, we looked very heavily at current events and what we thought you all would enjoy debating. This topic has many different sides and is quite complex so we can't wait to see the innovative and unique idea you bring to conference in March. Your goal as delegates is to consider NATO's role and powers as well as your countries' role in the war.

Please feel free to email us with any questions you may have or if you need any advice as the committee approaches in March. I can't wait to meet all of you soon. Good luck!

Best wishes,

Cacilia Rollet

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Specialized: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Session I



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**Renata Venzor**

Dear Delegates,

It is with joy and pride that I write to you as one of your Directors for this year's Crisis: North Atlantic Treaty Organization! My name is Luisa Luo and I will be at the Hilton Midtown for Session II in March. Over my summer break, my co-director and I worked tirelessly to produce this Background Guide to inform you of the critical events related to the Russo-Ukrainian War, some of which you are familiar with by tuning into the news.

I was first introduced to MUN at the age of 13. Attending a bilingual middle school in Beijing, my only platform to practice English was through public speaking. Hence, I quickly fell in love with this competitive extracurricular and being able to express my thoughts eloquently. Now as a college sophomore, I am actively involved in the MUN team at USC, where I serve as the team trainer, coaching my peers. This allowed me to further hone my skills as a delegate, and more importantly, I made life-long friends by being a part of the club. This is my second year at NHSMUN, and I am excited to see how this experience transforms me and you all. I want to pass on the torch of helping high school students develop professional abilities and discover themselves through the process.

Outside of MUN, I am double majoring in Narrative Studies and Sociology, with a double minor in Thematic Approaches to Humanities & Society and Cultural Diplomacy. When I am not running speech roasts and preparing for conferences, you can find me attending meetings for the Undergraduate Student Government, committing to volunteering work with the USC Helenes and reviewing prose and poetry as a literary magazine editor. I firmly believe that studying the Social Sciences has a huge intersection with creativity and innovation, and I hope to carry forward this interdisciplinary spirit in every aspect of life.

Engaging in simulations for NATO is not an easy task. Considering today's socio-political climate, I encourage you all to commit to a compassionate perspective, not just perceiving this political entity as an operational authority but also as foreign representatives responding to sovereignty questions and life-threatening emergencies. Beyond the current crisis in Eastern Europe, you are to confront border disputes and power dynamics among national leaders. My Assistant Director and I are looking forward to chairing the committee and hearing what you have to offer to resolve the ongoing global conflicts.

Sincerely,

Luisa Luo

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Specialized: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Committee Session II



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## A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! We are Terry Wang and Jordan Baker, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. We are thrilled to welcome you to New York City in March.

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

**Realism and accuracy:** Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

**Educational emphasis, even for awards:** At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

**Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility:** With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

**Extremely engaged staff:** At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference,

delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

**Empowering participation:** The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

**Focused committee time:** We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2025 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Terry Wang  
Secretary-General

Jordan Baker  
Director-General

## A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

**I: Topic Background** – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

**II: Country Policy** – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

**III. Proposed Solutions** – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length.** The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via [myDais](#) on or before **February 21, 2025**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 31, 2025**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at [info@imuna.org](mailto:info@imuna.org).

**Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.**

## Committee History

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established in 1949 with the purpose of protecting its member states through defensive means. Originally established to defend Europe from aggression by the Soviet Union, NATO now works to protect the geopolitical security of its 32 member states.<sup>1</sup> The structure, purpose, and organization of NATO is established by NATO's founding document, the North Atlantic Treaty. Perhaps the best-known section of the North Atlantic Treaty is Article 5, which declares that "an armed attack against one or more [members]... shall be considered an attack against them all," establishing a unique transatlantic collective defense guarantee that has protected NATO member states since.<sup>2</sup>

NATO's headquarters are located in Brussels, Belgium, where the North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO's senior political decision-making body, is located. NATO members and partners send permanent delegations to Brussels to represent their country's interests in weekly council meetings.<sup>3</sup> The NAC also includes a number of subcommittees that specialize in specific administrative work or policy focuses, including the Senior Political Committee, which drafts statements and communiqués on the Council's behalf; the Defence Planning Committee, which provides guidance and recommendations to NATO military authorities; and the Nuclear Planning Group, which focuses on addressing nuclear proliferation and encouraging communication between members on nuclear weapons policies.<sup>4</sup> Another major decision-making body is the Military Committee (MC) which provides advice on military policy for member states.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, NATO holds annual summits to introduce new policies, and reinforce existing partnerships. The most recent summit was held in Washington D.C. in July 2024.<sup>6</sup>

NATO's decisions are made collectively on the basis of unanimity and consensus. Members of the council work together to seek out compromise and establish mutually acceptable solutions.<sup>7</sup> In addition to its 32 member states, NATO maintains relations with over 40 "NATO partners," including non-member countries and international organizations. This includes NATO's Partnership for Peace program, which maintains bilateral cooperation with 18 partner countries in Europe, as well as the Mediterranean Dialogue, which partners with seven non-NATO countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Through these partnerships, NATO collaborates with non-member states to protect regional security and combat global issues including cyber security, maritime security, and disaster relief.<sup>8</sup> NATO has also directly partnered with the United Nations (UN) since the early 1990s, assisting UN Peacekeepers in intervention missions in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Libya, and providing security escorts for shipments in Somalia.<sup>9</sup>

In NATO's 75 years of operations, it has established itself as a key player on the international security stage through a variety of interventions and operations both in the North Atlantic region and around the world. NATO has also intervened in a number of conflicts that the organization deemed sufficiently threatening to broader European geopolitical security, including the Yugoslav Wars in the decade following the Soviet Union's dissolution. In recent years, NATO has continued expanding its relationships with its partners and coordinating responses to emerging geopolitical threats including the Russo-Ukrainian War.<sup>10</sup> NATO has historically needed to navigate a complex series of international conflicts in order to develop actionable policy. While Ukraine is not a member state within the organization, NATO member states should consider the importance of continuing to aid Ukraine's

1 "What is NATO?" NATO, accessed September 27, 2024. <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/>.

2 "The North Atlantic Treaty." NATO, last modified October 19, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm).

3 "NATO Headquarters." NATO, last modified March 28, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49284.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49284.htm).

4 "Part II: Policy and Decision Making." NATO, accessed September 23, 2024. <https://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2006/hb-en-2006/part2.pdf>.

5 "The NATO Command Structure." NATO, February 2018. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_02/1802-factsheet-nato-command-structure\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_02/1802-factsheet-nato-command-structure_en.pdf).

6 "Topic: NATO Summits." NATO, July 12, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50115.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50115.htm).

7 "NATO's Partnerships." NATO, last modified August 6, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_84336.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84336.htm).

8 "70 Years of NATO: Shared Values, Historic Achievements, and Defending our Future Together." U.S Embassy & Consulates in Italy, April 1, 2019. <https://it.usembassy.gov/70-years-of-nato-shared-values-historic-achievements-and-defending-our-future-together>.

9 "Relations with the United Nations." NATO, July 25, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50321.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm).

10 "Operations and Missions: Past and Present." last modified July 10, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52060.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52060.htm).



defense while still bearing in mind their economic and military capabilities, domestic affairs, and national security priorities.

## Simulation

This committee will be operating with some modified procedural aspects because of the unique way that delegates will be able to change the flow of the committee. There will be less of an emphasis on formal debate and, because of the nature of a crisis simulation, the committee will encourage fast and detailed debate. Because delegates represent individuals tied to areas of government as opposed to the countries in general, roles are more specific, while also giving delegates the task of ensuring that their actions are appropriate for both who they represent and the governing body as a whole.

Because this crisis simulation has specific responsibilities and mandates, delegates must be aware that each action taken must follow their representative's unique policy while also falling in line with actions prescribed in the governing body's mandate. If an action is taken outside of its mandate, it will be ruled improper and removed from consideration. The aforementioned responsibilities require different procedural mechanisms; thus, this committee will use heavily modified procedural rules during both the mandate review and crisis management portions of debate. Due to the complex nature of this committee, we encourage delegates to read the following pages thoroughly.

### Individual and Committee Mandates

The committee will be called upon to resolve any crises that may take place under the purview of the committee. Delegates should be acutely aware of the actors and interests surrounding the issues, the possible causes, and barriers to solutions.

Delegates must become absolute experts on the background, politics, and past actions of their assigned positions. This exceptional knowledge is needed to prepare for updates that will be presented to delegates at an extremely rapid rate. New crises will emerge throughout committee sessions, and delegates must call upon past actions attempted by the committee as well as the current situation to formulate a response that is in line with their assigned character's policy. If delegates are not aware of their standing on an issue of their own policy platforms, contradictory and unfeasible policies may arise, slowing down committee and halting debate. With informed delegates, the committee will make informed decisions. For a more detailed account of the various roles, their duties, and functions, please refer to the Committee Representatives section of the paper.

Similarly, delegates must be well informed of the powers of the committee and the types of decisions it is empowered to make. Anything outside the mandate of the body will not be accepted. The committee will be tasked with a variety of issues that will encompass many parts of its mandate, and so prioritizing will be key to ensuring that crises are responded to efficiently. Various actors will have access to information or resources which the whole committee does not have access to. As a result, individuals will have to make decisions on whether they want to respond to issues unilaterally, work with other actors, or through the committee as a whole. Delegates will also have their own agendas, and delegates must consider what they can gain for their countries by approaching a situation in a certain way.

### Special Parliamentary Procedures

To better control the unique powers of this committee, special rules and procedures will be adopted. Three forms of debate will be used in this crisis simulation: round robin, roundtable, and moderated caucus. When a standard committee ends a caucus with no further motions, debate automatically returns to the speakers list. This is called the "default debate format." In our simulation, once another form of debate is exhausted, such as a moderated or unmoderated caucus, the committee will revert to a non-exhaustible moderated caucus with a speaking time to be decided at the chair's discretion. This will be this committee's new default debate format. The speaking time can be adjusted by the delegates via a motion.

To modify the default debate style, delegates will have a new procedural motion available to them during debate being a “motion to change the default debate style.” The motion will require a simple majority to pass and will not require any speakers for or against. At the start of committee, the chair will accept motions to set the debate style, generally a moderated caucus with speaking time selected by simple majority; however, the dais understands that it may become necessary from time to time for the committee to create a speakers list or enter a round robin of speeches to have each delegate elaborate on their respective policies.

If the committee reaches a portion of debate where delegates feel that a more fluid form of procedure is needed, such as a time elapsing crisis in which delegates will be forced to solve a specific issue in a controlled period, a new form of debate is necessary. Debate during these segments will need to move much faster than the crisis debate before this period to meet the time requirements set by the dais at which the crisis shall be solved. During these situations, the committee can vote for a roundtable discussion. Thus, delegates will openly discuss the crisis at hand without a structured speaking time. This form of debate resembles an unmoderated caucus that is held at the table to help delegates hear all points of view on the present without a time limit. Of course, if delegates find that the crisis requires a lot of writing, an unmoderated caucus can be motioned for as well.

The last form of debate style is called “round robin.” During this form of debate, each delegate will be allotted a time to speak on the topic. Each time this form of debate is used, a different person will start a speech and then move clockwise or counterclockwise from that delegate. If a delegate wishes to not speak on the issue, they can merely say “pass” to the chair, and their speaking time will be absorbed by the dais. In addition, a delegate may also say, “I yield my time to the chair” to skip his/her speech. Note that personal pronouns here are appropriate because delegates are representing individuals, not countries. To move into this style of debate, a delegate may simply request the following: “motion to change the debate style to a round robin.”

## Final Products

The document output for the crisis portions will be heavily modified as well. Because of the nature of the updates provided throughout committee, there will be no resolutions used in this committee. Instead, the committee may pass three types of documents: **press releases**, **communiqués**, and **directives**. Press releases and communiqués are similar documents but have quite different uses. Press releases are when the committee or individuals wish to make information of any kind available to the public. On the other hand, communiqués are addressed to particular individuals and will not be released into the public eye. Anyone who can access a newspaper can subsequently access press releases, but only selected recipients can access communiqués. Thus, if a committee member only wants one other member to know of their stance on an issue, a communiqué may be issued to only that one member.

Directives are of an entirely different nature. Standard resolutions take far too long to write and are very ineffective when dealing with constant crisis. Thus, the committee will utilize directives as an alternative to resolutions. Directives exercise the executive power of the committee in any way that it sees fit. For example, delegates of the committee may redirect aid, distribute pamphlets about the issues, or anything that delegates can think of as long as it falls under the mandate of this special session. Directives are only comprised of sponsors and operatives, and all perambulatory clauses that a resolution must have are stripped. Thus, a directive is a less formal resolution, having only the operative needed and sponsors enlisted.

Each of these documents will require a different voting procedure to be passed. Communiqués sent from individuals concerning a representative's own organization do not need to come before a public vote. Rather, the communiqué is simply handed to chair and immediately passed. Similarly, for directives, if it is within the individual powers of your organization then the committee does not have to pass it for it to go into effect. However, the committee must approve communiqués and directives sent from the governing body. These documents must have three members as sponsors to be considered, and no signatories are needed. After the directive or communiqué is presented to the dais, the dais will formally present it to the committee. At this time, the committee

may either vote immediately on the piece, or the committee may continue to debate the proposal. To enter voting procedure, the committee must approve a motion to vote on the proposals on the floor, and it requires two-thirds to pass. Proposals that pass will immediately go into effect, and proposals that fail will no longer be recognized by the dais and will be returned to one of the sponsors. The document may be altered and reintroduced, but it must go through the voting process once again.

## **Final Notes and Summary**

This committee will be moving extremely quickly, especially during crisis situations. There is no formula to provide the real-time at which a crisis is moving (e.g., 1 crisis minute = 1 simulation hour) since this would make some portions of debate outlandishly quick and others extremely slow. Instead, crisis times and allotted periods for discussion will be under the chair's discretion. All crises will be accompanied by a day, month, and year to keep delegates aware of how the committee is moving. Clearly, this committee is extremely unique and moves at a much different pace than all other committees at NHSMUN. However, if delegates come into committee having read this document and already possessing a rudimentary understanding how this secretariat will function, then the committee shall run smoothly. Delegates will also quickly pick up these concepts as debate moves.

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Crisis directors.

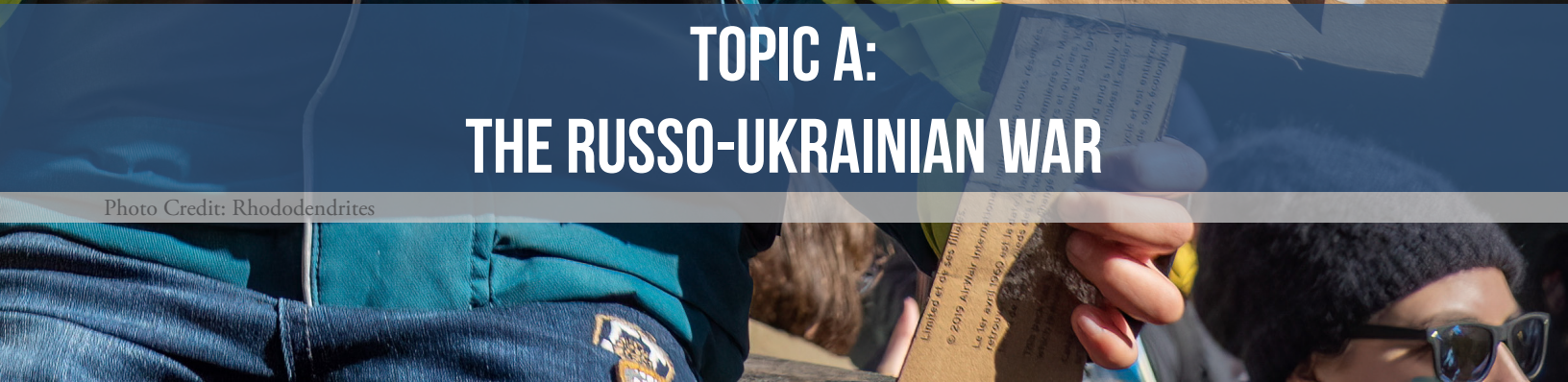


CRISIS-NATO  
NHSMUN 2025



# TOPIC A: THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

Photo Credit: Rhododendrites



## Introduction

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine is the largest conflict in Europe since World War II. The conflict began in September 2014, when Russia invaded the Ukrainian region of Crimea. In the years that would follow, thousands upon thousands of people would die in the proceeding conflict.<sup>1</sup> In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, to seize the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv. Since then, Ukraine has launched counteroffensive measures. They have sent drones to destroy key Russian ships and infrastructure. On the other hand, Russian forces have continued to obstruct Ukrainian ports and attack major cities.<sup>2</sup> Both sides are tirelessly fighting against the other, one side fighting to conquer, and the other fighting to defend.

While the conflict officially began in 2014, Russian-Ukrainian tensions existed far before this. Both countries were once part of the Soviet Union. When the union collapsed in 1991, the nuclear weapons that previously belonged to the Union belonged to the various states that newly gained independence, like Moldova and Georgia. This sowed the seeds of tension. In 1994, Ukraine surrendered all nuclear weapons to Russia in exchange for guaranteed border security.<sup>3</sup> However, since Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, his main priority has been to expand Russia's lands - even if this meant breaking the agreement made in 1994 and crossing Ukraine's borders.<sup>4</sup> Today, Putin is still in power. This makes him the longest-serving Russian leader since Joseph Stalin.

Despite the conflict being limited to Russia and Ukraine, its effects are felt internationally. Large alliances like The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) have backed Ukraine. Other nations, like China and Belarus, have backed Russia.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Russia is the second largest exporter of oil globally. This means that trade with Russia is vital for many states.<sup>6</sup> Many countries find themselves in a tough spot. While they support Ukraine, they rely on Russian trade.

Indeed, it is complex problems like these that NATO has to

deal with. An end to this war will not be easy to come by. As an alliance, NATO condemns the Russian aggression and supports Ukraine's right to self-defense. Putin and Russia will not back down until they fully conquer all of what was the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Russia refuses to negotiate a truce with NATO.<sup>7</sup> Along with understanding the conflict's history, delegates must consider the unique relationships each NATO member state has with Russia. Through this, delegates will be able to fully understand how interconnected the ongoing war is, as well as its implications for the world.

## History and Description of the Issue

### Ukrainian Independence from the Soviet Union

Before its independence, Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was the successor to the Russian Empire of the early 20th century. The Soviet Union came as a result of the collapse of the Russian Empire and its rulers called "Tsars". In 1917, the people of the Russian Empire were revolting against the control of the Tsars. However, the Ukrainian people were doing something different. They were taking steps towards their independence. During this time, the

1 Michael Ray, "Russia-Ukraine War," Encyclopedia Britannica, August 7, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/2022-Russian-invasion-of-Ukraine>.

2 Global Conflict Tracker. "War in Ukraine," 2015. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>.

3 Greg Myre, "How the Soviet Union's Collapse Explains the Current Russia-Ukraine Tension," NPR, December 24, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/24/1066861022/how-the-soviet-unions-collapse-explains-the-current-russia-ukraine-tension>.

4 Peter Dickinson, "Putin Admits Ukraine Invasion Is an Imperial War to 'Return' Russian Land," Atlantic Council, June 10, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putin-admits-ukraine-invasion-is-an-imperial-war-to-return-russian-land/>.

5 Mohammed Haddad, "Where Does Your Country Stand on the Russia-Ukraine War?" Al Jazeera, February 16, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/16/mapping-where-every-country-stands-on-the-russia-ukraine-war>.

6 "The World's 10 Biggest Oil Exporters," Investopedia, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/company-insights/082316/worlds-top-10-oil-exporters.asp>.

7 Peter Dickinson, "NATO Poses a Threat to Russian Imperialism Not Russian Security," Atlantic Council, April 6, 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/nato-poses-a-threat-to-russian-imperialism-not-russian-security/>.

Ukrainian people created their central government. These new leaders began promoting Ukrainian culture and even spread the Ukrainian language through schools.<sup>8</sup> When Vladimir Lenin came along, he realized that the only way to grant Ukraine true independence was to allow the state to have its own culture.<sup>9</sup>

In the late months of 1922, Vladimir Lenin promised a socialist future in the aftermath of a civil war.<sup>10</sup> This new union would span the lands of the Russian Empire, including Ukraine. The economic and political systems of this new union were created with the intent of pushing the people towards communism. However, each state was allowed to keep its own culture. Leaders during this time promoted their lifestyles to the rest of the world. However, this was far from reality. As time went on, the Soviet Union's leaders conquered more and more lands, becoming more authoritarian. This included Stalin taking over the Baltic States, which came as a result of World War II.<sup>11</sup>

1989 marked an important year of change for the Soviet Union, ultimately leading to its collapse. President Mikhail Gorbachev decided to loosen Soviet control in Eastern Europe. This led to the start of a democratic movement in the Soviet Union. For example, Gorbachev allowed elections, which take place in predominantly democratic systems.<sup>12</sup> After the 1990 elections, there was political pressure on Gorbachev from two sides. One side wanted to democratize the Soviet Union. The other side wanted to remain communist.<sup>13</sup> By 1991, the conflict within the Soviet Union was growing faster than ever.<sup>14</sup>

The fate of the Soviet Union was sealed by a failed coup against

Gorbachev in August 1991. A group of extreme Communists, some of whom were on Gorbachev's staff, requested a meeting with him. During this meeting, they trapped him in the room and demanded that he declare a state of emergency. Moreover, they forced him to sign all powers to his vice president, Gennady Yanayev. Gorbachev declined these demands and was placed under house arrest. While under house arrest, Gorbachev and his family had no access to the outside.<sup>15</sup>

August 24, 1991, marks the day that Ukraine officially declared its independence.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to Gorbachev's efforts to make the Soviet Union more democratic, officials met and voted on a resolution to declare their independence. This meeting was broadcast to almost 50 million people in the streets surrounding the parliamentary building. Throughout the day, officials had to make many vital decisions for the newly independent nation. This included the establishment of a Ukrainian currency and the formation of a Ukrainian military.<sup>17</sup> For the people of Ukraine, this day often marks the end of Ukraine's struggle for independence from the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup>

In the aftermath of the coup against Gorbachev, many former Soviet states declared their independence, starting with Moldova. Then, the Baltic States declared their independence, because they were quickly recognized by the United Nations. Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, and Armenia all declared their independence in succession. A week later, there was a meeting between officials from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus. In this meeting, they declared

8 Lubomyr A. Hajda, Ivan Alekseyevich Yerofeyev, Stepan Andriyovich Kryzhanivsky, Oleksa Eliseyovich Zasenka, Andriy Makuch, and Ihor Stebelsky. "Ukraine." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 30, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine>.

9 "The Birth of the Soviet Union and the Death of the Russian Revolution - JSTOR Daily." *JSTOR Daily*. December 21, 2022. <https://daily.jstor.org/the-birth-of-the-soviet-union-and-the-death-of-the-russian-revolution/>.

10 Amanda Onion. "Soviet Union - Countries, Cold War & Collapse | HISTORY." *HISTORY*. September 2017. <https://www.history.com/topics/european-history/history-of-the-soviet-union>.

11 "The Birth of the Soviet Union and the Death of the Russian Revolution - JSTOR Daily."

12 "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian." *State.gov*. 2024. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/collapse-soviet-union>.

13 "The Fall of the Soviet Union | CES at UNC." *Unc.edu*. 2024. <https://europe.unc.edu/iron-curtain/history/the-fall-of-the-soviet-union/>

14 "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian."

15 The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. "Collapse of the Soviet Union." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 28, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/the-collapse-of-the-Soviet-Union>.

16 "Three Decades of Ukraine's Independence." *Wilson Center*. 2024. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/three-decades-ukraines-independence>.

17 Roman Goncharenko. "Leonid Kravchuk: The Man Who Buried the Soviet Union." *Dw.com*. Deutsche Welle. May 10, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/leonid-kravchuk-the-man-who-buried-the-soviet-union/a-61752809>.

18 "Independence Day: How Ukraine Became a Powerful State and Continues to Fight for Its Freedom." *Visitukraine.today*. 2023. <https://visitukraine.today/blog/2475/independence-day-how-ukraine-became-a-powerful-state-and-continues-to-fight-for-its-freedom>.

the end of the Soviet Union and decided to replace it with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).<sup>19</sup>

On the night of December 25, 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed. During the day, Mikhail Gorbachev held a press conference where he announced that he was stepping down as president. In his speech, Gorbachev declared that the Soviet Union no longer existed and would become 15 separate nations. That night, the flags of the Soviet Union came down.<sup>20</sup> This flag would be replaced by the red, white, and blue tricolor flag of present-day Russia.<sup>21</sup> In the aftermath of their independence from the Soviet Union, Ukraine, and Russia have never been able to fully separate from one another. This is because so much of their history is intertwined. Many people within Russia hold the belief that Russia's relationship with former Soviet states is not based on cooperation, but rather a dominance over them. On the other hand, some believe that the conflict with Ukraine is an internal issue, rather than a war between two separate states.<sup>22</sup>

When the Soviet Union collapsed, its shared items, including nuclear weapons, were spread throughout some of the newly formed nations. In 1994, Ukraine gave all of its nuclear weapons to Russia. In exchange, Russia was to never violate Ukraine's borders.<sup>23</sup> At this time, however, Ukraine's relationship with NATO started to grow. This added to the tensions between Ukraine and Russia.<sup>24</sup> NATO expanded into Eastern Europe, enjoying cordial relations with former Soviet states like Georgia and Ukraine. Putin, who gained power in Russia in 2000, felt threatened by this. This is because many NATO countries had access to nuclear weapons. Putin feared that, if these nuclear states formed relationships with states like Ukraine, there was a chance Russia could be overpowered. The biggest example is the United States of America, which Putin feared because of the US-Soviet relations during the

Cold War.<sup>25</sup> If NATO continued to expand east, Ukraine could eventually become a part of the alliance, continuing to spread democracy eastward and making Putin lose influence.<sup>26</sup> It was these same sentiments, among others, that informed Putin's decision to invade Ukraine in 2022. Looking at the Soviet Union's history allows us to understand the seeds of the conflict still ongoing today. More specifically, it gives us an insight into how solutions were met in the past, laying a foundation for the initiatives that can be utilized in the present.

## Annexation of Crimea

The Crimean Peninsula is located on the southern tip of Ukraine. It is surrounded by the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and is connected to Russia via the Kerch Bridge. Crimea is an autonomous republic. This means that, although it is part of Ukraine, it has its government. The peninsula's administrative center is located in Simferopol, a city located near the Crimean mountains. During the years of the Ottoman Empire, Crimea was important for accessing the Black Sea. When the Russian Empire began to expand south, conflict ensued for control over the Black Sea Region, including Crimea. In 1783, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula, making it Russian territory. When the Russian Empire collapsed in 1917, though, Crimea became part of the new Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Crimea was passed to the newly established Ukraine. This would be problematic, though. There was a large Russian population in Crimea, along with Russia's interests to control Crimea.<sup>27</sup> It is this very tension that sets the stage for the animosity between the states.

In 2010, Ukraine elected Viktor Yanukovich to be president. As president, Yanukovich was pro-Russian, and he was interested in working with Russia. Soon after his election, Yanukovich made a deal with the then-President of Russia,

19 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Collapse of the Soviet Union."

20 Greg Myre. "How the Soviet Union's Collapse Explains the Current Russia-Ukraine Tension." NPR. December 24, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/24/1066861022/how-the-soviet-unions-collapse-explains-the-current-russia-ukraine-tension>.

21 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Collapse of the Soviet Union."

22 Oleksandr Shulga. "Why Do Russians Scorn Ukrainian Independence?" CEPA. August 29, 2023. <https://cepa.org/article/why-do-russians-scorn-ukrainian-independence/>.

23 "How the Soviet Union's Collapse Explains the Current Russia-Ukraine Tension."

24 "Ukraine's Struggle for Independence in Russia's Shadow." Council on Foreign Relations. 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/ukraines-struggle-independence-russias-shadow>.

25 "How the Soviet Union's Collapse Explains the Current Russia-Ukraine Tension."

26 Robert Person and Michael McFaul. "What Putin Fears Most | Journal of Democracy." Journal of Democracy. Journal of Democracy. 2022. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/what-putin-fears-most/>.

27 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Crimea." Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 7, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Crimea>.





Dmitry Medvedev. In exchange for lower prices on Russian natural gas, Russia's Black Sea Fleet was given access to the port of Sevastopol until 2042. The rest of Yanukovich's presidency was quite controversial, as he was accused of stealing money from the nation, along with allegedly being complicit in Russia's attacks.<sup>28</sup> This led to Yanukovich fleeing the country to Russia. There is no extradition agreement between Ukraine and Russia. This means that, although he is a criminal in Ukraine, Russia will not release him to the authorities. Following this, Petro Poroshenko was elected.<sup>29</sup>

In February 2014, pro-Russian protests became more forceful in Crimea. On February 23, major pro-Russian protests occurred in Sevastopol and Simferopol, the main cities of Crimea.<sup>30</sup> In Sevastopol, the radical party supported Russia. They got rid of the city's mayor and elected a new one. A few days later, on February 27, armed men entered the Crimean parliament building, demanding that parliament host a special session. In this session, they wanted to discuss the future of

Crimea. They then dismissed the region's prime minister, Anatolii Mohyliov, replacing him with Sergey Aksyonov, a member of the radical, pro-Russian party. In the following days, more armed men took over Crimea's main roads, local government buildings, airports, and more strategic locations. Although Putin and the Russian government continued to deny involvement, these men were likely part of the Russian military, as the slogan "Crimea is ours" became popular across Russia. Putin himself declared it a "great event in the history of our state".<sup>31</sup> Those who deny the connection to Russia claim that no evidence can be found, as the armed men did not have the Russian military logo on their uniforms.<sup>32</sup>

During this time, pro-Russian demonstrations became common throughout Ukraine, specifically Crimea. To fight back, Crimean Tatars became increasingly violent. Crimean Tatars are a group of Turkic nomads who found a place in Crimea, Kazakhstan, and Siberia.<sup>33</sup> The Tatars are anti-occupation due to the mass deportation of Crimean Tatars

28 Michael Ray. "Viktor Yanukovich." Encyclopedia Britannica, July 5, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Viktor-Yanukovich>; Jeremy Kahn. "Who Is Viktor Yanukovich, the Former Ukrainian President Putin Reportedly Wants to Put Back in Power?" Fortune. Fortune. March 2, 2022. <https://fortune.com/2022/03/02/viktor-yanukovich-yanukovich-putin-put-back-in-power-ukraine-russia/>.

29 "Ukraine's Presidents, Power Elites, and the Country's Evolution." Wilson Center. 2024. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukraines-presidents-power-elites-and-countrys-evolution>.

30 "Ukraine - Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, Conflict." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2024 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-crisis-in-Crimea-and-eastern-Ukraine>.

31 "How Russia's grab of Crimea 10 years ago led to war with Ukraine and rising tensions with the West" Associated Press. March 18, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-ukraine-crimea-seizure-8245aec572fb71236febfa8735c42879>

32 "Russia's Real Aims in Crimea." Carnegieendowment.org. 2014. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2014/03/russias-real-aims-in-crimea?lang=en>.

33 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopædia. "Tatar." Encyclopedia Britannica, June 5, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tatar>.

by former Russian President Joseph Stalin.<sup>34</sup> In March 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin went to the Russian Parliament, receiving permission to dispatch troops to Crimea. The claimed goal of these troops was to protect the ethnic Russian population in Crimea. However, within a few days of being on the peninsula, the Russian forces took control of the land. This led to a standoff resulting in the new Russian-controlled parliament unanimously agreeing to withdraw from Ukraine and join Russia. On March 18, a treaty was signed by Putin, bringing Crimea into Russia. Days later, this was accepted by the House and Parliament of Russia.<sup>35</sup>

The Russian annexation of Crimea was condemned by many Western leaders and was only recognized by only six countries (Afghanistan, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nicaragua, Syria, and Venezuela).<sup>36</sup> However, many leaders were cautious in their statements denouncing the annexation.<sup>37</sup> On March 27, 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held a meeting. In this meeting, it was affirmed that the UNGA is committed to Ukraine's independence and the invalidity of the installation of Russian troops in the Crimean government. A resolution was adopted encouraging international organizations, states, and other agencies to not recognize the change in Crimea's status.<sup>38</sup> In their statements, the UNGA highly encouraged countries to refrain from any actions that could increase tensions. It was encouraged that both Ukraine and Russia sought a peaceful resolution to their conflicts.<sup>39</sup>

In 2019, five years after the original annexation of Crimea, the UNGA met again, approving a further resolution to condemn the occupation of Crimea. This statement also included strong

urges for Russia to remove its military forces from the land. The resolution came as the militarization of Crimea by Russian forces increased.<sup>40</sup> During this time, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) released a statement rejecting Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. The statement continued by explaining how this is a threat to Euro-Atlantic security. In this statement, NATO called upon Russia to return Crimea to Ukraine and they decided that to combat Russia's illegal actions, sanctions would be put in place.<sup>41</sup>

Since 2014, Crimea has largely been used as a military base and jumping-off point for other invasions of Ukraine. Many Crimean Tatars have been forced out of Crimea and forbidden from returning to the land they once called home.<sup>42</sup> To transform the peninsula, Russian officials have imported many Russian citizens.<sup>43</sup> The fear of things getting worse continues to dominate Western leaders' judgment. Individuals who have challenged Russia's occupation of Crimea have faced human rights violations, including torture, disappearances, and horrible treatment.<sup>44</sup> It is imperative to recognize the history of Crimea's annexation, as well as the enduring legacy that it has. Indeed, Crimea is still being annexed and is something that needs urgent attention to ensure a long-term solution is met.

## Poroshenko Era

In Ukrainian history, the Poroshenko Era started in 2014 and ended in 2019. This was the period when Petro Poroshenko was the president of Ukraine. Before his presidency, Poroshenko was a businessman who entered politics later in his life.<sup>45</sup> In 1998, he was elected to parliament and represented

<sup>34</sup> "Ukraine's Presidents, Power Elites, and the Country's Evolution." Wilson Center. 2024.

<sup>35</sup> "Ukraine - Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, Conflict."

<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Bender. "6 Countries OK with Russia Annexation of Crimea." Business Insider. Insider. May 31, 2016. <https://www.businessinsider.com/six-countries-okay-with-russias-annexation-of-crimea-2016-5>.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Dickinson. "Putin's Unpunished Crimean Crime Set the Stage for Russia's 2022 Invasion." Atlantic Council. February 22, 2024. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-unpunished-crimean-crime-set-the-stage-for-russias-2022-invasion/>.

<sup>38</sup> "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." 2014. Un.org. March 27, 2014. <https://press.un.org/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases."

<sup>40</sup> "UN Resolution Condemns Russia's Occupation of Crimea." Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera. December 10, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/10/un-resolution-condemns-russias-occupation-of-crimea>.

<sup>41</sup> NATO. "Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Crimea." NATO. 2019. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_164656.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164656.htm).

<sup>42</sup> "Crimean Tatar Genocide – Ukrainian American Community Center." Uacmn.org. 2015. <https://uacmn.org/crimean-tatar-genocide/>.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Dickinson. "Putin's Unpunished Crimean Crime Set the Stage for Russia's 2022 Invasion."

<sup>44</sup> "Russian Federation's Decade-Long Occupation of Crimea Marked by Widespread Violations." Ukraine. 2024. <https://ukraine.un.org/en/261842-russian-federation%E2%80%99s-decade-long-occupation-crimea-marked-widespread-violations>.

<sup>45</sup> "Petro Poroshenko," *Forbes*, 2024. <https://www.forbes.com/profile/petro-poroshenko/>.

Vinnitsya, a city in central Ukraine.<sup>46</sup> Throughout his political career, Poroshenko had a habit of switching political parties constantly. Eventually, when Viktor Yushchenko became president in 2005, Poroshenko was appointed his national security secretary. In the years following, Poroshenko filled many positions within Yushchenko's cabinet, including Foreign Minister and Minister of Trade. In 2012 and 2013, Poroshenko worked closely with the European Union, managing Ukraine's relations.<sup>47</sup>

In February 2014, Yanukovich was impeached after government forces killed Ukrainian protestors. The former president immediately fled to Russia.<sup>48</sup> An interim government was established until elections could be held in May 2015. While campaigning, Poroshenko held an anti-corruption stance to appeal to voters.<sup>49</sup> In a landslide victory, Poroshenko beat Yuliya Tymoshenko, the former prime minister.

Under Yanukovich, Ukraine and Russia enjoyed a cordial relationship. This made his impeachment have a devastating effect. Immediately, tensions increased again, as they did around the time the Soviet Union fell. It was around this time that Russia annexed Crimea. This resulted in the tensions increasing even more.<sup>50</sup>

During the early months of Poroshenko's presidency, both Ukraine and Russia were on the offensive, attempting to take control of Crimea in their ways. In September 2015, Poroshenko and Putin agreed to a cease-fire. This was necessary because of the bloodshed on both sides.<sup>51</sup>

As president, Poroshenko stuck to what he initially promoted.

However, much of the population was still skeptical that this standard was sustainable. There were many civil society groups advocating for anti-corruption laws. Given the way Yanukovich's presidency ended, much of Ukraine's population aligned with these ideas. These groups put pressure on Poroshenko to maintain the standard he set for himself in the initial few weeks of his presidency. Additionally, Poroshenko faced pressure from Ukraine's foreign partners, like the World Bank.<sup>52</sup> For context, Ukraine's GDP continued to drop from 2012-2015, which increased poverty rates.<sup>53</sup> The pressure from both sides led to vital changes for Ukraine. This included the creation of the National Anti-corruption Bureau (NABU). NABU's goal was to investigate public sector crimes. This includes investigating presidents, governors, ministers, and many others.<sup>54</sup>

While these developments were taking place, the conflict between pro-Russian militants and Ukrainian troops continued. Many people fled the conflict, migrating to other cities or even other European nations. Pro-Russian militias shelled cities. Residents were left without water, electricity, or gas.<sup>55</sup> Poroshenko promised relief to those suffering, but these promises were seen as empty. Many people died as a result of these issues.<sup>56</sup> In a 2018 statement to the United Nations, Poroshenko called for assistance with the humanitarian issues plaguing Ukraine. He further encouraged world leaders to denounce Putin and the actions of the Russian government.<sup>57</sup>

Before Poroshenko became president, Ukraine had a "non-aligned" status, which meant that the state was not allowed to align with any major alliances like NATO or the EU. In

46 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Vinnitsya." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 12, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vinnitsya-Ukraine>.

47 Michael Ray. "Petro Poroshenko." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 13, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Petro-Poroshenko>.

48 "Ukrainian MPs Vote to Oust President Yanukovich." *BBC News*. February 22, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26304842>.

49 "A Brief History of Corruption in Ukraine: The Poroshenko Era." *Eurasianet*. 2020. <https://eurasianet.org/a-brief-history-of-corruption-in-ukraine-the-poroshenko-era>.

50 Michael Ray. "Petro Poroshenko."

51 Andrew Gardner. "Ukraine: 'Permanent Ceasefire' Agreed with Russia." *POLITICO*. September 3, 2014. <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-and-russia-reach-permanent-ceasefire/>.

52 "A Brief History of Corruption in Ukraine: The Poroshenko Era."

53 World Bank Group. "Ukraine Economic Update - September 2016." *World Bank*. October 14, 2016. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ukraine/publication/ukraine-economic-update-fall-2016>.

54 "History of NABU | NABU Official Website." *Nabu.gov.ua*. 2014. <https://nabu.gov.ua/en/about-the-bureau/struktura-ta-kerivnitctvo/istoriya-stanovlennya/>.

55 Alec Luhn. "Ukraine's Humanitarian Crisis Worsens as Tens of Thousands Flee Combat in East." *The Guardian*. June 12, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/12/ukraine-humanitarian-crisis-tens-of-thousands-flee>.

56 "Ukraine Crisis of 2013-14 | Euromaidan, Annexation of Crimea, & War in the Donbas | Britannica." 2024. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ukraine-crisis>.

57 "In UN Address, Ukraine President Denounces Russia's 'Aggressive Expansionist Policies.'" *UN News*. September 26, 2018. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/09/1020921>.

December 2015, Poroshenko dropped this status as a result of Russia's aggression. He pledged to work towards NATO membership.<sup>58</sup> Along with this, Poroshenko pioneered visa-free travel into Europe for Ukrainian citizens. Moreover, he advanced the Ukrainian military, giving them a chance to fight back against the pro-Russian militia. More than 3,000 important buildings, like schools and hospitals, were built during Poroshenko's presidency.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, the Poroshenko Era was marked by many developments. However, failures ran just as rampant. For example, despite Poroshenko's anti-corruption stance, he ended up appointing many of his personal friends into vital government positions.<sup>60</sup> This meant that many of NABU's cases were dismissed when they reached the courts, more often than not because the officials on trial were friends with the judges.<sup>61</sup>

In April 2019, elections were held. Leading up to the election, Poroshenko's approval rating dropped into the single digits,

which is extremely low.<sup>62</sup> Poroshenko was up for reelection against Volodymyr Zelensky, a television star.<sup>63</sup> Zelensky ran on a platform of being anti-corruption and fixing the now stagnant economy. Modernization was another thing that interested voters. Zelensky took the tactic of running his platform on YouTube and Instagram primarily.<sup>64</sup> In the first round of voting on March 31, 2019, Zelensky took 30 percent of the votes while Poroshenko only took 16 percent. There was no in-person debate between the candidates until days before the second round of voting. During this debate, Poroshenko tried to make it seem like Zelensky lacked the political acumen to take on Vladimir Putin. However, Poroshenko had no real evidence to reinforce his arguments.<sup>65</sup> Zelensky's knowledge of the people and his understanding of their needs secured him the victory. The early months of Zelensky's presidency were filled with many promises, just like Poroshenko's before him. Also similar to Poroshenko, these promises were often empty. However, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion

58 "Relations with Ukraine." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_37750.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm)

59 Ben Bohdan. "Five Years of Poroshenko's Presidency: Main Achievements and Failures - Euromaidan Press." Euromaidan Press. April 18, 2019. <https://euromaidanpress.com/2019/04/19/five-years-of-ukraine-poroshenko-main-achievements-and-failures/>.

60 Melinda Haring. "Why Poroshenko Lost." Atlantic Council. April 23, 2019. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-poroshenko-lost/>.

61 Ben Bohdan. "Five Years of Poroshenko's Presidency: Main Achievements and Failures - Euromaidan Press."

62 "Ukraine - Poroshenko, Administration, Reforms | Britannica." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Poroshenko-administration>.

63 "Volodymyr Zelensky's Biography — Official Web Site of the President of Ukraine." Official Website of the President of Ukraine. 2024. <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/president/biografiya>.

64 Michael Ray. "Volodymyr Zelensky." Encyclopædia Britannica, July 17, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Volodymyr-Zelensky>.

65 Michael Ray. "Volodymyr Zelensky."



Petro Poroshenko

Credit: The Presidential Administration of Ukraine

of Ukraine, Zelensky's wartime leadership became impactful.<sup>66</sup> Regardless, it is important to understand Poroshenko's legacy, especially as a leader during the time of Crimea's annexation. While Poroshenko ran on anti-corrupt stances, his behavior in office proved otherwise. As NATO representatives, Looking at states through a critical lens is of the utmost importance. Ukraine has faced oppression for centuries, and on a global scale, NATO aligns itself with Ukraine's efforts. However, every government must be held accountable for its actions, regardless of any conflicts that the government might be undergoing. It is complex ideas like these that members of NATO must tackle, but these same ideas are what will allow for a sustainable global framework to be put into place.

## Prelude to the Invasion

In March and April 2021, the Russian Armed Forces began mobilizing thousands of military equipment and personnel near Russia's border with Ukraine and in Crimea.<sup>67</sup> This was the largest mobilization since Crimea was annexed in 2014.<sup>68</sup> What ensued was an international crisis due to concerns over a potential invasion. Satellite imagery showed movements of armor, missiles, and heavy weaponry towards the border.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, a second buildup began in October 2021, and by December, over 100,000 Russian troops were massed around Ukraine on three sides, including Belarus from the north and Crimea from the south.<sup>70</sup> Despite the Russian military buildups, Russian officials continually denied that the state

had any plans to invade Ukraine.<sup>71</sup> Eventually, on February 21, 2022, Russian troops were deployed to Donbas.<sup>72</sup> Finally, on the morning of February 24, 2022, Putin announced that Russia was initiating a "special military operation" in the Donbas region.<sup>73</sup> A full-scale invasion of Ukraine was launched.

Before the mobilization near the border, Russia's Defense Ministry announced the deployment of around 3000 paratroopers to the border for military exercises.<sup>74</sup> Simultaneously, NATO started a series of military exercises called "Defender-Europe 2021".<sup>75</sup> Russia criticized NATO for holding these trainings, using it as an excuse to follow through with their border exercises. This deployment led to a large troop buildup along the Russo-Ukrainian border by mid-April. Nearly a week later, Ukrainian Colonel General Ruslan Khomchak revealed intelligence reports that suggested a potential military buildup by Russia.<sup>76</sup> According to Khomchak, the buildup consisted of 28 Russian battalion tactical groups but was expected to increase to 53.<sup>77</sup> It was estimated that over 60,000 Russian troops were stationed in Crimea and Donbas. However, Putin's spokesperson Dmitri Peskov claimed that the military movements were of no concern to neighboring countries and that the decision to deploy troops was made to address Russia's national security.

However, the "training exercise" was quickly becoming a matter of international concern. In April, significant quantities

66 Mykhailo Minakov. "Five Years of Zelensky's Presidency." Wilson Center. 2024. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/five-years-zelenskys-presidency>.

67 "Russian Force on Ukraine Border Larger than Any Time since 2014, U.S. Says | Reuters." Reuters, April 8, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-usa-idUSKBN2BV2Z3/>.

68 Andrew E Kramer. "Russian Troop Movements and Talk of Intervention Cause Jitters in Ukraine." The New York Times, April 9, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/09/world/europe/russia-ukraine-war-troops-intervention.html>.

69 "Satellite Images Show Russian Military Buildup along Ukraine Border." Reuters. Accessed September 16, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/satellite-images-show-russian-military-b-idUSRTXBN4Y0/>.

70 Anton Troianovski, and David E. Sanger. "Russia Issues Subtle Threats More Far-Reaching than a Ukraine Invasion." The New York Times, January 16, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/16/world/europe/russia-ukraine-invasion.html>.

71 Eugene Kiely, Robert Farley. "Russian Rhetoric Ahead of Attack against Ukraine: Deny, Deflect, Mislead." FactCheck.org, February 24, 2022. <https://www.factcheck.org/2022/02/russian-rhetoric-ahead-of-attack-against-ukraine-deny-deflect-mislead/>.

72 Jen Kirby, and Jonathan Guyer. "Russia's War in Ukraine, Explained." Vox, February 24, 2022. <https://www.vox.com/2022/2/23/22948534/russia-ukraine-war-putin-explosions-invasion-explained>.

73 "War in Ukraine | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed September 16, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>.

74 Simon Shuster. "Inside the Power Struggle Breaking up Russia and Ukraine." Time, February 2, 2022. <https://time.com/6144109/russia-ukraine-vladimir-putin-viktor-medvedchuk/>.

75 Todd South. "Massive, Army-Led NATO Exercise Defender Europe Kicks Off." Army Times, August 18, 2022. <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2021/03/15/massive-army-led-nato-exercise-defender-europe-kicks-off/>.

76 "Ukraine Says Russian Military Buildup Threatens Its Security | Reuters." Reuters. Accessed September 16, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-military/ukraine-says-russian-military-buildup-threatens-its-security-idUSKBN2BM1N6/>.

77 Ukraine: Russia's "Red Line" - House of Commons Library. Accessed September 16, 2024. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9401/>.

of weapons and equipment were transported towards the Russo-Ukrainian border and into Crimea.<sup>78</sup> Unofficial Russian sources, including the pro-Russian Telegram channel Military Observer, published videos of a group of Russian attack helicopters being transported from Siberia to Crimea.<sup>79</sup>

Towards the end of April 2021, the Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu announced that military exercises would be reduced and that the guards at the border would return to their bases by May 1st.<sup>80</sup> However, Senior US Defense Department officials reported on May 5, that Russia had only withdrawn a few thousand troops since the military buildup.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, all the vehicles and equipment remained at the border, leading to fears that a resuming of military buildup might occur.<sup>82</sup> The officials estimated that over 80,000 troops remained at the border - it was at this time that members of the US intelligence community began discussing the potential for a Russian invasion during the fall of 2021.<sup>83</sup>

In early November 2021, reports of re-mobilization of Russian troops prompted American officials to warn other NATO members.<sup>84</sup> Around this time, Zelensky announced that Russia had amassed 100,000 troops near the border, higher than an initial American assessment.<sup>85</sup> However, on the same day, Putin denied any possibility of a Russian invasion, calling the notions “alarmist”. In December, Ukraine’s Minister of

Defense spoke of the possibility of Russia invading towards the end of January 2022. When January came, instead of an invasion, Russia began slowly evacuating its embassy staff at Kyiv.<sup>86</sup> The reasoning for this evacuation was unknown, and in mid-January, Ukraine’s Ministry of Defense concluded that Russia was in its final stages of completing a military buildup at the border, amassing almost 130,000 troops.<sup>87</sup> Among them were naval and air forces, as well.<sup>88</sup> In addition, 35,000 Russian-backed separatist forces were reported to be present. Equally as pressing was an estimate that the 40 short-range ballistic missile systems near the border were stationed within striking distance of Kyiv.<sup>89</sup>

During the eve of the invasion, the United States played a large role in information-sharing, as well as political negotiations. For example, in late January, three anonymous US officials reported that Russia had stockpiled medical supplies.<sup>90</sup> A week later, other US officials reported that Russia had assembled 83 battalion tactical groups for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.<sup>91</sup> It was around this time that President Joe Biden offered to prevent Ukraine’s NATO membership if it meant that Russia did go through with an invasion. Despite this, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated that an attack could begin at any moment before February 20th.<sup>92</sup> This indicates that the talks between Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin at this time were not favorable for Biden, given Putin’s refusal to stop the invasion.

78 Matthew P. Funaiolo, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Heather A. Conley, and Cyrus Newlin. “Unpacking the Russian Troop Buildup along Ukraine’s Border.” CSIS. Accessed September 16, 2024. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/unpacking-russian-troop-buildup-along-ukraines-border>.

79 Andrew Roth. “EU and UK Pledge Backing to Ukraine after Russian Military Buildup.” The Guardian, April 6, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/05/eu-sounds-alarm-at-russian-troops-ukraine-border-moves>.

80 Andrew E. Kramer, and Anton Troianovski. “Russia Orders Partial Pullback from Ukraine Border Region.” The New York Times, April 22, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/22/world/europe/russia-ukraine-military-pullback.html>.

81 Helene Cooper, and Julian E. Barnes. “80,000 Russian Troops Remain at Ukraine Border as U.S. and NATO Hold Exercises.” The New York Times, May 5, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/05/us/politics/biden-putin-russia-ukraine.html>.

82 Cooper and Barnes. “80,000 Russian Troops Remain at Ukraine Border as U.S. and NATO Hold Exercises.”

83 Garrett M. Graff. “‘Something Was Badly Wrong’: When Washington Realized Russia Was Actually Invading Ukraine.” Politico, February 24, 2023. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/02/24/russia-ukraine-war-oral-history-00083757>

84 Holly Ellyatt. “The World Is Worried Putin Is About to Invade Ukraine.” CNBC, December 1, 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/17/the-world-is-worried-putin-is-about-to-invade-ukraine-heres-why.html>.

85 “Ukraine’s President Says 100,000 Russian Troops Amassed near Border | The Times of Israel.” Times of Israel, November 14, 2021. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ukraines-president-says-100000-russian-troops-amassed-near-border/>.

86 Michael Schwartz, and David E. Sanger. “Russia Thins out Its Embassy in Ukraine, a Possible Clue to Putin’s next Move.” The New York Times, January 18, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/17/us/politics/russia-ukraine-kyiv-embassy.html>.

87 Matthew Chance, Kylie Atwood, Emmet Lyons, and Ami Kaufman. “Ukraine Warns Russia Has ‘Almost Completed’ Build-up of Forces Near Border.” CNN, January 19, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/18/europe/ukraine-intelligence-russia-military-build-up-intl/index.html>.

88 “Ukraine Warns Russia Has ‘Almost Completed’ Build-up of Forces Near Border.”

89 “Ukraine Warns Russia Has ‘Almost Completed’ Build-up of Forces Near Border.”

90 “Exclusive Russia Moves Blood Supplies near Ukraine, Adding to U.S. Concern, Officials Say | Reuters.” Reuters, January 29, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/exclusive-russia-moves-blood-supplies-near-ukraine-adding-us-concern-officials-2022-01-28/>.

91 “Russian Forces at 70% of Level Needed for Full Ukraine Invasion, U.S. Officials Say | Reuters.” Reuters, February 5, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-forces-70-level-needed-full-ukraine-invasion-us-officials-2022-02-05/>.

92 David M. Herszenhorn “US Warns War Could Be ‘imminent’ in Ukraine.” POLITICO, February 12, 2022. <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-russia-european-union-diplomats-leave/>.

Following these announcements, the US ordered most of its diplomatic staff and all military instructors in Ukraine to evacuate.<sup>93</sup> Other countries like Japan and Germany followed suit. On February 17, US and NATO officials reported that the threat of an invasion remained, claiming that Russia is still looking for an event that would fully justify the invasion.<sup>94</sup> This included Russia itself conducting a false flag operation, which NATO claims to have seen.<sup>95</sup>

One month prior, on January 21, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation announced that its head members wanted Putin to officially recognize two breakaway People's Republics: Donetsk and Luhansk.<sup>96</sup> The resolution was adopted by the State Duma, which is the name of Russia's legislative branch.<sup>97</sup> After being adopted, this resolution was supported by various Russian political parties, including United Russia, and the Liberation Democratic Party of Russia.<sup>98</sup> On February 21, the leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk requested that Putin officially recognize the republics' independence. Both leaders proposed signing a treaty on friendship and cooperation with Russia. Later that day, Putin signed decrees of recognition of the republics. With this, treaties on "friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance" between Russia and the two republics were put on paper.<sup>99</sup>

Quite literally right after this signing, Putin ordered Russian forces to enter both republics.<sup>100</sup> He also ordered additional troops to enter Donbas, in what Russia called a "peacekeeping

mission".<sup>101</sup> On February 22, the US declared it an "invasion", and Russia's senate unanimously authorized Putin to use his military force outside of Russia.<sup>102</sup> On February 23, Ukraine's parliament approved Zelensky's introduction of a state of emergency starting on the 24th.<sup>103</sup> Eventually, Putin announced the beginning of a "special military operation" in the Donbas region.<sup>104</sup> Shortly after, reports of explosions came from multiple cities in central Ukraine, particularly in Kyiv and Kharkiv.<sup>105</sup> February 24th is the date that Russia officially invaded Ukraine.

At the time, many believed that Russia's military operations in Ukraine would inevitably lead to the overthrow of Ukraine's government and end its national sovereignty. However, Russia has been unable to capture Kyiv since it initially invaded.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, despite the many casualties and negative impacts that Ukraine has faced, the state has successfully mobilized and defended itself against the third-largest superpower in the world. However, the fact remains that the conflict is still ongoing. Looking at the initial mobilization allows us an insight into the forces that caused the invasion. As members of NATO, it is now integral to ensure that the issue reaches a viable solution. Otherwise, the conflict will see no end, and Ukraine risks losing the sovereignty it fought hard to gain.

## Human Rights Concerns and Refugee Crisis

Before the emergence of the Russo-Ukrainian War, there had

93 Kylie Atwood, and Oren Liebermann. "US Moves Some Forces out of Ukraine and Orders Evacuation of Most Embassy Staff as Fears of a Russian Invasion Grow | CNN Politics." CNN, February 12, 2022. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/12/politics/us-embassy-ukraine-evacuation/index.html>.

94 Victor Jack. "NATO Has 'seen' Russian False-Flag Attempts in Ukraine, Stoltenberg Says." POLITICO, February 17, 2022. <https://www.politico.eu/article/nato-has-seen-attempts-at-russian-false-flag-operation-ukraine-says-alliance-chief/>.

95 "NATO Has 'seen' Russian False-Flag Attempts in Ukraine, Stoltenberg Says."

96 Oleg Sukhov. "Russian Parliament to Consider Recognizing Donbas Proxies as Independent States." The Kyiv Independent, July 31, 2024. <https://kyivindependent.com/russian-parliament-to-consider-recognizing-donbas-proxies-as-independent-states/>.

97 "Russian Parliament to Consider Recognizing Donbas Proxies as Independent States."

98 "Donetsk and Lugansk Leaders Ask Putin to Recognize Republics' Independence." TASS, February 21, 2022. <https://tass.com/world/1407325>.

99 "Donetsk and Lugansk Leaders Ask Putin to Recognize Republics' Independence."

100 Andrew Roth. "Putin Orders Troops into Eastern Ukraine on 'Peacekeeping Duties.'" The Guardian, February 21, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/21/ukraine-putin-decide-recognition-breakaway-states-today>.

101 Ivana Kottasová, Tamara Qiblawi, and Helen Regan. "Putin Orders Troops into Pro-Russian Regions of Eastern Ukraine." CNN, February 22, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/21/europe/russia-ukraine-tensions-monday-intl/index.html>.

102 "Russian Troops in East Ukraine an 'invasion,' White House Declares - National." Global News, February 23, 2022. <https://globalnews.ca/news/8636852/russian-troops-in-east-ukraine-an-invasion-white-house-declares/>.

103 "Verkhovna Rada Approves Move to Introduce State of Emergency in Ukraine." Ukrinform, February 23, 2022. <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/3410758-verkhovna-rada-approves-move-to-introduce-state-of-emergency-in-ukraine.html>.

104 "NATO Agrees to Increase Troops near Ukraine's Border as Russia Begins Its Invasion." ABC News, February 24, 2022. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-24/vladimir-putin-authorises-special-military-operation/100857650>.

105 Jamie Dettmer. "As Biden Deliberates, Ukraine's Nuclear Plants Are Increasingly at Risk." POLITICO, September 16, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-ukraine-nuclear-plants-energy-war-joe-biden-united-states-nato/>.

106 Robert Burns. "Russia's Failure to Take down Kyiv Was a Defeat for the Ages." AP News, April 8, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-battle-for-kyiv-dc559574ce9f6683668fa221af2d5340>.

already been more than two million refugees impacted by the annexation of Crimea and the separatist republics. This issue has experienced a lack of spotlight, due to major media neglect.<sup>107</sup> The result has been millions of refugees suffering from widespread death, as well as the destruction of homes and businesses.

Russia's military invasion had more consequences than just diplomatic tensions and damage to infrastructure. For context, after the invasion, a majority of Ukraine's population was forced to migrate to neighboring countries.<sup>108</sup> Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova were all popular sites of escape.<sup>109</sup> Three months into the conflict, there had been more than six million refugees who fled Ukraine, and another 8 million were displaced within the country.<sup>110</sup> This means that these people were forced to flee their homes but have not migrated to another country. Considering that the country was composed of approximately 44 million people as of 2020, this number means a quarter of all Ukrainians suffered from displacement.

The influx of displaced people confirmed that the Russo-Ukrainian war was the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s.<sup>111</sup> Many human rights activists from around the globe advocated for their governments to strengthen their emergency planning and expand the scale of asylums to create public support for refugees. Those sympathetic with Ukraine called for their officials to extend their protections to aid refugees, and that they not be prosecuted for their illegal immigration.<sup>112</sup>

To ensure the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees, the cities

and legal system have to work together to help them stay so that they are not in active danger while assisting in the reconstruction and safe return of the displaced people. In addition to the countries closest to Ukraine geographically, other temporary protections have been established in Germany (with one million refugees) and the Czech Republic (with half a million refugees).

When the Russian missiles hit the most populated cities, essential supplies such as water and electricity were disrupted. Families were shipped out of bombing sites through tunnels.<sup>113</sup> The survivors of the attacks remained in shelters because most exposed facilities were destroyed. Many restaurants and apartment buildings no longer exist, and the relentless bombardment destroyed the peaceful way of life that existed before the war.

The Human Rights Watch noted that unaccompanied children were forcibly transferred to either the Russian-occupied territory or within the Russian border.<sup>114</sup> The NGO called this operation "punitive, abusive screening of fleeing civilians". They were extremely concerned about the crimes against humanity, as the people were only fleeing due to fear of violence and detention. Additionally, the filtration system set up by Russia collected the civilian's biometric data and questioned them about their political views. These measures violated the right to privacy, as Russia has no legal ground to detain the refugees based on their responses.

In September of 2022, the UN criticized Russian authorities' interrogation and separations.<sup>115</sup> The UN Secretary-General for Human Rights had suspicions that Russia was trying to adopt

107 Viola Gienger. "Ukraine's 'Invisible Crisis': 1.5 Million Who Fled War with Russia." *United States Institute of Peace*, 23 Nov. 2015, [www.usip.org/publications/2015/11/ukraines-invisible-crisis-15-million-who-fled-war-russia](http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/11/ukraines-invisible-crisis-15-million-who-fled-war-russia).

108 UNHCR. "Ukraine Refugee Situation." *Data.unhcr.org*, UNHCR, 6 Dec. 2024, [data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine](https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine).

109 "Ukraine Response: Ukrainians and Third-Country Nationals Crossing back to Ukraine - Regional Analysis (January - March 2024) Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia - Hungary." *ReliefWeb*, 16 July 2024, [reliefweb.int/report/hungary/ukraine-response-ukrainians-and-third-country-nationals-crossing-back-ukraine-regional-analysis-january-march-2024-hungary-latvia-poland-republic-moldova-romania-slovakia](https://reliefweb.int/report/hungary/ukraine-response-ukrainians-and-third-country-nationals-crossing-back-ukraine-regional-analysis-january-march-2024-hungary-latvia-poland-republic-moldova-romania-slovakia). Accessed 14 Aug. 2024.

110 CNN, George Ramsay. "A Quarter of Ukrainians Have Fled Their Homes. Here's Where They've Gone." *CNN*, 21 Mar. 2022, [www.cnn.com/2022/03/21/europe/ukraine-russia-conflict-10-million-refugees-intl/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2022/03/21/europe/ukraine-russia-conflict-10-million-refugees-intl/index.html).

111 Steve Ballinger. "Protecting Ukrainian Refugees: What Can We Learn from the Response to Kosovo in the 90s?" *British Future*, 7 Mar. 2022, [www.britishtime.org/protecting-ukrainian-refugees-what-can-we-learn-from-kosovo/](https://www.britishtime.org/protecting-ukrainian-refugees-what-can-we-learn-from-kosovo/).

112 Kenan Malik. "The People of Ukraine Need Our Solidarity. But Not Just Because They're 'like Us' | Kenan Malik." *The Guardian*, 6 Mar. 2022, [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/06/people-of-ukraine-need-our-solidarity-not-just-because-theyre-like-us](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/06/people-of-ukraine-need-our-solidarity-not-just-because-theyre-like-us).

113 "Russia Hits Lviv Again as Putin's Campaign of Terror Focuses on Ukraine's Shell-Shocked East - CBS News." *www.cbsnews.com*, 4 May 2022, [www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-news-russia-war-lviv-attack-mariupol-evacuations-putin-offensive-in-east/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-news-russia-war-lviv-attack-mariupol-evacuations-putin-offensive-in-east/). Accessed 30 June 2024.

114 "Forcible Transfer of Ukrainians to Russia." *Human Rights Watch*, 1 September 2022, [www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/01/forcible-transfer-ukrainians-russia](https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/01/forcible-transfer-ukrainians-russia).

115 "UN Says 'Credible' Reports Ukraine Children Transferred to Russia." *Al Jazeera*, 8 September 2022, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/8/un-says-credible-reports-ukraine-children-transferred-to-russia](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/8/un-says-credible-reports-ukraine-children-transferred-to-russia).



children without parental care and convert them to Russian citizenship. Due to the methods in which the examinations were conducted, the UN is also suspecting sexual abuse against women and young girls at risk. The US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield identified this program as part of Russia’s larger misinformation campaign.<sup>116</sup> International NGOs continued to warn that Russia’s actions constitute potential war crimes and that the UN should be granted the capacity to conduct investigations. Unsurprisingly, however, these allegations were denied by Russia.

Similar to those forced to migrate to Russia, those remaining in the state also live under extreme punishment. For example, there are many instances of Russian troops not distinguishing between civilians and combatants. There are cases of sexual abuse, torture, and the use of explosive weapons in indiscriminate attacks.<sup>117</sup> Mass burial sites have been found near the town of Iziium, and many executions have taken place in Bucha.<sup>118</sup> To this day, war crimes are taking place,

116 “U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas Greenfield on the Atrocities Uncovered in Ukraine.” *PBS News*, PBS News, 5 Apr. 2022, [www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-ambassador-to-the-un-linda-thomas-greenfield-on-the-atrocities-uncovered-in-ukraine](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-ambassador-to-the-un-linda-thomas-greenfield-on-the-atrocities-uncovered-in-ukraine). Accessed 14 Aug. 2024.

117 Nick Cumming-Bruce. “U.N. Experts Find That War Crimes Have Been Committed in Ukraine.” *The New York Times*, September 23, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/23/world/europe/russia-ukraine-war-crimes-united-nations.html>.

118 “U.N. Experts Find That War Crimes Have Been Committed in Ukraine.”

119 Jessie Butchley. “What Is the European Union Temporary Protection Directive?” *Envoy Global Resource Center*, June 15, 2023. <https://resources.envoyglobal.com/global-news-alerts/what-is-the-european-union-temporary-protection-directive/>.

120 “What Is the European Union Temporary Protection Directive?”

121 “What Is the European Union Temporary Protection Directive?”

122 “What Is the European Union Temporary Protection Directive?”

and the humanitarian crisis runs rampant. While Ukraine has defended itself and is continuing to fight, casualties are still taking place, and refugees are still leaving the country.

One month after the invasion, the EU Commission officially proposed invoking the Temporary Protection Directive to protect Ukrainian citizens fleeing. This Directive was drafted in response to the Balkan Wars of the 1990s as a means to outline procedural measures to protect displaced people migrating to European nations.<sup>119</sup> However, it was invoked for the first time in March 2022. Under the Directive’s provisions, all EU member states are required to make certain concessions regarding immigration.<sup>120</sup> For example, individuals protected under the Directive are eligible for a residence permit, access to employment, and access to education for minors.<sup>121</sup> However, the specific conditions of employment are subject to the labor market policies of each member state.<sup>122</sup> What this means is that migrants will be held to the same occupational standards that native workers have.

Refugee care near Poland train station

Credit: Pakkin Leung



As of today, the refugee crisis is still going on, and Ukrainian civilians are still dealing with an intense refugee crisis.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, energy infrastructure has been destroyed, rendering it nearly impossible for many to access water, food, or electricity. There is no doubt that this situation is of utmost importance. Given the crisis' international ramifications, proposed solutions need to keep the international community in mind. Indeed, the Russo-Ukraine war is not an isolated incident, and with the refugee crisis causing people to migrate all around Europe, it is more of an international one than ever.

### The Use of Technology and Cyber Warfare

Since the early 2000s, modern warfare experienced a shift in how battles were fought. While geopolitical consequences for all parties still very much exist, new cutting-edge technology is now utilized to states' advantage. From hacking to drone usage, the term "cyber warfare" was created to account for the new, advanced methods of battle.<sup>124</sup> Cyber warfare has proved to be just as effective as in-person armed conflicts. This is because of several factors, namely its endless reusability and difficulty in finding the source of the attacks.<sup>125</sup> By disrupting computer systems and a state's digital infrastructure, hackers can tilt the scale of battle. In the past, this has been done by obtaining central intelligence information, leaking planned strategies, and using drones to destabilize artillery. In the Russo-Ukraine war, this is no exception: Cyber warfare has been used extensively.

One of the factors that makes the Russo-Ukraine conflict so unconventional is that neither side of the war has an overwhelming advantage over the other.<sup>126</sup> Although Russia is one of the leading powers in the world and has a "stronger military", Ukraine's access to similar technologies and

international resources allows it to compete with Russia's forces. Without the aforementioned technologies, Ukraine might not have been able to resist Russia's onslaught for so long. Given this, cyber warfare's importance in protecting Ukraine, and in strengthening Russia, cannot be overstated.

In 2013, Russia began "Operation Armageddon". It is still ongoing to this day. This campaign, run by the hacker group "Armageddon", has the goal of targeting Ukraine's government, law enforcement, and military officials to steal sensitive information.<sup>127</sup> However, the attacks were not sophisticated. More often than not, Armageddon resorted to spear-phishing, a type of scam that works through emails. Despite the relatively juvenile nature of these attacks, Armageddon did see success, and they used the documents they stole to infect other users. The timing of these attacks coincided with Ukraine's decision to support the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement, which Russia opposed. Under this agreement, the parties involved would cooperate on economic policy.<sup>128</sup> These terms would allow Ukraine access to an international banking system, which Russia looked down upon.<sup>129</sup> Today, Armageddon is very active and still dangerous. It was revealed that the group operates out of Crimea and acts on orders from Russia's Federal Security Service in Moscow.<sup>130</sup> One of their latest techniques is to infect USB drives so that if one is shared between computers, the drive can infect new software.<sup>131</sup> Groups like these are still active in the conflict and are learning new methods to securely hack into their desired destinations. It is the secretive and unpredictable nature of these attacks, however, that makes Armageddon and other hacker groups threats to national security.

After Crimea was illegally annexed, Putin ordered the Federal Security Service to employ a large number of hackers.

123 "Ukraine 2020 Archives." *Amnesty International*, 2022, [www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/ukraine/report-ukraine/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/ukraine/report-ukraine/).  
 124 "Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression against Ukraine | CCDCOE." *Web.archive.org*, 16 Aug. 2016, [web.archive.org/web/20160816132103/ccdcoe.org/multimedia/cyber-war-perspective-russian-aggression-against-ukraine.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20160816132103/ccdcoe.org/multimedia/cyber-war-perspective-russian-aggression-against-ukraine.html).  
 125 "What Is Cyber Warfare | Types, Examples & Mitigation | Imperva." *Learning Center*, 2022, [www.imperva.com/learn/application-security/cyber-warfare/](http://www.imperva.com/learn/application-security/cyber-warfare/).  
 126 Alexander Hill. "Both Sides in the Russia-Ukraine War Are Using New and Old Technologies for Warfare." *The Conversation*, 14 Mar. 2024, [theconversation.com/both-sides-in-the-russia-ukraine-war-are-using-new-and-old-technologies-for-warfare-225451](https://theconversation.com/both-sides-in-the-russia-ukraine-war-are-using-new-and-old-technologies-for-warfare-225451).  
 127 Brian Prince. "'Operation Armageddon' Cyber Espionage Campaign Aimed at Ukraine: Lookingglass." *SecurityWeek*, 28 Apr. 2015, [www.securityweek.com/operation-armageddon-cyber-espionage-campaign-aimed-ukraine-lookingglass/](http://www.securityweek.com/operation-armageddon-cyber-espionage-campaign-aimed-ukraine-lookingglass/).  
 128 "EU Trade Relations with Ukraine." *Policy.trade.ec.europa.eu*, [policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/ukraine\\_en](http://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/ukraine_en). Accessed 19 July 2024.  
 129 "EU Trade Relations with Ukraine."  
 130 Daryna Antoniuk. "Russian Hacking Group Armageddon Increasingly Targets Ukrainian State Services." *Cyber Security News | The Record*, July 16, 2023. <https://therecord.media/armageddon-gamaredon-russian-hacking-group-increasingly-targeting-ukraine-government>.  
 131 "Russian Hacking Group Armageddon Increasingly Targets Ukrainian State Services."

Throughout the next few years, Russia used these hackers to instigate several cyber aggressions against the Ukrainian government. For example, in December 2015, the Russian hacker group “Sandworm” hacked two large power grids in Ukraine. This caused a widespread power outage that impacted 230,000 residents.<sup>132</sup> This was the first instance of deliberate state-sponsored hacking in the region.

In December 2016, Russian hackers attempted to hack into and destroy a large power plant just outside of Kyiv. Managing to hack into a system operator, the hackers managed to open the circuit breaker and cause a blackout. The hackers’ main goal was to shut down the entire power plant, but Ukrainian operators turned the power back on quicker than expected.<sup>133</sup> Regardless, these two events affirmed that cyber warfare was becoming an accepted way to attack Ukraine. The smaller states needed to follow suit to ensure that they could rival Russia’s aggressions.

Eventually, the Ukrainian Cyber Alliance (UCA) was formed. The group consists of Ukrainian cyber activists who formed to counter Russian aggression in Ukraine. While initially formed in 2014, the group only started conducting operations after Russia’s failed power-plant hacking attempt. The group’s operations include hacking into Russian state-led news agencies, hacking Russia’s Ministry of Defense, and leaking Russian intel to reveal misinformation.

Following their failure and the UCA’s subsequent mobilization, Russia started targeting international banks, ministries, and newspapers.<sup>134</sup> Many European countries were impacted by the ransomware, but 80 percent of the infections were in Ukraine. As done many times in the past, Russian officials

denied carrying out the attacks even though they were considered the primary suspect according to statements by Ukrainian authorities and the CIA.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, leading up to the Russian invasion, Kremlin-ordered hackers targeted Ukraine’s major governmental agencies like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the National and Defense Council’s websites.<sup>136</sup> Although they were restored within hours, the hackers left messages on the interfaces warning people to “prepare for the worst”, possibly hinting at the impending invasion. This was one of the incidents that revealed to the American correspondents that Russia had been preparing for an invasion.<sup>137</sup>

Today, Russia continues to block governmental and banking platforms in Ukraine. Moreover, there have been attempts to stop Starlink from providing internet access through satellite.<sup>138</sup> However, this has yet to happen. In fact, because of the invasion, Ukraine’s collaboration with technological organizations has only strengthened. Amazon, Microsoft, and Google have all collaborated with Ukraine’s government to help build up the state’s defense against Russian cyber warfare.<sup>139</sup> Regardless, cyber warfare is still utilized heavily and is something that has a clear influence on the conflict. Furthermore, it has helped Ukraine defend itself against Russian aggression. However, NATO has to question whether or not simple defense is enough, and if it can be sustained until Russia’s defeat or retreat. Ukraine has to recognize the potential of cyber warfare and use it to the extent that Russia does. However, this risks escalation beyond what is already an intense and catastrophic conflict. The situation is complex, but it is these very situations that require the most urgency.

132 Alex Hern. “Ukrainian Blackout Caused by Hackers That Attacked Media Company, Researchers Say.” *The Guardian*, 7 Jan. 2016, [www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jan/07/ukrainian-blackout-hackers-attacked-media-company](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jan/07/ukrainian-blackout-hackers-attacked-media-company).

133 Andy Greenberg. “New Clues Show How Russia’s Grid Hackers Aimed for Physical Destruction.” *Wired*, WIRED, 12 September 2019, [www.wired.com/story/russia-ukraine-cyberattack-power-grid-blackout-destruction/](http://www.wired.com/story/russia-ukraine-cyberattack-power-grid-blackout-destruction/).

134 Frank Bajak, and Raphael Satter. “Companies Still Hobbled from Fearsome Cyberattack.” *AP NEWS*, 2 Feb. 2022, [apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-technology-business-europe-hacking-ce7a8aca506742ab8e8873e7f9f229c2](https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-technology-business-europe-hacking-ce7a8aca506742ab8e8873e7f9f229c2).

135 “Oleksandr Turchynov: One of the Mechanisms for Spreading a Dangerous Computer Virus Was a System for Updating the Accounting Software - National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.” *Web.archive.org*, 19 Oct. 2017, [web.archive.org/web/20171019075903/www.rnbo.gov.ua/en/news/2821.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20171019075903/www.rnbo.gov.ua/en/news/2821.html).

136 Joe Tidy. “Ukraine Cyber-Attack: Russia to Blame for Hack, Says Kyiv.” *BBC News*, 14 Jan. 2022, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59992531](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59992531).

137 Pavel Polityuk, and Steve Holland. “Cyberattack Hits Ukraine as U.S. Warns Russia Could Be Prepping for War.” *Reuters*, 14 Jan. 2022, [www.reuters.com/world/europe/expect-worst-ukraine-hit-by-cyberattack-russia-moves-more-troops-2022-01-14/](http://www.reuters.com/world/europe/expect-worst-ukraine-hit-by-cyberattack-russia-moves-more-troops-2022-01-14/).

138 “How Elon Musk’s Satellites Have Saved Ukraine and Changed Warfare.” *The Economist*, 5 Jan. 2023, [www.economist.com/briefing/2023/01/05/how-elon-musks-satellites-have-saved-ukraine-and-changed-warfare](http://www.economist.com/briefing/2023/01/05/how-elon-musks-satellites-have-saved-ukraine-and-changed-warfare).

139 Russ Mitchell. “How Amazon Put Ukraine’s ‘Government in a Box’ — and Saved Its Economy from Russia.” *The Seattle Times*, 26 Dec. 2022, [www.seattletimes.com/business/how-amazon-put-ukraines-government-in-a-box-and-saved-its-economy-from-russia/](http://www.seattletimes.com/business/how-amazon-put-ukraines-government-in-a-box-and-saved-its-economy-from-russia/).

## Current Status

### NATO's Contributions to War Efforts

Four months after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, NATO leaders approved a new Strategic Concept (SC) for the Alliance. In the past, strategic concepts have set the Alliance's strategy for security threats, with the priority on safeguarding its members. The 2022 Strategic Concept reaffirmed this idea and went on to note that the "Russian Federation" was the "most significant and direct threat to the Allies' security and peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area".<sup>140</sup> Moreover, the SC reaffirmed that NATO does not seek confrontation with Russia, nor does the Alliance pose any threat. While the organization is willing to keep open channels of communication with Moscow to manage and mitigate risks, the organization clearly states that it cannot consider Russia to be its partner.<sup>141</sup> This indicates that the majority of NATO's contributions to war efforts have been done with Ukraine's benefit in mind.

NATO-Ukraine relations date back to Ukraine's independence in 1991.<sup>142</sup> However, since Russia's full-scale invasion, NATO's practical support for Ukraine dramatically increased. During the 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid, the Allies agreed to provide Ukrainians with an extensive assistance package to help push back Russian troops.<sup>143</sup> The package consisted of secure communications, fuel, medical supplies, as well as equipment to counter mines. At this summit, Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary-General of NATO, was quoted as saying that over the long term, NATO will "help Ukraine transition

from Soviet-era equipment to modern NATO equipment".<sup>144</sup> Moreover, to support Ukraine's self-defense, NATO allies have provided around USD 150 billion in military and financial assistance.<sup>145</sup> Along with this, the Alliance imposed massive sanctions on Russia's economy.<sup>146</sup> Economic sanctions are penalties given to a country to de-motivate them to continue doing what they're doing. In this case, the sanctions were a consequence of the full-scale invasion.

After the 2022 invasion, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov accused NATO of supplying military aid to Ukraine.<sup>147</sup> Lavrov likened the act to a "proxy war", claiming that NATO is using Ukraine as a proxy to fight Russia.<sup>148</sup> Along with this claim, Lavrov warned that the risks of nuclear conflict were now "considerable". This increasing emphasis that Moscow put on its nuclear arsenal concerned many Western officials.<sup>149</sup> This is because Russia's conventional forces did not fare well against Ukraine, and they were hampered by fierce resistance and technological issues.<sup>150</sup> To NATO and the West, this implied that nuclear weapons were becoming the only remaining option. As of July 2024, Russia has ordered several rounds of drills to test out short-range missiles and artillery munitions.<sup>151</sup> While not nuclear, these drills were intended to showcase Russian capabilities. NATO responded by reaffirming its defensive stance.<sup>152</sup> In response to these drill threats, NATO created the CBRN Defense Task Force. This group was made to counter the growth of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>153</sup>

In July 2023, NATO led a summit in Lithuania's capital,

140 "NATO 2022 - Strategic Concept." NATO 2022 - Strategic concept. Accessed September 10, 2024. <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>.

141 "NATO 2022 - Strategic Concept."

142 Nato. "Relations with Ukraine." NATO, August 28, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_37750.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm).

143 "Relations with Ukraine."

144 Noemie Bissierbe. "NATO Allies Pledge More Aid for Kyiv as Stoltenberg Says Commitment to Ukraine Is Unshakeable." *The Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 2022. <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/ukraine-russia-war-nato-summit-news/card/nato-countries-agree-to-increase-support-to-ukraine-BApCekjZuDxtaMqyGLJT>.

145 "NATO Allies Pledge More Aid for Kyiv as Stoltenberg Says Commitment to Ukraine Is Unshakeable."

146 Nick Fenton. "Sanctions and the Russian Economy." CSIS Events, January 19, 2023. <https://www.csis.org/events/sanctions-and-russian-economy>.

147 Helen Livingstone. "Russia Accuses Nato of 'Proxy War' in Ukraine as US Hosts Crucial Defence Summit." *The Guardian*, April 26, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/26/russia-accuses-nato-of-proxy-war-in-ukraine-as-us-hosts-crucial-defence-summit>.

148 "Russia Accuses Nato of 'Proxy War'"

149 "Russia Accuses Nato of 'Proxy War'"

150 "Russia Accuses Nato of 'Proxy War'"

151 "Russian Military Begins 3rd Round of Drills to Train Troops in Tactical Nuclear Weapons." *AP News*, 31 July 2024, [apnews.com/article/russia-nuclear-drills-putin-ukraine-war-3e24676fcb8ef4449461d7b93425c](https://apnews.com/article/russia-nuclear-drills-putin-ukraine-war-3e24676fcb8ef4449461d7b93425c). Accessed 2 Aug. 2024.

152 "What Are Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Why Did Russia Order Drills?" *AP News*, 6 May 2024, [apnews.com/article/russia-tactical-nuclear-weapons-ukraine-war-drills-05b0b3da546ae8411976936797bff68e](https://apnews.com/article/russia-tactical-nuclear-weapons-ukraine-war-drills-05b0b3da546ae8411976936797bff68e). Accessed 2 Aug. 2024.

153 NATO. "Combined Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence Task Force." NATO, November 4, 2016. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49156.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49156.htm).

Vilnius, around 500 days after Russia invaded Ukraine. At this summit, the G7 - the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Japan, Italy, France, and Germany - published a joint declaration of support for Ukraine.<sup>154</sup> This declaration sought to hold Russia accountable and pursue Ukrainian reforms. While not announcing specifics, the declaration provides a framework for countries that sign it to make their security commitments with Ukraine.<sup>155</sup>

A year after the Vilnius summit, NATO, their partner countries, and the EU congregated in Washington D.C. The expectation at this summit was to provide Ukraine with something that would bring the country closer to NATO membership.<sup>156</sup> On the summit's first day, US President Joe Biden announced that several NATO nations, including the US, would provide Ukraine with equipment for five air

defense systems.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, the alliance accused China of enabling Russia's war against Ukraine through its support for Russia's defense industrial base.<sup>158</sup> The foreign ministry of the People's Republic of China responded by saying that NATO has malicious intent.<sup>159</sup> All 32 NATO states approved the Washington Summit declaration that condemned countries that supported Russia during the conflict, including China, Iran, North Korea, and Belarus.<sup>160</sup> Immediately following the 2024 Washington Summit, the US announced its intention to place long-range missiles in Germany by 2026.<sup>161</sup> These weapons would include SM-6 and Tomahawk cruise missiles. Public reactions to these actions have been divided. In Germany, those on the margins of the political spectrum oppose it, with many fearing a potential arms race.<sup>162</sup> The Russian Federation responded, as well. Putin warned that if Washington deploys these missiles in Germany, Russia will station similar missiles

154 Sean Monaghan, Sissy Martinez, Otto Svendsen, Carlota García Encina, and Mathieu Droin. "What Happened at NATO's Vilnius Summit?" CSIS, July 14, 2023. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-happened-natos-vilnius-summit>.

155 "What Happened at NATO's Vilnius Summit?"

156 Katherine Walla. "Expect a New 'bridge' to NATO Membership for Ukraine at the Washington Summit, Says Julianne Smith." Atlantic Council, April 29, 2024. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/expect-a-new-bridge-to-nato-membership-for-ukraine-at-the-washington-summit-says-julianne-smith/>.

157 Federica Marsi, and Joseph Stepansky. "NATO Countries Pledge Long-Term Support for Ukraine as Allies Meet." Al Jazeera, July 11, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/7/10/nato-summit-washington-live>.

158 Al Jazeera Staff. "What Has NATO Promised Ukraine – and Did Gaza Figure in Summit Talks?" Al Jazeera, July 11, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/11/what-has-nato-promised-ukraine-at-summit-and-did-gaza-figure-in-talks>.

159 Karson Yiu, and Kevin Shalvey. "Cold War Mentality: China Responds to NATO Accusations Saying Beijing Is 'enabler' of Russian War." ABC News, July 11, 2024. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/cold-war-mentality-china-responds-nato-accusations-beijing/story?id=111836136>.

160 "NATO Countries Pledge Long-Term Support for Ukraine as Allies Meet."

161 Hasselbach, Christoph. "A New Arms Race in Europe? US Long-Range Weapons in Germany." dw.com, July 15, 2024. <https://www.dw.com/en/a-new-arms-race-in-europe-us-long-range-weapons-in-germany/a-69648733>.

162 "A New Arms Race in Europe? US Long-Range Weapons in Germany."

Ukraine – NATO Commission chaired by the President

Credit: The Presidential Administration of Ukraine



within striking distance of the West. He noted that Russia “will take mirror measures to deploy, taking into account the actions of the United States, its satellites in Europe, and in other regions of the world”.<sup>163</sup>

NATO’s war efforts reaffirm its commitment to self-defense and Ukrainian safety. With this, NATO’s Allies insist on allowing Ukraine to uphold its fundamental right to self-defense. However, with a potential arms race brewing, on top of Russia threatening NATO with missile drills, it begs the question of whether simply defending its countries is enough of a response. While a pledge for long-term security is righteous and democratic, there are doubts as to whether or not it is sustainable.

### Disinformation in the Russo-Ukraine War

Following the 2022 invasion, both the Russian and Ukrainian governments have been accused of using propaganda and deception in their information wars against the other state. Many Russian fake news stories accused Ukraine of being a neo-Nazi state and developing biological weapons, among other stories. Russian propaganda also accused NATO of controlling Ukraine. Specifically, they accuse NATO of using Ukraine to build up military forces against Russia, evident when Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov accused NATO of using Ukraine as a proxy. Meanwhile, Ukrainian propaganda has been accused of having overly optimistic sentiments. In particular, reports about the war have promoted false patriotic stories. In general, Russian propaganda has proven to have been successful in Russia. This is due to Putin’s censorship of war news and state control of most media.<sup>164</sup> Internationally,

Russia’s reputation has been tarnished due to this very censorship. However, many countries in the Global South, particularly in Africa, have been successfully influenced by this propaganda. For example, many recent coups in Mali and Niger were influenced by Russia, the leaders of such countries having friendly relations with Putin.<sup>165</sup> Regardless, the use of disinformation has greatly influenced the public’s perception of the war. It is seminal to acknowledge and address propaganda as a critical facet of both sides of the conflict.

One of the main points that Russian propaganda targets is Ukraine’s national identity. Ukrainians have often been portrayed as “Little Russians”, a theme that has been prevalent in Russian rhetoric since the seventeenth century.<sup>166</sup> For years, Putin has questioned Ukraine’s legitimacy. In 2021, Putin published an essay titled “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, in which he claims that there is no historical basis for Ukraine to have its own identity.<sup>167</sup> Ironically, ever since this essay’s publishing, Russian media’s official narrative has been that Ukraine always belonged to Russia.<sup>168</sup> For example, Russian TV host Vladimir Solovyov has broadcast propaganda supporting the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>169</sup> In February 2024, Putin framed the Russo-Ukraine war as having “civil war elements”, indicating that both sides of the conflict belong to a single state.<sup>170</sup> UN Human rights experts have claimed that such denial of Ukraine’s nationhood is part of Russia’s campaign to incite the genocide of Ukrainians.<sup>171</sup>

When Russia initially invaded Ukraine, Putin claimed that Ukraine was carrying out genocide in Donbas, which is a Russian-speaking region in Ukraine.<sup>172</sup> Putin called the

163 “Putin Warns Us against Deploying Long-Range Missiles in Germany.” *The Guardian*, July 28, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/28/putin-warns-us-against-deploying-long-range-missiles-in-germany>.

164 Dominik Presl. “Russia Is Winning the Global Information War.” *Royal United Services Institute*, May 7, 2024. <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russia-winning-global-information-war>.

165 Dan Whitman. “Russian Disinformation in Africa: No Door on This Barn.” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, July 30, 2024. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/08/russian-disinformation-in-africa-no-door-on-this-barn/>.

166 Reuters. “Putin says Russians and Ukrainians ‘practically one people’.” *Reuters*, August 29, 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-putin-people-idUSKBN0GT14720140829/>

167 Björn Alexander Düben. “Revising History and ‘Gathering the Russian Lands’: Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian Nationhood.” *LSE Public Policy Review*, September 8, 2023. <https://ppr.lse.ac.uk/articles/10.31389/lseppr.86>.

168 “Revising History and ‘Gathering the Russian Lands’”

169 Liza Rozovsky. “Ukraine War: Russia Is Running an Orwellian Propaganda Campaign.” *Haaretz.com*, February 27, 2022. <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2022-02-27/ty-article/.highlight/putins-propaganda-channeling-the-rabid-protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion/0000017f-f413-d497-a1ff-f693c8c90000>.

170 Ukraine War: Russia Is Running an Orwellian Propaganda Campaign.”

171 Targeted destruction of Ukraine’s culture must stop: UN experts | ohchr. Accessed September 11, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/targeted-destruction-ukraines-culture-must-stop-un-experts>.

172 Alexander Hinton. “Putin’s Claims That Ukraine Is Committing Genocide Are Baseless, but Not Unprecedented.” *The Conversation*, May 8, 2024. <https://theconversation.com/putins-claims-that-ukraine-is-committing-genocide-are-baseless-but-not-unprecedented-177511>.

invasion a “military operation”, and said it was a way to protect Russians.<sup>173</sup> He went on to claim that Russia has been facing a genocide perpetrated by Kyiv’s regime.<sup>174</sup> However, the European Commission called the allegations “Russian disinformation”, and said that there was no evidence for these claims.<sup>175</sup> Ukraine bought a case before the ICJ to challenge Russia’s claim, and the ICJ said there was no evidence of genocide by Ukraine.<sup>176</sup>

NATO has been a focus of Russian propaganda. For example, there was the claim that NATO provoked the invasion and that Russia’s invasion was a defensive measure. Putin falsely claimed that NATO was building up military forces and infrastructure in Ukraine.<sup>177</sup> NATO responded to these claims by saying that it is not at war with Russia, but supports Ukraine’s right to self-defense, as stated in the UN charter.<sup>178</sup> British academic Lawrence Freedman wrote that any weakening of Russia caused by the war would be because of Moscow, not because of NATO’s intent to harm them.<sup>179</sup>

In March 2022, Russia alleged that Ukraine was building biological weapons in a lab linked to the United States.<sup>180</sup> These claims were amplified by Chinese state media, with ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian stating that “this Russian military operation has uncovered the secret of the U.S. labs

in Ukraine”.<sup>181</sup> The United Nations, however, found no claim of this. Russian biologists have also debunked the claim.<sup>182</sup> Around the same time, Russian state-controlled news agencies claimed that Ukraine was developing a plutonium-based nuclear weapon at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu claimed that Ukraine was preparing a “provocation” involving the use of a bomb.<sup>184</sup> The Institute for the Study of War suggested that these claims were made so that foreign aid for Ukraine could be suspended.<sup>185</sup> However, the international community rejected these claims. Among other examples of disinformation around Ukraine’s weapons were claims that the US was training birds to spread disease in Ukraine among Russian citizens and that Ukraine was using drones with “combat mosquitoes” that spread viruses.<sup>186</sup>

Various smaller-scale, yet still-pressing examples of disinformation have come to light since the initial invasion. For example, In October 2023, a video of Hamas, the extremist Islamic political group was shared on X.<sup>187</sup> The video showed Hamas members thanking Ukraine for giving them supplies. The video was viewed over 300,000 times and was shared by American far-right accounts. However, the video was linked to the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company.<sup>188</sup> In January 2024, Russia carried out a missile strike on a building

173 “Putin’s Claims That Ukraine Is Committing Genocide Are Baseless, but Not Unprecedented.”

174 “Putin’s Claims That Ukraine Is Committing Genocide Are Baseless, but Not Unprecedented.”

175 “Disinformation about the Current Russia-Ukraine Conflict – Seven Myths Debunked.” European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), January 24, 2022. [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/disinformation-about-current-russia-ukraine-conflict-seven-myths-debunked-2022-01-24\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/disinformation-about-current-russia-ukraine-conflict-seven-myths-debunked-2022-01-24_en).

176 Julian Borger. “UN International Court of Justice Orders Russia to Halt Invasion of Ukraine.” The Guardian, March 16, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/16/un-international-court-of-justice-orders-russia-to-halt-invasion-of-ukraine>.

177 Tetyana Klug, and Rachel Baig. “Fact Check: Russia’s Disinformation Campaign Targets NATO.” dw.com, August 21, 2023. <https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-russias-disinformation-campaign-targets-nato/a-64675398>.

178 NATO. “De-Bunking Russian Disinformation on NATO.” NATO. Accessed September 11, 2024. <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/115204.htm>.

179 Lawrence Freedman. “Ukraine Is Not a Proxy War.” New Statesman, October 12, 2023. <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/ukraine/2023/01/ukraine-proxy-war-russia-vladimir-putin-nato>.

180 Edward Wong. “U.S. Fights Bioweapons Disinformation Pushed by Russia and China.” The New York Times, March 11, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/10/us/politics/russia-ukraine-china-bioweapons.html>.

181 David Rising. “China Amplifies Unsupported Russian Claim of Ukraine Biolabs.” AP News, November 30, 2023. <https://apnews.com/general-news-39eccc023efdf7ea59c4a20b7e018169>.

182 Robert Mackett. “Russia Is Lying about Evidence of Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine, Russian Biologists Say.” The Intercept, June 1, 2023. <https://theintercept.com/2022/03/17/russia-ukraine-bioweapons-misinformation/>.

183 “Russia, without evidence, says Ukraine making nuclear ‘dirty bomb,’” March 6, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-without-evidence-says-ukraine-making-nuclear-dirty-bomb-2022-03-06/>.

184 “Ukraine War: NATO Denounces Russia’s ‘dirty Bomb’ Claim.” BBC News, October 24, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63369175>.

185 “Ukraine War: NATO Denounces Russia’s ‘dirty Bomb’ Claim.”

186 Steven Lee Myers, and Stuart A. Thompson. “Truth Is Another Front in Putin’s War.” The New York Times, March 20, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/20/world/asia/russia-putin-propaganda-media.html>.

187 Manisha Ganguly. “How Israel-Hamas War Disinformation Is Being Spread Online.” The Guardian, October 11, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/oct/11/how-israel-hamas-war-disinformation-is-being-spread-online>.

188 John Faersth. “No Evidence That Hamas Has Received NATO Weapons Donated to Ukraine.” Logically Facts, October 18, 2023. <https://www.logicallyfacts.com/en/article/no-evidence-that-hamas-has-received-nato-weapons-donated-to-ukraine>.

in Kharkiv, Ukraine, and claimed that it killed a dozen “French mercenaries”.<sup>189</sup> However, Ukrainian authorities noted that only civilians were killed, and there was no military target in the building. The French network Radio France Internationale contacted two people who were supposedly killed in the attack and interviewed them. This confirmed that the story was Russian propaganda.<sup>190</sup>

Similarly, in March 2024, four ISIS gunmen attacked a concert hall in Krasnogorsk, Russia. 144 people were killed.<sup>191</sup> Russian officials claimed that these gunmen tried to escape to Ukraine, which Ukrainian officials said was “very doubtful” information.<sup>192</sup> This is because the border between Russia and Ukraine is heavily guarded by soldiers, mined, and constantly monitored.<sup>193</sup> The Latvian-based news outlet Meduza reported that state-controlled media in Russia was instructed to highlight possible traces of Ukrainian involvement in the attack.<sup>194</sup> In fact, on the evening of the attack, the Russian television channel NTV broadcasted a video using audio deep faking showing the Secretary of the National Security of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov confirming Ukrainian involvement in the attack.<sup>195</sup> Statistics showed that more than 50 percent of Russians believed that Ukraine was responsible for these

attacks.<sup>196</sup> In April 2024, Russia’s defense ministry announced that around 16,000 citizens had signed military contracts in the last 10 days to fight as contract soldiers in the war. Most of their reasoning was to “avenge those killed” in the Crocus City Hall attack.<sup>197</sup>

Ukraine’s use of disinformation has been on a smaller scale than Russia’s. However, it has still contributed to the overall falsehood of much of the war. For example, the day after Russia invaded Ukraine, videos and pictures went viral on social media that claimed that a Ukrainian pilot nicknamed the “Ghost of Kyiv” shot down six Russian fighter jets.<sup>198</sup> This was within the first 30 minutes of the war. There is no credible evidence that this “ghost” existed. A video of this alleged pilot was shared on the official Twitter account of Ukraine’s Ministry of Defense.<sup>199</sup> However, the video was later found to be from a video game called “Digital Combat Simulator World”.<sup>200</sup> Former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko shared an altered photo from this game.<sup>201</sup> In May 2022, the Ukrainian Air Force admitted that the Ghost of Kyiv was fabricated. Despite this, the British newspaper *The Times*, among other news outlets, published stories that asserted that the pilot was real and had died.<sup>202</sup> Disinformation from Ukraine’s side

189 “Paris Dismisses Russian Claim of French ‘mercenaries’ in Ukraine.” France 24, January 18, 2024. <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20240118-paris-dismisses-russian-claim-of-french-mercenaries-in-ukraine>.

190 Gregory Genevriev. “Les Dessous de l’infox, La Chronique - Comment La Russie a Faussement Annoncé La Mort de ‘Mercenaires’ Français En Ukraine.” RFI, January 26, 2024. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/podcasts/les-dessous-de-l-infox-la-chronique/20240126-attaque-informationnelle-la-russie-imagine-la-mort-de-mercenaires-fran%C3%A7ais-en-ukraine>.

191 Andrew Roth. “Four Suspects in Moscow Concert Hall Terror Attack Appear in Court.” *The Guardian*, March 24, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/24/new-islamic-state-videos-back-claim-it-carried-out-moscow-concert-hall-attack>.

192 Alla Shcherbak. “Ukraine Daily News: Breaking News, War with Russia, United States Relations — NV.UA.” *The New Voice of Ukraine*, March 23, 2024. <https://english.nv.ua/nation.html>.

193 Ukraine Daily News: Breaking News, War with Russia, United States Relations — NV.UA.”

194 “Kremlin Tells Pro-Government Media to Emphasize Possible ‘traces’ of ‘Ukrainian Involvement’ in Reporting on Moscow Terrorist Attack.” Meduza, March 23, 2024. <https://meduza.io/en/news/2024/03/23/kremlin-tells-pro-government-media-to-emphasize-possible-traces-of-ukrainian-involvement-in-reporting-on-moscow-terrorist-attack>.

195 Adam Robinson. “All Four Suspects Arrested after Crocus City Hall Shootings, Russia Says.” *BBC News*, March 23, 2024. [https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-68642036?ns\\_mchannel=social&ns\\_source=twitter&ns\\_campaign=bbc\\_live&ns\\_linkname=65feee133c0b7a6946ae3614%26Russian+TV+airs+fake+video+blaming+Ukraine+for+Moscow+attack%262024-03-23T15%3A40%3A04.475Z&ns\\_fee=0&pinned\\_post\\_locator=urn%3Aasset%3Ab8f8fd75-07a2-4302-866a-aeeb2c5e0aff&pinned\\_post\\_asset\\_id=65feee133c0b7a6946ae3614&pinned\\_post\\_type=share](https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-68642036?ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=twitter&ns_campaign=bbc_live&ns_linkname=65feee133c0b7a6946ae3614%26Russian+TV+airs+fake+video+blaming+Ukraine+for+Moscow+attack%262024-03-23T15%3A40%3A04.475Z&ns_fee=0&pinned_post_locator=urn%3Aasset%3Ab8f8fd75-07a2-4302-866a-aeeb2c5e0aff&pinned_post_asset_id=65feee133c0b7a6946ae3614&pinned_post_type=share).

196 “Financial Times: Poll Shows over Half of Russians Believe Kyiv behind Deadly Terrorist Attack in Moscow.” Meduza, April 1, 2024. <https://meduza.io/en/news/2024/04/01/financial-times-poll-shows-over-half-of-russians-believe-kyiv-behind-deadly-terrorist-attack-in-moscow>.

197 “Russian Military Says Recruited 100K Contract Soldiers since Start of 2024.” *The Moscow Times*, April 3, 2024. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/04/03/russian-military-says-recruited-100k-contract-soldiers-since-start-of-2024-a84721>.

198 Stuart A. Thompson, and Davey Alba. “Fact and Mythmaking Blend in Ukraine’s Information War.” In *Ukraine’s Information War, a Blend of Fact and Fiction* - *The New York Times*, March 3, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220303154004/https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/03/technology/ukraine-war-misinfo.html>.

199 Coleman, Alistair Coleman. “Ukraine Conflict: Further False Images Shared Online.” *BBC News*, February 25, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/60528276>.

200 Madison Czopek. “‘Ghost of Kyiv’ Clip Is from a Video Game.” @politifact. Accessed September 11, 2024. <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/feb/28/facebook-posts/ghost-kyiv-clip-video-game-not-video-fighting-ukra/>.

201 Ines Eisele. “Fact Check: The ‘ghost of Kyiv’ Fighter Pilot” *dw.com*, May 5, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-ukraines-ghost-of-kyiv-fighter-pilot/a-60951825>.

202 “Fact Check: The ‘ghost of Kyiv’ Fighter Pilot”



typically follows this format, highlighting optimistic attitudes towards the war.

In general, propaganda has been utilized extensively in the Russo-Ukraine war. Much of Russia’s communication with the outside world regarding the conflict has been filtered through fabrication that much of the state’s population believes, due to censorship and media being state-controlled. While Ukraine has also spread disinformation, it has paled in comparison to the attempts that the Federation of Russia has made to distort the facts and portray the former as the perpetrators of this conflict. Given this, it is of utmost importance that any information from the war is taken with a grain of salt.

### Impacts of the Russo-Ukraine Conflict

The humanitarian impact of the conflict cannot be understated. Many facets of life have been impacted. For example, as of February 2024, there are almost 4 million internally displaced

people in Ukraine.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, nearly 7 million people from Ukraine have been recorded as refugees, and approximately 14.6 million Ukrainians need humanitarian assistance.<sup>204</sup> Ukraine’s cultural heritage has been devastated, with over 500 Ukrainian cultural heritage sites being affected by the invasion.<sup>205</sup> This includes cultural centers, theaters, museums, and churches. According to the UN, the Russian attacks have been characterized as genocide.<sup>206</sup>

The invasion caused the largest refugee and humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s.<sup>207</sup> Even before the invasion, neighboring countries and aid organizations prepared for a mass displacement, because Russia was building up military forces. For example, in December 2021, the Ukrainian defense minister estimated that an invasion could force three to five million people to flee their homes.<sup>208</sup> In the first week of the invasion, the UN reported over a million refugees had fled Ukraine.<sup>209</sup> This reached over eight million

203 “Ukraine Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News | USA FOR UNHCR.” The UN Refugee Agency. Accessed September 12, 2024. <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/>.

204 “Ukraine Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News | USA FOR UNHCR.”

205 Charlotte Mullins. “Ukraine’s Heritage Under Attack: Why Russia Is Looting Museums.” The Guardian, May 27, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/may/27/ukraine-russia-looting-museums>.

206 “Destruction of Cultural Heritage Is a War Crime.” EPP Group in the European Parliament. Accessed September 12, 2024. <https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/destruction-of-cultural-heritage-is-a-war-crime>.

207 Steve Ballinger. “Protecting Ukrainian Refugees: What Can We Learn from the Response to Kosovo in the 90s?” British Future, March 11, 2022. <https://www.britishfuture.org/protecting-ukrainian-refugees-what-can-we-learn-from-kosovo/>.

208 Jasmine Aguilera. “Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Could Trigger Refugee Crisis.” Time, February 25, 2022. <https://time.com/6150856/ukraine-refugees-russia-invasion-preparation/>.

209 “Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation.” UNHCR Data Portal. Accessed September 12, 2024. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

Terrorist attack at the Crocus City Hall in Moscow  
Credit: Government of Moscow Oblast



people by January 2023.<sup>210</sup> Most refugees were women, children, the elderly, or the disabled. Furthermore, most male Ukrainian nationals aged 18 to 60 were denied exit from Ukraine as part of mandatory state service.<sup>211</sup> Many of these men opted to stay in Ukraine to join the resistance.

In July 2023, a study by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees showed that most Ukrainian refugees migrated to Poland, Germany, or the Czech Republic.<sup>212</sup> With these migrations come many issues. Concerns about human trafficking and sexual violence have been realized during this refugee crisis. La Strada, the international NGO that addresses human trafficking in Europe, worked on a case where Ukrainian girls were offered tickets to Mexico, Türkiye, and UAE without ever having met these offerors.<sup>213</sup> The European Commissioner for Home Affairs noted that there are indications of online services demanding Ukrainian refugees for illicit purposes.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, UNICEF and UNHCR raised concerns about minors who were traveling unaccompanied and urged neighboring countries to identify and register children before sending them to relocation services.<sup>215</sup> UNICEF set up “Blue Dot” safe spaces in Ukraine-neighboring countries, which included support for unaccompanied children.<sup>216</sup> Additionally, some protection for separated and unaccompanied minors is now provided through a system of temporary guardianship in the country where the children arrive. Poland, among other

countries, have set this up under their legislation.<sup>217</sup>

The environmental impacts of the war cannot be overstated. Based on a preliminary assessment, the war has inflicted USD 51 billion in environmental damages in Ukraine.<sup>218</sup> Around 700,000 tons of petrochemicals have burned as a result of shelling. Additionally, around 1600 tons of pollutants have leaked into bodies of water.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, hazardous chemicals have contaminated around 70 acres of soil, likely making agricultural activities temporarily impossible.<sup>220</sup> Currently, around 30 percent of Ukraine’s land is littered with explosives and more than 2.4 million hectares of forest have been damaged.<sup>221</sup> Netherlands peace organization PAX stated that Russia’s targeting of industrial and energy infrastructure has caused horrible pollution.<sup>222</sup> In June 2023, the Kakhovka Dam, under Russian occupation, was destroyed. This caused lots of flooding and warnings of an “ecological disaster”.<sup>223</sup> Many of Ukraine’s government workers and journalists have described the damage as ecocide, which is the destruction of the ecosystem by humans.<sup>224</sup> Currently, the Ukrainian government is investigating more crimes against the environment. Zelenskyy has met with very prominent European figures to discuss the environmental damage and how to prosecute it. The Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, on a visit to Kyiv, told reporters that ecocide and environmental destruction is a form of warfare.<sup>225</sup> A study published in April 2024 revealed

210 “Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation.”

211 Charli Carpenter. “Civilian Men Are Trapped in Ukraine.” *Foreign Policy*, July 15, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/15/ukraine-war-conscription-martial-law-men-gender-human-rights/>.

212 “Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation.”

213 Katya Adler. “How the Sex Trade Preys on Ukraine’s Refugees.” *BBC News*, March 27, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60891801>.

214 “Israel Investigating Suspected Trafficking of 17-Year-Old Ukrainian Refugee | The Times of Israel.” *The Times of Israel*, March 25, 2022. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-investigating-suspected-trafficking-of-17-year-old-ukrainian-refugee/>.

215 “Almost 100,000 children from orphanages evacuated amid war in Ukraine” Accessed September 12, 2024. <https://www.laprensalatina.com/almost-100000-children-from-orphanages-evacuated-amid-war-in-ukraine/>.

216 “Modern Furniture for the Real World.” *Blu Dot*, March 2, 2022. <https://www.bludot.com/>.

217 Suzanne Hoff, and Eefje de Volder. “Preventing Human Trafficking of Refugees from Ukraine: A Rapid Assessment of Risks and Gaps in the Anti-Trafficking Response.” *Journal of Human Trafficking, Enslavement and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* 3, no. 2 (December 22, 2022): 115–40. <https://doi.org/10.7590/266644722x16710255213783>.

218 Jonathan Mingle, Jon Hurdle, and Jon Hurdle. “One Year in, Russia’s War on Ukraine Has Inflicted \$51 Billion in Environmental Damage.” *Yale E360*, February 22, 2023. <https://e360.yale.edu/digest/russia-ukraine-war-environmental-cost-one-year>.

219 “One Year in, Russia’s War on Ukraine Has Inflicted \$51 Billion in Environmental Damage.”

220 Olivia Rosane. “‘Environmental Destruction Is a Form of Warfare’: Thunberg Joins Ecocide Investigation in Ukraine.” *Common Dreams*, June 30, 2023. <https://www.commondreams.org/news/thunberg-joins-group-to-investigate-ecocide-in-ukraine>.

221 “‘Environmental Destruction Is a Form of Warfare’: Thunberg Joins Ecocide Investigation in Ukraine.”

222 “Ten-Step Plan to Address Environmental Impact of War in Ukraine.” PAX, February 24, 2023. <https://paxforpeace.nl/publications/ten-step-plan-to-address-environmental-impact-of-war-in-ukraine/>.

223 Madeleine Finlay, Joel Cox, and Ellie Bury. “Kakhovka Dam Destruction: Why Is Ukraine Calling It ‘Ecocide’? – Podcast.” *The Guardian*, June 13, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2023/jun/13/kakhovka-dam-destruction-why-is-ukraine-calling-it-ecocide-podcast>.

224 Flavia Roscini. “The Environmental Cost of the War in Ukraine.” *International Relations Review*, April 14, 2022. <https://www.irreview.org/articles/the-environmental-cost-of-the-war-in-ukraine>.

225 Association, Press. “Zelenskyy Meets Greta Thunberg, Mary Robinson to Address War’s Effect on Ukraine’s Ecology.” *TheJournal.ie*, June 30, 2023. <https://www.thejournal.ie/zelenskyy-greta-thunberg-6106147-Jun2023/>.

that Russia has destroyed over 60,000 hectares of Ukrainian forests.<sup>226</sup> The investigation stated that long-term ecological consequences may include lowering of the groundwater level, reduction of biodiversity, fire outbreaks, and the drying up of ponds and rivers.<sup>227</sup>

Along with the environmental consequences, the war is currently facing heavy economic consequences, as well. The economic impact began in late February 2022, the days after Russia invaded Ukraine. Immediately, institutions like the US, the EU, and other Western countries introduced significant sanctions on Russia.<sup>228</sup> Some Russian banks were banned from using the SWIFT international payment systems.<sup>229</sup> Russia responded by placing sanctions of their very own, and strikes occurred across Europe against the rising cost of living.<sup>230</sup> For 2022 overall, the Russian GDP decreased by 2.1 percent. However, in 2023, Russia's GDP grew by 3.6 percent.<sup>231</sup> One theory for this growth is that it was driven mostly by ramped-up spending on the military.<sup>232</sup> In April 2024, it was reported that Russia was planning increases in personal income taxes and corporate taxes to help pay for the war.<sup>233</sup> Many think that this rise in taxes is part of the Russian government's efforts to reduce heavy reliance on oil revenues as Western states tighten their sanctions against Russian oil exports.<sup>234</sup>

While these developments might indicate some level of stability in Russia's economy, Ukraine's economy has been experiencing almost the exact opposite. Ukrainian Minister

of Economic Development and Trade Yulia Svyrydenko announced that for 2022, Ukraine lost 30.4 percent of its GDP.<sup>235</sup> However, similar to Russia's, Ukraine's GDP grew 5.3 percent in 2023.<sup>236</sup> As of September 2024, the National Bank of Ukraine has expectations for economic growth of 3.7 percent.<sup>237</sup> According to the Wilson Center, businesses in Ukraine are now much more prepared to handle electricity cut-offs because of new generators and batteries. However, as of July 1st, Ukraine's state and guaranteed debt amounts to USD 512 billion.<sup>238</sup> This is because of the sheer amount of external financing that Ukraine has used since the initial invasion. The economic impacts of the war cannot be overstated, and showcase the costly effects that prolonged fighting has on all parties involved.

In its February 2024 report, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has verified that around 31,000 civilian casualties have taken place since February 2022.<sup>239</sup> Millions have been displaced, thousands have lost their homes, and hundreds of medical and educational institutions have been damaged or destroyed. Ukrainian people's rights to health and education have been severely impacted because of this. In addition, interviews with over 550 former Ukrainian prisoners of war have indicated that Russia has committed serious violations of international human rights law.<sup>240</sup> Additionally, the UNHCR has documented instances of Ukrainian officers violating international human rights laws. While these instances are a fraction of the scope of those perpetrated by

226 Martin Fornusek. "Media: Russia Destroys over 60,000 Hectares of Ukrainian Forests." Yahoo! News, April 8, 2024. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/media-russia-destroys-over-60-101907829.html>.

227 "Media: Russia Destroys over 60,000 Hectares of Ukrainian Forests."

228 Metander, Ingrid Metander. "EU Targets Russian Economy after 'deluded Autocrat' Putin Invades Ukraine | Reuters." Reuters, February 24, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-launch-new-sanctions-against-russia-over-barbaric-attack-ukraine-2022-02-24/>.

229 Collins, Kaitlan Collins, Phil Mattingly, Kevin Liptak, and Donald Judd. "White House and EU Nations Announce Expulsion of 'selected Russian Banks' from Swift | CNN Politics." CNN, February 27, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/26/politics/biden-ukraine-russia-swift/index.html>.

230 "EU Targets Russian Economy after 'deluded Autocrat' Putin Invades Ukraine | Reuters."

231 Rob Garver. "Russia's Economy Grew in 2023, despite War and Sanctions." Voice of America, February 8, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-economy-grew-in-2023-despite-war-and-sanctions/7478952.html>.

232 "Russia's Economy Grew in 2023, despite War and Sanctions."

233 Paul Sonne. "Putin's War Will Soon Reach Russians' Tax Bills." The New York Times, April 27, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/27/world/europe/russia-taxes-ukraine-war-putin.html>.

234 "Putin's War Will Soon Reach Russians' Tax Bills."

235 Julia Horowitz. "Ukraine's Economy Shrank by More than 30% in 2022 | CNN Business." CNN, January 5, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/05/business/ukraine-economy/index.html>.

236 "Ukraine's Economy Grew 5.3% in 2023, Statistics Service Says | Reuters." Reuters. Accessed September 12, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/ukraines-economy-grew-53-2023-statistics-service-says-2024-03-28/>.

237 Andrian Prokip. "Report on Ukraine's Economy at Midyear." Wilson Center, September 11, 2024. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/report-ukraines-economy-midyear>.

238 "Report on Ukraine's Economy at Midyear."

239 "Ukraine: Report Reveals War's Long-Term Impact Which Will Be Felt 'for Generations' | UN News." United Nations, February 22, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/02/1146842>.

240 "Ukraine: Report Reveals War's Long-Term Impact Which Will Be Felt 'for Generations' | UN News."

Russian forces, this does not exempt Ukrainian forces from their obligations to adhere to international humanitarian laws.<sup>241</sup> All this to say, the war has impacted millions of lives, and the repercussions of the attacks will be felt for generations to come. It is of utmost importance that these issues be addressed in sustainable and diplomatic methods.

## Bloc Analysis

### Points of Division

The members of NATO have different perspectives as to how to handle Russia following their invasion of Ukraine. A key factor in the various approaches to Russia is the different relationships that each country has with Russia. Some countries still trade and import Russian goods, including gas and oil products. When it comes to global exports and imports, Russia is one of the world's largest exporters of oil products while many countries within NATO import large amounts of oil.<sup>242</sup> The importance of this resource has meant that some states are hesitant to sanction Russia to protect their national interests.

Geographical location also has an impact on the way that NATO countries feel Russia should be handled. The Eastern European, Western European, and American NATO members each have a different reaction to Putin and his invasion of Russia. Many Eastern European states are fearful that Ukraine is just a stepping stone in a bigger plan to continue taking over lands. On the other hand, many Western European countries feel that Ukraine is the end goal, meaning those in Eastern Europe are safe from potential Russian invasion.<sup>243</sup>

Another major point of dispute that has affected and will

continue to affect how countries feel regarding Russia is Ukraine's pitch for membership in NATO. Not every member of NATO is happy about or in support of Ukraine joining NATO. Depending on where a country falls on this issue, is an indicator as to how they feel about sanctions on Russia. For Ukraine to join NATO, a unanimous decision needs to be reached by all NATO members. This means all 30 member countries have to agree to Ukraine joining the alliance.<sup>244</sup> Over the years, various countries have been the reason Ukraine was denied entry into the alliance. In 2008, Angela Merkel of Germany rejected their application into the alliance on the grounds of political conditions not being met. Following this, Ukraine was left with the promise of eventually being able to join the alliance.<sup>245</sup> Currently, Hungary is blocking Ukraine from joining NATO as a form of protest against Ukraine's human rights violations on Hungarian ethnic minorities living in Ukraine.<sup>246</sup> Each country has its unique relationship with both Ukraine and Russia, leading to each country having its perspective as to the sanctions that should be implemented on Russia and the aid that should be provided to Ukraine.

### Countries that want Sanctions Against Russia

As an alliance, NATO has not implemented sanctions against Russia.<sup>247</sup> However, the European Union (EU), the United States, and the United Kingdom have all implemented sanctions on their own accord. These sanctions vary slightly based on who has implemented them but all have the same goal. The goal of these sanctions is to increase the pressure on the Russian government, encouraging them to seek a peaceful resolution.<sup>248</sup> The sanctions by these parties include financial, energy and gas, and travel restrictions.<sup>249</sup> Many of these sanctions have also been applied to the countries actively

241 "Ukraine: Report Reveals War's Long-Term Impact Which Will Be Felt 'for Generations' | UN News."

242 Petras Katinas. "April 2024 — Monthly Analysis of Russian Fossil Fuel Exports and Sanctions." Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. May 20, 2024. <https://energyandcleanair.org/april-2024-monthly-analysis-of-russian-fossil-fuel-exports-and-sanctions/>

243 Seth Cropsey. "The Divide within NATO." Hoover Institution. 2023. <https://www.hoover.org/research/divide-within-nato>.

244 Alec Greaney. "Ukraine Wanted to Join NATO's Alliance for Years. What Stopped It?" NBC Chicago. April 22, 2022. <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/national-international/ukraine-wanted-to-join-natos-alliance-for-years-what-stopped-it/2813488/>.

245 "Merkel Defends 2008 Decision to Block Ukraine from NATO." France 24. April 4, 2022. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220404-merkel-defends-2008-decision-to-block-ukraine-from-nato>.

246 "Embassy of Hungary Washington." Mfa.gov.hu. 2018. <https://washington.mfa.gov.hu/eng/news/why-is-hungary-blocking-ukraines-nato-accession>.

247 Demyan Plakhov. "NATO Sanctions Policy." July 26, 2021. <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Policy-Primer-Plakhov-NATO-Sanctions-Policy.pdf>.

248 "NATO's Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_192648.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_192648.htm).

249 Alan Kartashkin, Satish M. Kini, Jane Shvets, Alexandre Bisch, Konstantin Bureiko, Robert T. Dura, Carl Micarelli, Aseel M. Rabie, Tzerina Dizon, Isabel Espinosa de los Reyes, Anastasia Magid, Sophie Michalski, and Jonathan R. Wong. "A Guide to US, UK and EU

supporting Russia including Belarus, North Korea, and China.<sup>250</sup>

Countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and France (a member of the EU) have all been very vocal about their sanctions and have encouraged other states to do the same. Through the Group of 7 (G7), the countries above, Germany, and Canada have been able to implement greater sanctions. The sanctions imposed have all been against individuals or entities. However, who the sanctions are on does vary between parties. The common factors, though, tend to be government officials, people in positions of power, and entities that greatly contribute to the Russian economy.<sup>251</sup> These sanctions are not against the common man, however they do affect everyone. The G7 has been able to enforce punishments on people or entities who are evading the sanctions.<sup>252</sup> Through outside alliances such as the EU and G7, NATO members can seek wide-ranging sanctions while allowing NATO to promote peace and not intervene except for promoting aid and security.<sup>253</sup>

## Countries that want No Sanctions Against Russia

The countries in this bloc have not been involved in sanctioning Russia or have stalled sanctions against Russia in their alliances outside of NATO. This bloc has openly denounced Russia's

invasion of Ukraine and has provided aid, however, outside of this, they are not intervening much in the conflict. Turkey has been balancing their membership in NATO and maintaining relations with Russia.<sup>254</sup> The Turkish government has continually supplied Ukraine with military support, needed for Ukraine's defense. On the other hand, Turkey has been supporting Russia economically.<sup>255</sup> Unlike the countries in the European Union, Türkiye has allowed its airspace to remain open for Russian airlines. The Russian government has also been able to use Türkiye as a pipeline to European markets. By selling oil and gas products through Türkiye, Russia can evade the sanctions implemented by the EU, United States, and United Kingdom. Trading with Russia has become an important lifeline for the Turkish economy.<sup>256</sup>

Hungary is a member of the European Union that has implemented sanctions on Russia, however, they have stalled the vote on many of these sanctions.<sup>257</sup> Despite eventually agreeing to vote in favor of sanctions on Russia, Hungary has not enforced said sanctions. The Hungarian government has continued to purchase Russian oils and gas, despite the European Union declaring they would no longer do so.<sup>258</sup> Hungarian president, Viktor Orbán has transformed the country from a democracy to an authoritarian state, increasing tensions with democratic Europe.<sup>259</sup> This transformation has led to criticism from some NATO members including

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250 Andrew Hood, Richard Tauwhare, and Agnieszka Paulina Regiec. "UK, EU and US Sanctions on Russia." Fieldfisher. July 24, 2024. <https://www.fieldfisher.com/en/services/international-trade/trade-sanctions-blog/uk-eu-and-us-sanctions-on-russia>.

251 "EU Sanctions against Russia Explained." Consilium. 2024. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia/sanctions-against-russia-explained/>; Claire Mills. "Sanctions against Russia." House of Commons Library. August 2, 2024. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9481/>; "What Are the Sanctions on Russia and Have They Affected Its Economy?" Bbc.com. BBC News. January 27, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659>.

252 Sunny Mann. "Sanctions Takeaways from the G7 Summit." Global Sanctions and Export Controls Blog. June 17, 2024. <https://sanctionsnews.bakermckenzie.com/sanctions-takeaways-from-the-g7-summit/>.

253 "Relations with Russia." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50090.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50090.htm).

254 "Unpacking Turkey's Non-Binary Ukraine War Policy." The Washington Institute. 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/unpacking-turkeys-non-binary-ukraine-war-policy>.

255 Elçin Poyrazlar. "Turkey Carves Its Own Course in NATO." Poli. July 8, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-nato-russia-ukraine-turkish-defense-minister-yasar-guler/>.

256 Henry Ridgwell. "Russian Trade Rises despite Sanctions, as NATO Member Turkey Offers 'Critical Lifeline.'" Voice of America News. June 8, 2023. <https://www.voanews.com/a/russian-trade-rises-despite-sanctions-as-nato-member-turkey-offers-critical-lifeline-/7128651.html>.

257 Justin Spike and Illia Novikov. "Orbán in Kyiv for the First Time since the Russia-Ukraine War Began." AP News. July 2, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-hungary-viktor-orban-volodymyr-zelenskyy-79277d17ae9c452a4e4924c9f1f633f9>.

258 Henry Ridgwell. "Hungary Appears to Be Strengthening Ties with Russia, China." Voice of America News. February 23, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/hungary-appears-to-be-strengthening-ties-with-russia-china/7499682.html>.

259 Gábor Scheiring. "I Watched Hungary's Democracy Dissolve into Authoritarianism and See Parallels in Trumpism." Ohio Capital Journal. March 8, 2024. <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2024/03/08/i-watched-hungarys-democracy-dissolve-into-authoritarianism-and-see-parallels-in-trumpism/>.

Poland.<sup>260</sup> Hungary has had negative relations with Ukraine since Ukraine decided that Ukrainian would be the only language used in schools throughout the country. This angered the Hungarian government as there is a large Hungarian minority within the country whose national identity is being removed.<sup>261</sup> This has been used by the Hungarian government to defend their actions towards Ukraine and their lack of support for Ukraine.

## Aid Promoting Countries

This bloc is made up of countries that would rather provide aid to Ukraine than sanction Russia for their invasion. Countries in this bloc rely heavily on Russian imports so sanctioning them would cripple their own economy.<sup>262</sup> Many of the countries in this bloc have agreed to the sanctions of their alliances such as the EU. However, these countries do not enforce the sanctions that would impact their economy. The sanctions that are not enforced are primarily the ones impacting gas and oil importation. Throughout Europe, gas and oil prices have increased as a result of the sanctions. This increase has meant that some people no longer can afford gas and oil.<sup>263</sup>

The states within this bloc are primarily Balkan countries.<sup>264</sup> These countries are situated close to Russia and are divided as some countries take Russia's side and others wholeheartedly support Ukraine, yet others are somewhere in the middle, promoting aid and an end to the war. The variation comes from different relations with NATO and the different histories with Russia. North Macedonia and Slovenia continue to receive gas from Russia despite agreements not to.<sup>265</sup> Without this

gas, their economies would collapse. However, other Balkan countries have made progress in finding other sources of gas such as Albania and Greece.<sup>266</sup> On the other hand, Croatia has supported sanctions and aid but feels that Western military aid is prolonging the war. Croatian president, Zoran Milanovic, has said that "Crimea will never again be part of Ukraine" as he feels Ukraine trying to regain control of the region would provoke the war.<sup>267</sup> The rest of the Croatian government has openly disagreed with Milanovic, acting against his wishes.<sup>268</sup> These countries are all hoping for an end to the war so that their country can return to normal before 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea.

## Committee Mission

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, has a legacy of conducting intergovernmental military operations and enforcing arms embargoes and economic sanctions. Its primary goal is to ensure collective security. This means that states have to collaborate to deter aggression, not just act out of national interest alone. Indeed, a balance of power must be facilitated. Their defense expenditure takes shape in direct contributions, such as funding large budgets and investment programs, as well as indirect contributions, such as committing troops and equipment voluntarily.<sup>269</sup>

The Russo-Ukrainian War is a significant topic in global security. What began as an invasion by one country into another has transformed and polarized the world, forever reshaping the nature of diplomacy in the modern day. Moreover, since it is still ongoing, it demands attention and has impacted

260 "Poland Tells Hungary to 'Join a Union with Putin' in Diplomatic Row." Euronews.com. July 29, 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/07/29/create-a-union-with-putin-poland-and-hungary-in-diplomatic-row-over-russia>.

261 "Embassy of Hungary Washington."

262 "Dependence on Russian Gas by European Country 2021" Statista. 2021. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201743/russian-gas-dependence-in-europe-by-country/>.

263 "The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the European Union's Economy." Santander. March 10, 2022. <https://www.santander.com/en/press-room/insights/the-impact-of-the-war-in-ukraine-on-the-european-unions-economy>.

264 "Russia's Influence in the Balkans." Council on Foreign Relations. 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/russias-influence-balkans>.

265 "Slovenia Continues to Rely on Russian Gas." RTV Slovenija. May 18, 2024. <https://www.rtvlo.si/radio-si/news/slovenia-continues-to-rely-on-russian-gas/708720>; "North Macedonia, Bosnia and Moldova Most Dependent on Russian Gas." Intellinews.com. 2024. <https://www.intellinews.com/north-macedonia-bosnia-and-moldova-most-dependent-on-russian-gas-234239/>.

266 Fjori Sinoruka. "Albania Unveils Sanctions on Russia over Attack on Ukraine." Balkan Insight. February 28, 2022. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/02/28/albania-unveils-sanctions-on-russia-over-attack-on-ukraine/>; Constanze Stelzenmüller and Samantha Gross. "Europe's Messy Russian Gas Divorce." Brookings. June 18, 2024. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/europes-messy-russian-gas-divorce/>.

267 "Croatian President Slams Western Arms to Ukraine." Al Jazeera. January 30, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/30/croatian-president-slams-western-arms-to-ukraine>.

268 "Croatian President Zoran Milanovic Criticizes Tank Deliveries to Ukraine." PBS News. January 30, 2023. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/croatian-president-zoran-milanovic-criticizes-tank-deliveries-to-ukraine>.

269 "Funding NATO." NATO, 13 Aug. 2021, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_67655.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm).

millions of lives. As delegates representing influential member states, you all are tasked with the responsibility of evaluating the present-day circumstances of the war. This must be done while leveraging resources, forging alliances, and challenging limitations unique to each nation. Additionally, you must be able to react to new information rapidly, for every day could represent a potential swing in the balance of power amongst countries of the world.

One key factor to consider is that NATO represents diplomacy and promotes peaceful resolution. NATO has consistently mediated the hostility between Russia and Ukraine since the organization's creation.<sup>270</sup> Given NATO's non-confrontational stance, it can provide consultations on defense-related issues and manage urgent crises. Additionally, although NATO considers Russia to be a disruptive force in Europe's stability, not all member states demonstrate the same extent of solidarity with Ukraine. This is part of the reason why Ukraine's membership is widely debated. Depending on the country, delegates will have conflicting opinions over the severity with which to approach tackling the conflict. Such conflict is encouraged, as this will allow for true debate, but all delegates must keep in mind the need to resolve this conflict as swiftly and efficiently as possible, to ensure peace and tranquility for all nations.

The Chair eagerly awaits the innovative solutions that will result from the committee, particularly directives that encourage political independence, ensure territorial integrity, and take advantage of the wide-span access NATO already possesses. Much is at stake for this committee, however, with diplomacy and respect for all nations, true peace can be achieved.

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<sup>270</sup> Isachenkov, Vladimir, and Mathew Lee. "US Offers No Concessions in Response to Russia on Ukraine." *AP NEWS*, 26 Jan. 2022, [apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-russia-united-states-moscow-72856781c3b92640d03c5e954488ba90](https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-russia-united-states-moscow-72856781c3b92640d03c5e954488ba90).

## Committee Representatives

### Representative of Belgium to NATO

The NATO headquarters is located in Brussels, the capital city of Belgium. The country has hosted the Alliance since 1967, providing meeting spaces for diplomats to convene and consolidate peace.<sup>1</sup> The country has a strong consultative objective to promote Atlantic cooperation. Simultaneously, the NATO-Russia Council met in Brussels in 2022. Despite being a venue for neutrality, Belgium promised to enhance the interoperability of Ukrainian capabilities and assist the sovereign state with qualitative defense and military equipment to serve international humanitarian law.<sup>2</sup> The representative should lean into the role of being the official host of various international summits while defending Belgium's positioning in the land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains such as constituting strategic stockpiles.

### Representative of Bulgaria to NATO

Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004, in the largest wave of countries joining the alliance since its creation. Since joining NATO, Bulgaria has been in charge of many training and exercises to prepare the alliance for potential situations.<sup>3</sup> Bulgaria has often opposed large-scale military aid to Ukraine and has maintained some relations with Russia. Although many NATO members spend large amounts of money on defense and deterrence measures for the alliance, Bulgaria is not one of them. They have instead spent large amounts of money on trying to modernize their military resources, however, this has been largely unsuccessful.<sup>4</sup> In committee, it is the goal of the Bulgarian representative to provide training aid without providing direct military aid.

### Representative of Canada to NATO

As a key correspondent in North America, Canada is one of the founding members of the Alliance.<sup>5</sup> Its Armed Forces are deployable and responsive to every NATO operation since its inception. They are also extra committed to climate change plans to come up with a green government strategy while promoting greater accessibility to the Arctic. As of 2023, Canada estimated spending of 1.33 percent of its GDP on the military budget for defending Ukraine, with plans such as purchasing surveillance aircraft, helicopters, and ammunition supplies.<sup>6</sup> Even though Canada does not directly border the war zone, the representative has the potential to be a major player in the committee if they take advantage of factors such as the transatlantic trading network and Canada's firm stance on democracy.

### Representative of Czechia to NATO

Czechia joined NATO in the first wave of membership following the Cold War in 1999. The nation's main interest in joining the alliance was to strengthen the country and develop international relations further.<sup>7</sup> Since the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, Czechia has taken in many Ukrainian refugees and provided military equipment to Ukraine. Czechia believes in NATO

1 "Belgium and NATO - 1949." *NATO*, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified\\_162358.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_162358.htm). Accessed 4 September 2024.

2 "Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long-Term Support between the Kingdom of Belgium and Ukraine." *President of Ukraine | Volodymyr Zelenskyy*, 28 May 2024, [www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ugoda-pro-spivrobotnictvo-u-sferi-bezpeki-ta-dovgostrokovu-p-91169](http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ugoda-pro-spivrobotnictvo-u-sferi-bezpeki-ta-dovgostrokovu-p-91169).

3 "Remarks of Ambassador Kenneth Merten on Bulgaria's 20th NATO Anniversary." U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria, April 5, 2024. <https://bg.usembassy.gov/remarks-of-ambassador-kenneth-merten-on-bulgarias-20th-nato-anniversary/>.

4 Georgi A. Angelov. "After Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, Bulgaria Is Rapidly Trying to Modernize Its Armed Forces." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, September 25, 2023. <https://www.rferl.org/a/bulgaria-modernizing-armed-forces-russia-ukraine/32608683.html>.

5 Government of Canada. "Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization." *Government of Canada*, 2016, [www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations-relations\\_internationales/nato-otan/index.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/nato-otan/index.aspx?lang=eng).

6 Cook, Lorne. "Canada's Defense Investment Plans Put It on Track to Meet NATO Guideline, Minister Says." *AP News*, 14 June 2024, [apnews.com/article/nato-defense-spending-budgets-canada-russia-14708fd0c358c2b445c7ce5e1a0f112d](https://apnews.com/article/nato-defense-spending-budgets-canada-russia-14708fd0c358c2b445c7ce5e1a0f112d).

7 "NATO Review - the Importance of and Outlook for the Czech Republic in NATO." *NATO Review*, March 11, 2024. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2024/03/11/the-importance-of-and-outlook-for-the-czech-republic-in-nato/index.html>.



increasing their support of Ukraine and strengthening their defenses.<sup>8</sup> The goal of the representative from Czechia should be to provide greater support to Ukraine and find a way for justice to be achieved.

## Representative of Denmark to NATO

Denmark is one of the original members of NATO, joining in 1949. Since then, NATO has been vital to Danish security and defense. Denmark's primary interest lies in contributing to NATO and strengthening its defense.<sup>9</sup> It has deployed many forces to help with NATO missions. Currently, Denmark is providing many resources to Ukraine with the goals of deterrence and defense. Their aid is not limited to Ukraine and they have also provided troops and equipment to Latvia and Estonia with the same goals in mind.<sup>10</sup> The representative of Denmark should seek to ensure that the goals of deterrence and defense are met for Ukraine and other countries threatened by Russia.

## Representative of Estonia to NATO

Estonia joined NATO in 2004, as part of the second wave of memberships following the Cold War. They have contributed over 3 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defense efforts, the second most of any NATO member.<sup>11</sup> This interest in spending comes primarily from a fear of Russia continuing its advances. If Russia defeats Ukraine and takes over, they are one step closer to Estonia. By putting large amounts of money into the Ukrainian war effort, Estonia can maintain its buffer between itself and Russia.<sup>12</sup> In committee, the representative of Estonia should seek to help Ukraine hold back Russian forces while making sure to have a backup plan for their own country.

## Representative of France to NATO

France has been one of the original members of NATO since 1949. Since then, France has contributed largely to all of NATO's operations. In 1966, France left the integrated military command over fears of independence, however, in 2009, they rejoined.<sup>13</sup> In 2016, NATO launched its reassurance measures for the Baltic States and Poland, of which France has largely contributed. France currently provides air policing support to Estonia and participates in patrols over Eastern Europe, protecting the airspace from potential Russian attacks.<sup>14</sup> During the committee, the representative of France should look to defend international airspace while ensuring the interests of the country are met.

## Representative of Germany to NATO

West Germany joined NATO in 1955 after much deliberation from Western leaders. When Germany was reunified in 1990, East Germany joined West Germany in their NATO membership.<sup>15</sup> Germany has consistently been undermining the unity of NATO over the past few years, blocking defensive weapons from reaching Ukraine. They have also forced aircraft carrying military equipment to Ukraine to fly around German airspace. The relationship between Germany and Russia has been complicated in

8 "Secretary General Thanks Czechia for Strong Contributions to NATO as Foreign Ministers Gather in Prague." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_225831.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_225831.htm).

9 "NATO." Ministry of Defence. 2018. <https://www.fmn.dk/en/topics/international-cooperation/nato/>.

10 "U.S. Security Cooperation with Denmark." United States Department of State. April 8, 2024. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-denmark/>.

11 "Secretary General: Estonia Leads by Example in NATO." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_227113.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_227113.htm).

12 Frank Gardner. "Ukraine War: We Have No Plan B If Ukraine Falls, Estonian PM Says." Bbc.com. BBC News. May 31, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c722zxj0kyro>.

13 "France and NATO." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified\\_160672.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_160672.htm).

14 "France and NATO." France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. March 2022. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/our-alliances-and-cooperations/france-and-nato/>.

15 "NATO Member Countries." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52044.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm).

the past but has also been filled with cooperation between the two.<sup>16</sup> The German representative needs to attempt to undermine the agreements by NATO and protect their relations with Russia.

## Representative of Greece to NATO

Greece joined NATO at the same time as Türkiye in 1952, opening up access to a stretched-out coastline and numerous islands. During the Cold War, it was in touch with both blocks though not to an equal extent.<sup>17</sup> It has been very adamant about its bilateral foreign relations with Russia since the era of the Soviet Union, and although Greece condemned the annexation of Crimea and refused to officially recognize it as a part of Russian territories, it still retains the Embassy in Moscow. Though the Prime Minister is determined to stop depending on Russia's energy supply, it has historically imported 40 percent of its natural gas from the now hostile ally.<sup>18</sup> As of 2024 May, they opposed transferring their strategic air defense missile systems to Ukraine.<sup>19</sup>

## Representative of Hungary to NATO

Hungary joined NATO in 1999 right before the turn of the century. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is firm in his stance that they will not be involved in operations outside of the territories of this military alliance.<sup>20</sup> Although Hungary has found itself on the wrong side of history during World War II, its strategies of conservatism have shifted slightly since then. Now, they agreed to not veto NATO's support for Ukraine as long as their government doesn't have to provide funds or soldiers for joint assistance efforts. This attitude of apathy and ambiguity warrants the delegates to be aware of their delicate relationship with the pro-Ukraine bloc in NATO.<sup>21</sup>

## Representative of Italy to NATO

Though divided by internal political disputes, Italy is a critical member of NATO for its geographic advantage in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>22</sup> In terms of collective security and defense, it takes on the critical role of securing the Southern Flank. Similar to other major powers in Europe, Italy contributed to war efforts by providing aid packages to Ukraine. Additionally, they provided cruise missiles and air defense to Kyiv, signing a border defense cooperation to fully restore Ukraine's territorial integrity.<sup>23</sup> The representative needs to consider that Italy is so far slower than French and German companies when it comes to producing and maintaining equipment, yet it hopes to participate in investment for a favorable fiscal regime.

## Representative of Montenegro to NATO

Montenegro joined NATO in 2017, 11 years after it declared independence. They deployed national armed forces to the military during the beginning of the 21st century. Russia has been trying to control the country through cyber attacks and coups since 2016. The government is not split into pro-Russian and pro-NATO factions. They need to juggle the pro-Western foreign policy

16 "Why Germany Is Undermining NATO Unity on Russia." Carnegieendowment.org. 2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2022/01/why-germany-is-undermining-nato-unity-on-russia?lang=en>.

17 "Greece and NATO - 1952." NATO, [www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/declassified\\_181434.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/declassified_181434.htm). Accessed 4 September 2024.

18 "Greek PM Condemns Russian Attack, Says Greece Energy Supply Secure." Reuters, 24 Feb. 2022, [www.reuters.com/business/energy/greece-says-has-secured-energy-supplies-following-ukraine-invasion-2022-02-24/](http://www.reuters.com/business/energy/greece-says-has-secured-energy-supplies-following-ukraine-invasion-2022-02-24/).

19 Paul Iddon. "Greece and Turkey Are Adamant about Retaining Their Russian Missiles." Forbes, 8 May 2024, [www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2024/05/05/greece-and-turkey-are-adamant-about-retaining-their-russian-missiles/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2024/05/05/greece-and-turkey-are-adamant-about-retaining-their-russian-missiles/). Accessed 5 September 2024.

20 Pierre Emmanuel Ngendakumana. "Hungary Looking to Redefine Its NATO Membership." POLITICO, 24 May 2024, [www.politico.eu/article/hungary-nato-prime-minister-viktor-orban-country-russia-vladimir-putin-west-official/](http://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-nato-prime-minister-viktor-orban-country-russia-vladimir-putin-west-official/).

21 Lorne Cook. "Hungary Agrees Not to Veto NATO Support to Ukraine as Long as It's Not Forced to Help Out." The Associated Press, 12 June 2024, [apnews.com/article/nato-ukraine-russia-war-hungary-support-assistance-a08164782c1391076fda550190580a4c](http://apnews.com/article/nato-ukraine-russia-war-hungary-support-assistance-a08164782c1391076fda550190580a4c).

22 "Italy and NATO - 1949." NATO, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified\\_162356.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_162356.htm). Accessed 4 September 2024.

23 Federico Borsari. "Partners in Arms: Italy-Ukraine Defense Co-Operation." CEPA, 16 July 2024, [cepa.org/article/partners-in-arms-italy-ukraine-defense-co-operation/](http://cepa.org/article/partners-in-arms-italy-ukraine-defense-co-operation/). Accessed 4 September 2024.

to potentially abandon the historic tie to Russia due to the shared Slavic and Orthodox heritage.<sup>24</sup> The representative should understand the intricacy of the Balkan state's position in receiving influences from both sides of the camp since Russian tourists and investors are very important to their economy but they also want to be close to the US, Germany, and the UK.

## Representative of Netherlands to NATO

The Netherlands is one of the founding NATO members, gaining membership in 1949. It participates in NATO by joining in on training, missions, and military deployment. The Netherlands contributes ships, aircraft, and other military equipment to NATO annually.<sup>25</sup> In the event of an attack, the Netherlands agrees to assist any other NATO member nation, this is known as Article 5. The only time this has ever been used was following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States by ISIS. In this event, the Netherlands assisted with logistics help.<sup>26</sup> In committee, the Netherlands representative should continue to seek sanctions against Russia while supporting Ukraine.

## Representative of Portugal to NATO

Portugal joined NATO as one of the earliest members, providing a bridge between Europe and North America with its maritime traditions and its connection to Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>27</sup> The new government elected in March 2024 promised to align itself with stricter energy sanctions against Russia, ramping up restrictions such as trans-shipments in the EU.<sup>28</sup> To date, they have provided a total of more than EUR 220 million to Ukraine, and delivered weapons such as Leopard 2 tanks, with additional investment centered on technology and equipment to meet the military needs.<sup>29</sup>

## Representative of Romania to NATO

Romania joined NATO in the 2004 wave along with many other nations, as a result of the Cold War. Since then, Romania has continued to make significant contributions to the alliance.<sup>30</sup> Due to Romania's geographical location, they have been impacted largely by the conflict. Russian drones have been found in Romanian airspace and debris has been found on the ground. These drones were never deliberate attacks; however, NATO members have provided Romania with resources to protect the country if it becomes intentional.<sup>31</sup> In committee, the Romanian representative should look to provide Ukraine with aid while continually monitoring the situation, ensuring that nothing gets out of control, putting Romanian people in potential harm.

## Representative of Slovakia to NATO

Slovakia joined NATO in 2004 and houses a multinational battle group that Spain recently took over. The foreign minister actively met with Russian counterpart to defend the invader after the Czech Republic suspended talks.<sup>32</sup> He claimed that he was not willing to subscribe to "double standards", and that there are disagreements on "how to help" Ukraine. Since the inauguration

24 Giorgio Cafiero. "As the Ukraine War Rages, Montenegro's Juggling Act Gets Harder." *Www.aljazeera.com*, 20 May 2022, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/20/ukraine-war-means-difficult-juggling-act-for-montenegro](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/20/ukraine-war-means-difficult-juggling-act-for-montenegro).

25 "Military Contribution to NATO in 2024." *Defensie.nl*. 2024. <https://english.defensie.nl/topics/international-cooperation/un-nato-and-eu/military-contribution-to-nato>.

26 "The Netherlands and NATO." *Government.nl*. 2024. <https://www.government.nl/topics/nato/the-netherlands-and-nato>.

27 "Portugal and NATO - 1949." *NATO*, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified\\_162352.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_162352.htm). Accessed 4 September 2024.

28 "Portugal's New Government Aligned with Tougher Energy Sanctions on Russia." *Reuters*, 15 May 2024, [www.reuters.com/world/europe/portugals-new-government-favours-tougher-sanctions-against-russia-2024-05-15/](http://www.reuters.com/world/europe/portugals-new-government-favours-tougher-sanctions-against-russia-2024-05-15/).

29 "Portuguese Assistance to Ukraine Will Go above 220 Million in 2024." *Portugal.gov.pt*, 10 July 2024, [www.portugal.gov.pt/en/gc24/communication/news-item?i=portuguese-assistance-to-ukraine-will-go-above-220-million-in-2024](http://www.portugal.gov.pt/en/gc24/communication/news-item?i=portuguese-assistance-to-ukraine-will-go-above-220-million-in-2024).

30 "Romania Has Made Voluntary Contributions to NATO Funds to Strengthen the Resilience and Capabilities of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Jordan". Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2022. <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/59986>.

31 Veronika Melkozerova. "Romania Confirms Russian Drones in Its Airspace." *POLITICO*. July 25, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/romania-confirms-russian-drones-air-space-debris-ukraine-attacks/>.

32 Lili Bayer. "Slovakia Defends Russia Ties after Czech Republic Suspends Talks." *The Guardian*, 7 Mar. 2024, [www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/07/czech-republic-to-suspend-relations-with-slovakia-over-russia-support](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/07/czech-republic-to-suspend-relations-with-slovakia-over-russia-support).

of the left-wing nationalist government in domestic politics, Slovakia has been willing to help with humanitarian aid, but will no longer supply arms. Many neighboring countries are worried that Slovakia is going down the wrong path, especially after it decided that it would veto Ukraine's membership to NATO due to certain "conflicts of interest".<sup>33</sup> The representative needs to evaluate how to balance the internal inclination of the national government with the interests of other traditional alliances that disagree with Prime Minister Fico's approaches.

## Representative of Spain to NATO

Spain did not join NATO's military structure until 1999. However, ever since it started committing to the Alliance, it has been very firm in its stance to support operations, such as hosting the Summit in 2022.<sup>34</sup> In May 2024, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez met with President Zelenskyy in Madrid, pledging 1 billion euros in military aid for ground, aerial, naval, and other uses to enhance the defense systems for the protection of civilians.<sup>35</sup> This bilateral security agreement makes Spain one of the most vocal and active participants in NATO as a Ukrainian ally. The representative may choose to further extend the agenda of support, or explore more avenues in addition to financial assistance.

## Representative of Sweden to NATO

Sweden ended their World War II neutrality in March of 2024 when they joined NATO as its 32nd member to contribute to a united front against Russia.<sup>36</sup> Although they have long practiced non-alignment as their key diplomatic strategy, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 prompted strong responses in public opinion and led to Sweden applying for membership alongside Finland shortly after the war began.<sup>37</sup> The defense minister believed that joining NATO was not an easy decision, yet it was clear that it would be difficult to resist what the people were calling for.

## Representative of Türkiye to NATO

Türkiye joined NATO in 1952 as one of the first additions since NATO's creation in 1949. As an alliance, NATO has played a key role in Türkiye's security and stability, factors that Türkiye puts its highest values on.<sup>38</sup> Türkiye often plays the middleman between Asian and European relations. In the case of the War between Russia and Ukraine, Türkiye's president has tried to act as the mediator between both sides.<sup>39</sup> This is complicated as Türkiye is committed to Ukrainian defense through its alliance with NATO, however, personally, Türkiye has interests in Russian gas. In committee, it is the representative's goal to maintain this careful balance and maintain relations on both sides of the issue. They must be careful to not anger the alliance while also protecting their interests with Russia.

## Representative of the United Kingdom to NATO

The United Kingdom is one of the original 1949 NATO members. Its defense system is heavily supported by its alliance with

33 "Slovakia Would Veto Ukrainian Membership in NATO, PM Says ahead of Kyiv Visit." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, 22 Jan. 2024, [www.rferl.org/a/slovakia-veto-ukraine-membership-fico-uzhorod-zelensky/32786330.html](http://www.rferl.org/a/slovakia-veto-ukraine-membership-fico-uzhorod-zelensky/32786330.html).

34 "Spain and NATO," *Www.exteriores.gob.es*, accessed August 4, 2024, [www.exteriores.gob.es/en/PoliticaExterior/Paginas/EspanaOTAN.aspx](http://www.exteriores.gob.es/en/PoliticaExterior/Paginas/EspanaOTAN.aspx).

35 "Spain Pledges 1 Billion Euros of Military Aid to Ukraine in 2024." *Al Jazeera*, 27 May 2024, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/27/spain-pledges-1-billion-euros-of-military-aid-to-ukraine-in-2024](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/27/spain-pledges-1-billion-euros-of-military-aid-to-ukraine-in-2024).

36 Matthew Lee, and Lorne Cook. "Sweden Officially Joins NATO, Ending Decades of Post-World War II Neutrality." *AP News*, 7 Mar. 2024, [apnews.com/article/sweden-nato-us-russia-ukraine-8372bc866c8ddcf42d2b8209fa5cd2b1](https://apnews.com/article/sweden-nato-us-russia-ukraine-8372bc866c8ddcf42d2b8209fa5cd2b1).

37 Stine Jacobsen, and Johan Ahlander. "Russian Invasion of Ukraine Forces Swedes to Rethink NATO Membership." *Reuters*, 4 Mar. 2024, [www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/majority-swedes-favour-joining-nato-poll-2022-03-04/](http://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/majority-swedes-favour-joining-nato-poll-2022-03-04/).

38 "Türkiye's Relations with NATO". Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2024. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/nato.en.mfa>.

39 "Turkey: Walking the Tightrope between NATO, Russia and Ukraine." Institut Montaigne. 2021. <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/turkey-walking-tightrope-between-nato-russia-and-ukraine>.

NATO.<sup>40</sup> The United Kingdom currently leads NATO's rapid reaction force, putting them in charge of thousands of soldiers and having them ready for deployment with little to no notice. The leadership position for this role rotates annually so in 2025, a new country will have this role. Due to the pressing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, this task force is prepared to defend the alliance against Russia in necessary cases.<sup>41</sup> During the committee, the United Kingdom's representative should look to defend the alliance without committing too much military aid as the strain on their military is nearing its maximum.

## Representative of the United States to NATO

The United States of America is one of the original 12 founding members of NATO in 1949.<sup>42</sup> It contributes nearly 16 percent of NATO's budget; this is the most of any country tied with Germany. The United States plays a huge role in NATO's multinational initiatives and military defense budget. It is also responsible for much of the defense leadership and planning within NATO, providing many resources to help the overall alliance.<sup>43</sup> When it comes to the Russo-Ukrainian War, the United States has maintained a position of support without direct interference. The United States has sent weapons and aid to help Ukraine defend itself from Russia while not directly engaging in combat.<sup>44</sup> During the committee, the representative of the United States should attempt to find ways to help Ukraine defend itself while not directly causing more conflict with Russia.

40 "UK and NATO." Www.gov.uk. July 12, 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/world/uk-joint-delegation-to-nato>.

41 "UK to Lead NATO's 2024 Rapid Response Force." NATO. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_221565.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_221565.htm).

42 "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations" State.gov. 2024. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/nato>.

43 U.S. Embassy Kyiv. "Fact Sheet: U.S. Contributions to NATO Capabilities." U.S. Embassy in Ukraine. July 8, 2016. <https://ua.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-u-s-contributions-nato-capabilities/>.

44 "U.S., Ukraine Leaders Discuss Current Situation in Russia-Ukraine War." U.S. Department of Defense. 2024. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3875549/us-ukraine-leaders-discuss-current-situation-in-russia-ukraine-war/>.

## Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

1. Every member state within NATO has different national interests. How will members balance prioritizing their own interests with prioritizing the defense of Ukraine? What will be the greater implications for European security should members choose to prioritize their own interests before the greater region?
2. What does “victory” look like for NATO in the War in Ukraine? Are NATO members willing to accept some Ukrainian land concessions in exchange for a ceasefire, or should the fighting only stop when Russia is forced to retreat to pre-2022 or pre-2014 lines?
3. What strategies will NATO members use to convince other state and non-state actors to collaborate? Is collaboration with non-NATO actors to explore diplomatic avenues with Russia a priority? Or will NATO members choose to collaborate with non-NATO actors through military strategy? If further conflict arises, will NATO member states collectively defend their collaborators?
4. What country-specific risks are posed by further damaging diplomatic ties between NATO member-states and the Russian Federation?
5. If NATO becomes overly involved in the Russo-Ukrainian War, does it pose the risk of expanding the conflict into a potential world war?
6. How do NATO member-states’ constituents feel about the various military, diplomatic, and economic decisions made to address the Russo-Ukrainian War? Does public support for aid to Ukraine remain high, or are constituents skeptical of its importance?
7. What potential benefits and risks are posed by accepting Ukraine as a member of NATO? Would granting Ukraine NATO membership help deter further Russian aggression, or could it expand the conflict into world war? What conditions does Ukraine need to meet in order to gain acceptance into NATO?
8. How should NATO balance providing lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine? What are the risks and benefits of each?
9. What role should NATO member-states play in aiding the 10 million currently-displaced Ukrainian citizens? Are member-states willing to construct a collective agreement to erect sustainable refugee communities to house Ukrainian refugees within their own borders?
10. What does NATO’s response to the War in Ukraine signal for the future of the alliance? How would a Ukrainian victory or defeat in the war affect NATO’s standing and reputation in the international community?
11. What role should each member-state play in defending Ukraine? Are some states more obligated than others to offer support?
12. What have been the economic consequences of the Russo-Ukrainian War on individual member-states? What would be the economic impact of various potential outcomes of the war?

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