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**“The Crisis in Ukraine and its International Geopolitical  
Implications”**

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## Structure of Committee

The Security Council is one of the principal organs of the United Nations and tasked with maintaining international peace and security. It consists of 15 member states, 10 non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for a period of two years and 5 permanent members with veto power.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The Security Council also recommends to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and the admission of new Members to the United Nations. And, together with the General Assembly, it elects the judges of the International Court of Justice.

Resolutions of the Security Council are legally binding. UN member states are obliged to implement the decisions stated in the resolutions.

## The Crisis in Ukraine and its International Geopolitical Implications

### The Crisis in Kiev

In November 2013 Ukraine suspended preparations for the signing of an Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the European Union. Ukraine's government proposed a trilateral commission between itself, Russia and the European Union (EU) instead of further discussing economic relations. The Ukrainian population responded with protests in Kiev against President Victor Yanukovich's government, demanding his resignation.<sup>1</sup> These events in late 2013 marked the starting point of a crisis that has since taken on a regional and even international character.

President Yanukovich defended his decision and expressed his willingness for closer cooperation with Russia.<sup>2</sup> Russia welcomed Ukraine's decision to take a step back on its path towards the EU, with Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stating that Russia "clearly welcome[s] the desire of our close partner Ukraine to optimize and develop trade and economic cooperation".<sup>3</sup> Both, the EU and the United States were dismayed with Ukraine's decision, with Catherine Ashton issuing a statement "[t]his is a disappointment not just for the EU but, we believe, for the people of Ukraine [...] We believe that the future for Ukraine lies in a strong relationship with the EU."<sup>4</sup> According to a statement by Jen Psaki, the spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. as well was disappointed with Ukraine's suspension of negotiations.<sup>5</sup>

The protests continued into 2014 and culminated in February in what was termed "the bloodiest day in modern Ukrainian history", when more than 60 people died during violent protests in Kiev.<sup>6</sup> While president Yanukovich first signed a deal with the Ukrainian opposition, consenting to a limitation of his powers and early elections, he was later on reported to have fled the country.<sup>7</sup>

### The Annexation of Crimea

In late February 2014 a pro-Western interim government was formed in Kiev, while in Crimea pro-Russian protesters continued to rally for a closer union between the Crimean peninsula and Russia. In that context, acting president of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov, urged Russian military forces to stay within their designated locations, especially referring to the Black Sea Fleet located in Sevastopol. Nevertheless, Russian forces began to show up at key sites in Crimea, being supported by local militias.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herszenhorn, David M. 2013. "Amid Unrest, Ukrainian President Defends Choice on Accords" *The New York Times*, December 3

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> n.a. 2013. "Ukraine calls off EU deal in stunning reversal after Tymoshenko law flop" *Voice of Russia UK*, November 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Ukraine*, 21 November 2013.

<sup>5</sup> *Ukraine's Decision on Association with the EU*, U.S. Department of State, 21 November, 2013

<sup>6</sup> Traynor, Ian. 2014. "Ukraine violence: dozens killed as protesters clash with armed police" *The Guardian*, February 20.

<sup>7</sup> Booth, William and Englund, Will. 2014. "Ukraine's Yanukovich missing as protesters take control of presidential residence in Kiev" *The Washington Post*, February 22.

<sup>8</sup> Watts, Joseph and Stewart, Will. 2014. "Ukraine: Russia accused of 'armed invasion and occupation'" *London Evening Standard*, February 28.

The speaker of the Crimean parliament announced a planned referendum on “the widening of the authority of the autonomous republic of Crimea” while masked gunmen had seized government buildings and raised the Russian flag.<sup>9</sup> The Ukrainian prime minister claimed the grounds for the referendum were illegitimate, while Russia was already considering legislation to ease Crimea’s accession to Russia. The United States and the European Union both condemned the referendum as illegal.<sup>10</sup> In a call with German chancellor Angela Merkel and UK Prime Minister David Cameron, Putin reaffirmed Russia’s position on Crimea, stating that Russia would welcome Crimea joining the Russian federation. “The steps taken by the legitimate leadership of Crimea are based on the norms of international law and aim to ensure the legal interests of the population of the peninsula,” according to Putin.<sup>11</sup>

On 11 March, the Crimean parliament declared independence from Ukraine ahead of the scheduled referendum. The declaration also announced that if the Crimean population voted in favor of joining Russia, the Russian Federation would be asked if Crimea can join with Moscow.<sup>12</sup>

On 14 March, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonovic, announced the immediate deployment of a UN monitoring team throughout crisis-torn Ukraine to help establish the facts surrounding alleged human rights violations, including Crimea, and serve to de-escalate tensions in the country.<sup>13</sup>

The following day and one day before Crimea held the referendum on leaving Ukraine, Russia vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution to affirm Ukraine’s sovereignty and national borders. The measure would have declared the referendum in Crimea invalid.<sup>14</sup> In the referendum that was held on 16 March, 97 % of all voters voted for Ukraine joining Russia.<sup>15</sup> With the words “We’re going home. Crimea is going to Russia”, Aksynov described the atmosphere among the people in Crimea.<sup>16</sup>

In Kiev, Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk threatened severe consequences for the Crimean politicians who had called the vote, saying separatist “ring leaders” wanted to destroy Ukrainian independence “under the cover of Russian troops”.<sup>17</sup> U.S. President Barack Obama stated that the referendum “would never be recognized by the United States and the international community [...] Russia’s actions were in violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and [...] in coordination with our European partners, we are prepared to impose additional costs on Russia for its actions.”<sup>18</sup> Herman Van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso stated as well that “the referendum is illegal and illegitimate and its outcome will not be recognised.”<sup>19</sup> The United Nations General Assembly adopted a measure “underscoring that the mid-March referendum in Crimea that led to the peninsula’s annexation by Russia ‘has no validity’ and that the parties should ‘pursue immediately a peaceful resolution of the situation’.”<sup>20</sup> Russia, on the other hand, insisted that the referendum was “fully consistent with international law”<sup>21</sup> and recognized Crimea as a sovereign state.<sup>22</sup> From this point on, the conflict entered into a military stage.

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<sup>9</sup> Hauser, Christine and Preston, Jennifer. 2014. “Updates on the Tensions in Ukraine” *The New York Times*, February 27.

<sup>10</sup> Marol, Corello and Faiola, Anthony. 2014. “Crimea sets referendum on joining Russia” *The Washington Post*, March 6.

<sup>11</sup> n.a. 2014. “Merkel warns Putin against ‘illegal’ actions in Ukraine” *dw*. <http://www.dw.com/en/merkel-warns-putin-against-illegal-actions-in-ukraine/a-17484604>

<sup>12</sup> Paton Walsh, Nick, Magnay, Diana and Smith Matt. 2014. “Ignoring West, Crimea readies vote on joining Russia” *CNN*, March 12.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47355&Cr=ukraine&Cr1=#.VbMvFGDleFI>

<sup>14</sup> Chapell, Bill. 2014. “Russia Vetoes U.N. Security Council Resolution On Crimea” *NPR*, March 15.

<sup>15</sup> n.a. 2014. “Crimea Referendum: Final Results Show 97 Percent Of Voters In Crimea Support Joining Russia” *The World Post*, March 17.

<sup>16</sup> <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20140317/188508062.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0316/602602-ukraine-crimea-russia/>

<sup>18</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary. 2014. *Readout of the President’s Call with President Putin*. Accessed on <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/16/readout-president-s-call-president-putin>

<sup>19</sup> European Council, 2014. *Joint statement on Crimea by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso*. Accessed on [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/141566.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/141566.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47443#.VbMrZ2DleFI>

<sup>21</sup> Epstein, Jennifer. 2014. “Obama, Putin argue over Crimea vote” *Politico*, March 16.

<sup>22</sup> n.a. 2014. “Putin Defies West, Declares Crimea Independent” *VOA News*, March 17

## The Battle in the Donbass Begins

The economic consequences of Russia's annexation of Crimea were taken shape in additional sanctions by the United States and Europe, while Ukraine signed the AA with the European Union, which was the very agreement that had created the ongoing conflict.<sup>23</sup> Russia, at the same time signed laws that admitted Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and took over an airbase in Crimea.<sup>24</sup>

The events of the annexation sparked pro-Russian feelings in further Eastern Ukraine: About 2,000 people rallied in Donetsk in late March, demanding a referendum.<sup>25</sup> This raised concerns among NATO and Ukraine that Russia might answer with further aggression. In the political arena this led to an exclusion of Russia from the G8.<sup>26</sup> In the context of rising tensions throughout Ukraine, the Ukrainian Interior Ministry engaged on a crackdown against the nationalist Right Sector throughout the country.<sup>27</sup> The Right Sector protested, demanding the Interior Minister's resignation.<sup>28</sup>

In early April, pro-Russian activists stormed government buildings in Eastern Ukraine, demanding a referendum on allowing the "Donetsk Republic" to join Russia and declaring the city of Donetsk independent from Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> While Russia denied any military presence in eastern Ukraine, photographs proved the opposite and created a consensus in the (Western) international community that there was a connection between Russia and some of the armed militants in eastern Ukraine.<sup>30</sup> Ukraine's interior minister Avakov responded to this in issuing an ultimatum of either ending the standoff through negotiation or forceful intervention.<sup>31</sup> As the pro-Russian forces reaffirmed their demands and took over further facilities, Ukraine responded with an anti-terror operation in the eastern regions, which led to clashes. The Ukrainian president sought UN support for the operations and asked for the UN to send peacekeepers.<sup>32</sup>

Russian president Vladimir Putin stated that Russia had no intention of militarily invading Eastern Ukraine, while they would still keep control over Crimea and amass troops near the Eastern Ukrainian border.<sup>33</sup> In a demonstration of the forging of a Russian-Crimean union, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev visited Crimea at the end of March.<sup>34</sup>

As a reaction to Russian behavior, the NATO announced a suspension of cooperation with Russia<sup>35</sup> starting to bring the geopolitical implications of the Ukraine Crisis to the forefront. In response to that, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced that military presence at the Eastern Ukrainian border would be reduced, but also pointed to the US's violation of the Montreux Convention.<sup>36</sup> In mid-April 2014, NATO announced that it would increase their deployments in eastern alliance states in response to their concerns about Russia's aggression.<sup>37</sup> As the US claimed that Russian aggression had not stopped, they announced the deployment of additional paratroopers in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> n.a. 2014. "Ukraine crisis: EU signs association deal" *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26680250>

<sup>24</sup> <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20626>

<sup>25</sup> [http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/news/2014\\_03\\_22/Donetsk-Thousands-rally-in-support-of-President-Yanukovich-8652/](http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/news/2014_03_22/Donetsk-Thousands-rally-in-support-of-President-Yanukovich-8652/)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.rt.com/news/lavrov-g8-crimea-kerry-933/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/ukraines-police-crack-down-on-nationalist-right-sector-after-death-threats/496891.html>

<sup>28</sup> Miller, Christoph J. 2014. "Right Sector pickets parliament, demands Avakov's resignation" *Kyiv Post*, March

<sup>29</sup> Rudenko, Olga. 2014. "Separatist crisis flares again today in Ukraine's eastern regions" *Kyiv Post*, April 7

<sup>30</sup> Higgins, Andrew and Gordon, Michael R. 2014. "Photos Link Masked Men in East Ukraine to Russia" *The New York Times*, April 20.

<sup>31</sup> Alpert, Lukas I. 2014. "Kiev Threatens to Use Force to End Standoff" *The Wall Street Journal*, April 9.

<sup>32</sup> Faiola, Anthony and Englund, Will. 2014. "Pro-Russian militants in Ukraine defy government threats" *The Washington Post*, April 15.

<sup>33</sup> Golubkova, Katya. 2014. "Russia has no intention of sending troops to Ukraine: Lavrov" *CNBC*, March 29.

<sup>34</sup> <http://government.ru/en/news/11368/>

<sup>35</sup> Smith-Spark, Laura and Palk, Susannah. 2014. "Ukraine crisis: NATO suspends cooperation with Moscow" *CNN*, April 1.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/lavrov-russia-withdrawing-troops-border/25319695.html>

<sup>37</sup> Croft, Adrian. 2014. "NATO to bolster security of eastern allies worried over Ukraine" *Reuters*, April 16

<sup>38</sup> Gore, Leada. 2014. "U.S. sending 600 troops to Eastern Europe in response to Ukraine crisis", April 22. [http://blog.al.com/wire/2014/04/us\\_sending\\_600\\_troops\\_to\\_easte.html](http://blog.al.com/wire/2014/04/us_sending_600_troops_to_easte.html)

In the midst of these developments, the Russian gas exporter Gazprom announced an elimination of discounts on natural gas for Ukraine.<sup>39</sup> This put even more pressure on economically stricken Ukraine, which has been dependent on Russian gas supplies since the end of the Soviet Union. This issue once again highlighted Ukraine's situation of being torn between the East and West, especially when Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatseniuk said his country would need more support in the energy sector from the EU.<sup>40</sup>

In April, negotiations between the United States, the European Union, Russia and Ukraine in Geneva lead to an agreement on steps to de-escalate the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, assisted by an OSCE special monitoring mission and a disarmament of illegal armed groups.<sup>41</sup> As the pro-Russian separatists refused to abide, they took hostage a group of OSCE observers on the ground in the city of Slaviansk (and released them one week later).<sup>42</sup> As a matter of fact, Ukrainian forces started losing ground to pro-Russian rebels and saw themselves forced to reinstate military conscription in order to put up with the increasing challenges.<sup>43</sup>

On 12 May, the people of Eastern Ukrainian regions held referenda and appealed to be absorbed by the Russian Federation.<sup>44</sup>

A U.N. monitoring mission found the human rights situation in Ukraine to having deteriorated, expressing concerns about the rising numbers of killings, abductions and beatings, as well as detentions of journalists and politicians.<sup>45</sup>



**Map 1 - Pro-Russian Unrest in Ukraine**

### The Battle in the Donbass continues

In May 2014 the Sergei Prokofiev International Airport in Donetsk in eastern Ukraine was occupied by armed separatists. The Ukrainian military launched an offensive against them by employing air and ground forces,

<sup>39</sup> Rushton, Katherine. 2014. "Russia cancels Ukraine's gas discount and demands \$1.5bn" *The Telegraph*, March 4.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/russias-gazprom-announces-huge-gas-price-hike-for-ukraine/a-17534158>

<sup>41</sup> <http://csis.org/ukraine/east1.htm#61>

<sup>42</sup> Grove, Thomas. 2014. "Ukraine rebel city says holding international observers" *Reuters*, April 25

<sup>43</sup> Djurica, Marko. 2014. "Masked gunmen tighten grip on eastern Ukraine" *Reuters*, April 30.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, Matt. 2014. "Ukraine separatists appeal to Moscow for absorption into Russia" *Reuters*, May 12

<sup>45</sup> Cumming-Bruce, Nick. 2014. "U.N. Finds Rising Human Rights Violations in Ukraine" *The New York Times*, May 16.

including military helicopters, fighter planes, and paratroopers.<sup>46</sup> This fight between the Ukrainian military and pro-Russian forces took 40 lives and wounded an additional 31, though other reports indicate that at least 50 rebels died in the fighting. However, after two days of conflict, the Ukrainian military took back the airport.<sup>47</sup> When additional six separatist fighters were killed as they tried to collect the bodies of the dead comrades, the Russian Foreign Ministry called for the OSCE to keep its monitors in Ukraine, stating that “amid Kiev’s intentionally intensified punitive operation in the east of the country, it is essential to step up the work of international observers.”<sup>48</sup>

Another fight occurred around Slovyansk in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian forces shot down a Ukrainian military transport helicopter. The attack resulted in the deaths of at least 12 members of the Ukrainian military, including a general. In a separate clash, separatists attacked a military base near the city of Luhansk.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the US Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, stated the following: “we do know that thousands of Russian troops have pulled back and are moving away, but we also know that there are still thousands of Russian troops there that have not yet moved.”<sup>50</sup>

In June 2014 approximately five hundred separatist fighters attacked a Ukrainian border protection headquarters in Luhansk.<sup>51</sup> Pro-Russian separatist forces in eastern Ukraine managed, after nearly a week of intense fighting, to fully open a corridor through which to bring additional fighters and supplies from Russia.<sup>52</sup>

While Kiev and Washington stated that fighters were heading from Russia to Ukraine, the Russian government continued to insist the process was going in reverse. According to Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, thousands were fleeing violence at the hand of the Kyiv government and seeking asylum in Russia. Another Russian official estimated that nearly 7,000 crossed into Russia in one 24-hour period. The Ukrainian authorities, meanwhile, insisted that there was no such refugee crisis.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the fact that across the region only seven out of 12 district electoral commissions were operating during the presidential elections in May of 2014, Petro Poroshenko claimed victory and was sworn in as Ukraine President on the 7 June. The separatists were in control of large areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.<sup>54</sup> Shortly after, Poroshenko stated that he will ask the United States for military aid in light of the threat posed by the separatists and by Russia.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, on the 4 June 2014 the White House released details of U.S. plans for more than \$23 million in additional security assistance for Ukraine. According to report, the aid was to be directed towards “working to bolster Ukraine’s ability to secure its borders and preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty.”<sup>56</sup> The primary areas of focus for this assistance package are: economic reforms tied to the IMF and World Bank programs; efforts to promote national unity, including constitutional reform; support for the Border Guard Service; anti-corruption; and diversification in trade and energy.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> CSIS (2014) „Ukraine Launches Military Offensive to Take Back Airport from Separatists“ , <http://csis.org/ukraine/east2.htm#2> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>47</sup> CSIS. 2014. "Ukrainian Military Retakes Airport, Fighting Claims Dozens" , <http://csis.org/ukraine/east2.htm#3> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>48</sup> AP. 2014. "Russia says monitors should stay in Ukraine", USA Today, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/05/31/russia-ukraine-monitors-troops/9808251/>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>49</sup> Paton Walsh, Nick and Smith-Spark, Laura (2014) „Ukrainian military helicopter shot down; 14 dead, president says“, CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/29/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>50</sup> Shabad, Rebecca (2014) „Hagel: Russia has pulled back most troops from border with Ukraine“ , <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/207693-russia-has-withdrawn-most-troops-from-ukraine-border-hagel-says> , accessed 23.07.2015

<sup>51</sup> Lister, Tim and Safarov, Azad „Ukrainian official: Five militants killed in attack on border guard base in Luhansk“, CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/06/02/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>52</sup> CSIS (2014), „Dueling Narratives from Russia, Ukraine on State of Border“, <http://csis.org/ukraine/east2.htm#11>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>53</sup> Alpert, Lucas (2014), „Russian Prime Minister Says Thousands Crossing Border to Flee Ukraine. Ukrainian Authorities Say No Evidence of Refugee Crisis“, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-prime-minister-medvedev-says-thousands-crossing-border-to-flee-ukraine-1401971825>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>54</sup> BBC (2014), „Petro Poroshenko claims Ukraine presidency“, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27569057>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>55</sup> CSIS (2014), „Ukrainian Military Retakes Airport, Fighting Claims Dozens“, <http://csis.org/ukraine/east2.htm#3>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>56</sup> CSIS (2014), Obama: “The Days of Empire and Spheres of Influence Are Over”, <http://csis.org/ukraine/east2.htm#9> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>57</sup> Office of the Vice president (2014), The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/07/fact-sheet-us-assistance-ukraine>, accessed 24.07.2015

Although progress was reported between Russia and Ukraine aimed at ending the fighting between government forces and pro-Russia separatists in the east, fighting continued in eastern Ukraine, with clashes in Kramatorsk, Sloviansk, and Luhansk.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, police forces from all across Ukraine were deployed to eastern Ukraine in order to assist military units. Also, humanitarian corridors from eastern to western Ukraine had to be created, that would allow civilians to leave safely and temporarily relocate.<sup>59</sup> According to the Ukrainian Health Ministry in June 2014, at least 270 deaths have been confirmed in eastern Ukraine since the beginning of “anti-terrorist operations”. The data is based on reports from morgues in the region. Approximately 225 people have died in Donetsk and 45 in Luhansk.<sup>60</sup>

After negotiations failed to resolve the issue of Ukraine’s repayment of gas debt, Gazprom announced that Ukraine will only receive gas for which it pays in advance. Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller said the risk to European customers could be significant in this case because 15 percent of Russia’s gas deliveries to Europe travel through pipelines that traverse Ukraine.<sup>61</sup>

Shortly after Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko formally announced the beginning of a week-long cease-fire and gained support from Vladimir Putin, pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine caused violent clashes near the city of Krasny Liman.<sup>62</sup> Hence, the United States and the European Union had prepared a package of targeted sectoral sanctions against Russia if the Kremlin would not renounce its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.<sup>63</sup> For instance, according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the sanctions target some of Russia’s most prominent companies and financial institutions, including eight state-owned defense firms, Rosneft, Novatek, Gazprombank (Gazprom’s financial subsidiary), and Vnesheconombank (the State Bank for Development and Foreign Economic Affairs). In June 2014 Ukraine signed an Association Agreement with the European Union that would free up trade and bring the country closer to the possibility of EU membership in the future.<sup>64</sup>

Ukraine’s military managed to clear 17 villages of pro-Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine. According to Ukraine’s National Security Council chief the Ukrainian forces now control 23 of the 36 local regions within Donetsk and Luhansk provinces.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, the Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation continued its offensive which successfully recaptured the city of Sloviansk and later on towns of Artemivsk and Druzhkivka.<sup>66</sup>

### Downing of MH17

The Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, which was en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, crashed in Ukraine, 60 km from the Russian border. All of the 280 passengers with 15 crew members died.<sup>67</sup> An adviser to the Ukrainian Interior Ministry as well as President Barack Obama stated that the plane was shot down by

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<sup>58</sup> Balmforth, Richard (2014) „Ukraine says repulses separatist mortar attacks“, Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/10/us-ukraine-crisis-fighting-idUSKBN0EL0LJ20140610>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>59</sup> CSIS (2014) „Amidst Continued Fighting, Poroshenko Orders Creation of Humanitarian Corridors“, <http://csis.org/ukraine/east2.htm#19>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>60</sup> BBC (2014), „Ukraine crisis: Death toll in east 'at least 270“ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27804611>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>61</sup> Marszal, Andrew (2014) „Europe faces gas shortage as Russia cuts Ukraine supply after talks fail“, The Telegraph, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10902271/Europe-faces-gas-shortage-as-Russia-cuts-Ukraine-supply-after-talks-fail.html>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>62</sup> Vasovic, Aleksandar (2014), „Ukraine forces battle separatists after truce "refused", Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/19/ukraine-crisis-fighting-idUSL6N0P021A20140619>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>63</sup> The Moscow Times (2014), „U.S. State Department Says New Russia Sanctions 'Ready to Go“, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/us-state-department-says-new-russia-sanctions-ready-to-go/502539.html>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>64</sup> Birnbaum, Michael (2014), „Ukraine signs landmark agreement with E.U.“, The Washington Post, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ukraine-signs-landmark-agreement-with-eu/2014/06/27/8e6ca59a-fdd2-11e3-932c-0a55b81f48ce\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ukraine-signs-landmark-agreement-with-eu/2014/06/27/8e6ca59a-fdd2-11e3-932c-0a55b81f48ce_story.html), accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>65</sup> Marson, James (2014), „Ukraine, Rebels Move Toward Resuming Peace Talks“, The Wall Street Journal, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-proposes-time-and-place-for-talks-1404482095>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>66</sup> BBC (2014), „Ukraine crisis: Rebels abandon Sloviansk stronghold“, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28174104>, accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>67</sup> TASS (2014), Russian News Agency, „Malaysia Airlines plane crashes in Ukraine 60 km from Russian border“, <http://tass.ru/en/world/741158>, accessed 25.07.2015



a BUK-M1 SAM (surface to air missile) system fired from rebel-controlled territory.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Ukraine accused Russia and pro-Moscow rebels of destroying evidence at MH17 crash site<sup>69</sup> and limiting inspection of international investigators.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the US State Department announced that OSCE observers were granted a mere 75 minutes of access and 3 hours on the next day.<sup>71</sup> Shortly after, the commander of the Vostok Battalion, Alexander Khodakovskiy, confirmed that the rebels had access to an SA-11 "BUK" SAM (surface to air missile) system and said it could have originated in Russia.<sup>72</sup> An international team of investigators abandoned efforts to reach the crash site in eastern Ukraine because of heavy fighting between the Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) forces and pro-Russian insurgents.<sup>73</sup> Also, Ukrainian official said that approaches to the crash site have been mined.<sup>74</sup>

Following the downing of Malaysian airplane and allegations of Moscow backing separatists in eastern Ukraine, the European Union adopted tough economic sanctions against Russia. The sanctions included an arms embargo, a ban on the sale of dual use and sensitive technologies, and a ban on the sale of bonds and equities by state-owned Russian banks in European capital markets. Moreover, the sanctions will also focus on the oil industry by restricting the sale of production and exploration technology. However, crucial natural gas technology will not be affected.<sup>75</sup> As a response to these sanctions, Russia adopted sanctions against the United States and European Union. Moscow imposed bans on Ukrainian juice and dairy produce, Polish vegetables, Australian beef and extended food import bans to Romania.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Russia's Prime Minister Medvedev stated that Russia has banned fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, milk and dairy imports from the US, the European Union, Australia, Canada and Norway. The ban is effective since 7 August 2014 and lasts for one year.<sup>77</sup>

When humanitarian convoy from Russia, which was caring food, supplies and medicine to eastern Ukraine, has turned off of its original route, Russia has been condemned by Pentagon. Additionally, a Ukrainian official characterized this as an "invasion".<sup>78</sup>

Just a day after a meeting in Minsk on the 26 August 2014, which was unable to move Russia, Ukraine, and the West towards a diplomatic resolution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine, pro-Russia forces have intensified their activities and Ukraine has leveled further claims of military incursions against Russia.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Shear, Michael D. and Hirschfeld Davis, Julie (2014), The New York Times, „Obama Says Plane Was Shot Down From Rebel-Held Ukraine Area“, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/us/obama-to-speak-about-downing-of-malaysian-plane.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/us/obama-to-speak-about-downing-of-malaysian-plane.html?_r=0) , accessed 25.07.2015

<sup>69</sup> Zverev, Anton and Graff, Peter (2014), Reuters, „Ukraine, rebels argue over wreck; Europeans give Putin 'last chance'“, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/19/us-ukraine-crisis-airplane-idUSKBN0FO04620140719> , accessed 25.07.2015

<sup>70</sup> Neuman, Scott (2014), NPR, „Ukraine Accuses Rebels Of Destroying Evidence At MH17 Crash Site“, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/07/19/332746427/access-to-mh17-crash-site-blocked-investigators-say> , accessed 25.07.2015

<sup>71</sup> Ellis, Ralph and Cohen, Tom and Smith-Spark, Laura, CNN, „Observers: Who's moving bodies at Malaysia Airlines crash site?“, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/19/world/europe/ukraine-malaysia-airlines-crash/> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>72</sup> Zverev, Anton (2014), Reuters, „Exclusive: Ukraine rebel commander acknowledges fighters had BUK missile“, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/23/us-ukraine-crisis-commander-exclusive-idUSKBN0FS1V920140723> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>73</sup> CSIS (2014), „Heavy Combat Forces MH-17 Investigators to Retreat from Crash Site“, <http://csis.org/ukraine/mh17.htm#14> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>74</sup> Morello, Carol and Birnbaum, Michael (2014), The Washington Post, „Investigators again blocked from plane crash site; Ukraine blames rebel mines“, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/investigators-again-blocked-from-plane-crash-site-ukraine-blames-rebel-mines/2014/07/30/26145be-17e1-11e4-85b6-c1451e622637\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/investigators-again-blocked-from-plane-crash-site-ukraine-blames-rebel-mines/2014/07/30/26145be-17e1-11e4-85b6-c1451e622637_story.html) , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>75</sup> Nwoye, Irene Chidinma (2014), The Slate, „European Union Set to Slap New Sanctions on Russia“, [http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_slate/2014/07/29/ukraine\\_conflict\\_european\\_union\\_reportedly\\_adopts\\_new\\_sanctions\\_against.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slate/2014/07/29/ukraine_conflict_european_union_reportedly_adopts_new_sanctions_against.html) , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>76</sup> Kiselyova, Maria and Zhdannikov, Dmitry (2014), Reuters, „Russia imposes new import bans in sanctions stand-off“, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/06/us-ukraine-crisis-trade-idUSKBN0G60MX20140806> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>77</sup> Rankin, Jennifer (2014), The Guardian, „Russia responds to sanctions by banning western food imports“, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/russia-retaliates-western-sanctions-ban-food-imports> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>78</sup> Bothelo, Greg and Isaac, Lindsay (2014), CNN, „Russian convoy rolls into Ukraine: 'Humanitarian' aid or 'direct invasion'?“, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/22/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/> , accessed 24.07.2015

<sup>79</sup> CSIS (2014), „No Resolution After Minsk Meeting, But Fighting Continues“, <http://csis.org/ukraine/mh17.htm#48> , accessed 24.07.2015

## Minsk I

On the 5 September 2014 an agreement to stop the ongoing conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine was signed under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) between the Representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), and the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR). The protocol contained twelve points:

1. An immediate bilateral ceasefire,
2. The monitoring and verification of the ceasefire by the OSCE,
3. The decentralization of power, including through the adoption of the Ukrainian law for the self-governance in particular in the districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts,
4. The permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of security zones in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation,
5. The immediate release of all hostages and illegally detained persons,
6. A law preventing the prosecution and punishment of persons connected to the events that have taken place in some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts,
7. The inclusive national dialogue,
8. Measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Donbass,
9. The ensurance of early local elections in accordance with the Ukrainian law,
10. The withdrawal of illegal armed groups and military equipment as well as fighters and mercenaries from Ukraine,
11. The adoption of a program of economic recovery and reconstruction for the Donbass region,
12. The provision of personal security for participants in the consultations.

Regardless of the statement made by the President Poroshenko that "the entire world strives for peace, the entire Ukraine strives for peace, including millions of Donbass residents. The highest value is human life. We must do everything possible and impossible to terminate bloodshed and put an end to people's suffering"<sup>80</sup> showing that there is hope for a bilateral cease-fire, continued fighting has been observed around the port of Mariupol. Both President Poroshenko and President Putin claimed that the ceasefire is largely holding and expressed their support for making it permanent in nature. Two weeks after the Minsk Protocol was signed, there were frequent violations of the ceasefire by both parties to the conflict. Talks continued in Minsk, and a follow-up to the Minsk Protocol was agreed to on 19 September 2014. This memorandum clarified the implementation of the Protocol.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council spokesman Col. Andriy Lysenko stated that "the situation was calmer than before the truce with instances of shelling in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions"<sup>81</sup> as by Sunday morning shelling took place near the Donetsk airport and on the outskirts of the port city of Mariupol ending in the death of one civilian and the wounding of three others. The fighting constitutes a violation of the agreement from both sides and it is therefore put in serious jeopardy. Hence, visiting the port city of Mariupol, the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko outlined the necessity of the Ukrainian military to secure Mariupol with "howitzers, multiple rocket launchers, tanks, anti-tank weapons and air cover"<sup>82</sup> as Mariupol "is our Ukrainian land. We will not give it to anyone"<sup>83</sup>. Later he confirmed that approximately 70 percent of Russian troops have left eastern Ukraine giving thus hope for a tenuous ceasefire. In late October, DPR prime minister and Minsk Protocol signatory Alexander Zakharchenko claimed that his forces would retake the territory it had lost to Ukrainian forces during a July 2014 offensive, and that DPR forces would be willing to wage "heavy battles" to do so.

Another event that was a big step in this crisis were Ukraine's plans for the withdrawal of artillery to the edge of the agreed-upon buffer zone. Nonetheless, the military will not do this until a stable ceasefire was in place as they should be "synchronized together with the withdrawal of Russian forces"<sup>84</sup>

On the 5 December, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said that the elections held on the 2 November between DPR and LPR were "exactly within the range in which they had been negotiated in Minsk"<sup>85</sup>, and that

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<sup>80</sup> President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko. 2015. *About the President of Ukraine*. Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/31174.html>

<sup>81</sup> CNN. September 8, 2014. *Shelling near two cities rocks fragile ceasefire in eastern Ukraine* by Jethro Mullen and Diana Magnay. Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/07/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>

<sup>82</sup> Delhi News. 2014. *Ukraine president visits Mariupol*, Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://www.delhinews.net/index.php/sid/225509195>

<sup>83</sup> The New York Times Brushing Off Threats. September 8, 2014. *E.U. Votes to Toughen Its Sanctions on Russia* by Andrew Higgins, Accessed on July 26, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/09/world/europe/ukraine-russia-crimea-mariupol-poroshenko.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/09/world/europe/ukraine-russia-crimea-mariupol-poroshenko.html?_r=1)

<sup>84</sup> The Wall Street Journal. September 21, 2014. *Ukraine Says It Won't Pull Back Troops Until Rebels Cease Fire* by Alan Cullison. Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-says-it-wont-pull-back-troops-until-rebels-cease-fire-1411308470>

the Ukrainian parliament was supposed to pass an amnesty bill for DPR and LPR leaders after the Ukrainian parliamentary election in late October. According to Lavrov, closer monitoring of the Russo-Ukrainian border, as specified by the Minsk Protocol, could only take place after such an amnesty law was approved. He also noted that he thought that a Ukrainian presidential decree banning prosecution of Donbass separatist combatants was issued on 16 September, but said that "a bill has now been filed proposing to overturn"<sup>86</sup> the decree.

With the start of the year in January 2015, the Minsk Protocol ceasefire had completely collapsed. Following the separatist victory at Donetsk International Airport in defiance of the Protocol, DPR spokesman Eduard Basurin saying that the Minsk Memorandum will not be considered in the form it was adopted. Later in the day, DPR leader Alexander Zakharchenko said that the DPR "will not make any attempts at ceasefire talks any more", and that his forces were going to "attack right up to the borders of Donetsk region"<sup>87</sup>. Amidst increasing violence in the combat zone, another round of Minsk talks was scheduled for 31 January. Even if the members of the Trilateral Contact Group travelled to Minsk to meet representatives of the DPR and LPR, these signatories of the Protocol did not attend, and those representatives that did attend were not able to discuss the implementation of the Protocol or memorandum. It was later asked by these representatives for the revision of the Protocol and the memorandum; however the meeting was adjourned with no result.

### Elections in Ukraine

Amidst the prolonged crisis, multiple elections were held across Ukraine. The first of which was the presidential election held on the 25 May since the ousting of President Yanukovich, which resulted in the election of Petro Poroshenko as president of Ukraine. In the Donbass region, only 20% of polling stations were open due to threats of violence by pro-Russian separatist insurgents. As a result from 2,430 planned polling stations in the region, only 426 remained open for polling.

As the war in Donbass continued, the first post-revolutionary parliamentary elections in Ukraine were held on 26 October 2014. Once again, separatists stymied voting in the areas that they controlled. They held their own elections, internationally unrecognised and in violation of the Minsk Protocol peace process, on 2 November 2014. Hence, it has been decided by the representatives of Ukraine's Party of Regions that the party will not participate in the country's 26 October parliament elections. Even more surprising is the fact the current President Petro Poroshenko decided to dissolve parliament on 27 August by stating that its composition was not representative. Instead the party decided to form an opposition coalition while still allowing its members to run for parliament in majority constituencies.

Nevertheless, the date of the election was announced to be on the 25 August 2014. Because of the ongoing War in Donbass and the unilateral annexation of Crimea by Russia, the elections were not held in all of the regions of Ukraine. For this reason, on 2 September 2014 the Central Election Commission of Ukraine announced that voting would not be held for the 12 Verkhovna Rada constituencies in Crimea and Sevastopol. Also it was announced on the 25 October that they there will also be no voting in 9 constituencies in Donetsk Oblast and 6 constituencies in Luhansk Oblast, resulting that because of this 27 seats of the 450 seats in parliament will remain unfilled.

Every citizen of Ukraine who is 18 years of age or older was able to exercise their right to vote in a mixed electoral system. Also local election watchdogs, international observers, the European Union and Russia cited no serious election violations and were generally pleased with the election. The Petro Poroshenko Bloc won the most seats (132 seats) in the election with the People's Front coming second with 82 seats. Moreover, 94 independent candidates won a seat in single-seat constituencies, Self Reliance won 33 seats, the Opposition Bloc 29 seats, the Radical Party 22 seats, Fatherland 19 seats, Svoboda 6 seats, Right Sector 1 seat, Strong Ukraine 1 seat, Volia 1 seat, and Zastup also 1 seat. Noteworthy is the fact that for the first time since Ukraine's 1991 independence Communists have no parliamentary representation. The official voter turnout was set at 52.42% and the new parliament was appointed starting its tasks on the 27 November 2014.

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<sup>85</sup> Interfax-Ukraine, December 5, 2014. *Too early to discuss broader monitoring of Ukraine-Russia border - Lavrov*, Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/238216.html>

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *Too early to discuss broader monitoring of Ukraine-Russia border – Lavrov*

<sup>87</sup> BBC, January 23, 2015. *Ukraine Rebel Zakharchenko 'rejects truce talks'*. Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30949527>

## Minsk II to present

On the 11 February 2015 a summit in Minsk was held, where the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany agreed to a package of measures to alleviate the ongoing war in the Donbass region of Ukraine. The talks that led to the deal, overseen by the OSCE, were organised as a response to the collapse of the Minsk Protocol ceasefire in January–February 2015. The new package of measures is intended to revive the Protocol, which had been agreed to on 5 September 2014.

As seen before, many attempts to resolve the ongoing war in the Donbass region of Ukraine have failed. While the Minsk Protocol of the 5 September 2014 did significantly reduce fighting in the conflict zone for many months, minor skirmishes still continued causing significant concern in the international community. Nonetheless, the French president François Hollande and German chancellor Angela Merkel put forth a new peace plan on the 7 February with the hope that the Franco-German plan will revive the Minsk Protocol after talks with Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko and Russian president Vladimir Putin are finalised to restore diplomatic relations. President Hollande said that the plan was the "last chance"<sup>88</sup> for resolution of the conflict. The plan was put forth in response to American proposals to send armaments to the Ukrainian government, something that Chancellor Merkel said would only result in a worsening of the crisis. A summit to discuss the implementation of the Franco-German diplomatic plan was scheduled for the 11 February at Independence Palace in Minsk and was attended by Russian president Vladimir Putin, Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko, German chancellor Angela Merkel, French president François Hollande, DPR leader Alexander Zakharchenko, and LPR leader Igor Plotnitsky. Following the negotiations, it was announced on 12 February that the parties to the conflict had agreed to a new package of peacemaking measures, including the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line, release of prisoners of war, and constitutional reform in Ukraine.

However, the new package, commonly referred to as "Minsk II", was not widely accepted being criticised for being "highly complicated" and "extremely fragile", and for being very similar to the failed Minsk Protocol. Sector leader Dmytro Yarosh said that he reserved the right to continue fighting, and that Minsk II was unconstitutional. He said that his Ukrainian Volunteer Corps would continue fighting "until complete liberation of Ukrainian lands from Russian occupants", and promised "death to Russian terrorist-occupiers". DPR leader Alexander Zakharchenko said that the ceasefire did not apply to Debaltseve, and that fighting would continue there. According to the Associated Press, contact group talks in Minsk meant to push forward on the implementation of the Minsk II ceasefire agreement ended on the 17 June without any firm results.<sup>89</sup> The contact group consists of representatives of Ukraine, the pro-Russian separatist regions, Russia, and the OSCE. An OSCE spokesperson had earlier this week expressed hope that the meeting would lead to progress on the issue of the withdrawal of heavy weaponry under the Minsk II agreement.

In other news, the current situation in Ukraine consists of it trying to escape a debt crisis in the Grecian style by extending talks with its creditors indefinitely in order to head off fears of an imminent default.<sup>90</sup> As a result, Ukrainian government made an interest payment on its bonds amidst an ongoing row with creditors over a debt restructuring that many in Ukraine and the West view as essential to the country's economic survival. Analysts believe that Ukraine's decision to make the interest payment is a good sign, indicating that Kyiv still believes that it can reach a deal with creditors to restructure approximately \$19 billion in debt.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Investment Watch. February 8, 2015. *Last Chance to Avoid War in Ukraine*, Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://investmentwatchblog.com/last-chance-to-avoid-war-in-ukraine-normandy-four-meeting-in-minsk-on-wednesday-putin-says-if-we-manage-to-agree-our-positions-by-then/>

<sup>89</sup> Fox News, July 07, 2015, *Talks to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine end without firm results*, Accessed on, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/07/07/talks-to-resolve-conflict-in-eastern-ukraine-end-without-firm-results/>

<sup>90</sup> Financial Times, June 20, 2015, *Ukraines financial struggle*, Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d63385c4-2ba3-11e5-acfb-cbd2e1c81cca.html#axzz3gREKP35q>

<sup>91</sup> Wall Street Journal, July 24, 2015, *Ukraine Makes Key Interest Payment on Bonds* by Chiara Albanese. Accessed on July 26, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-makes-key-interest-payment-on-bonds-1437736130>

## **International Reactions**

### Germany

Chancellor Angela Merkel called Russia's actions "unacceptable" and their doings would break international law. Merkel reminded that Russia accepted the independence of the Ukraine in 1994 and is now not honoring the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances. She was overheard saying that Putin "lives in a different world" while talking with Barack Obama via phone.

### France

The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romain Nadal, expressed his concerns on events in Crimea and reminded the foreign minister Laurent Fabius repeatedly called upon to preserve the unity and integrity of Ukraine.

### Poland

On 1 March 2014, Poland strongly appealed for respecting Ukraine's territorial integrity, and observing international law, including fundamental principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe by urging states-signatories to the Budapest Memorandum of December 1994, which gives Ukraine security assurances, to respect and fulfil their commitments.

Poland's President Bronislaw Komorowski visited the Air Force base in Łask with Siemoniak on Tuesday 11 March 2014 and pronounced the urgent necessity for further military spending on the multi-purpose F-16 programme. Also<sup>1</sup> Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk called for change in EU energy policy as Germany's dependence on Russian gas poses risks for Europe. On 11 March 2014 Tusk announced that the current situation in Crimea is only a phase in an ongoing crisis, but Poland cannot accept the territorial disintegration of sovereign Ukraine. On August 29 Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially recognized "offensive action of the Russian armed forces in the southern regions of Donetsk oblast, in particular in the vicinity of the town of Nowakowska" as an aggression by international law.

### United Kingdom

The Foreign Secretary William Hague said he was "deeply concerned" at the escalations of tensions and the decision of the Russian parliament to authorise military action being "a potentially grave threat to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine."

### United States

On 28 February, President Barack Obama warned Russia in a statement not to intervene in Crimea pointing also his deep concern by reports of military movements taken by the Russian federation inside of Ukraine as any "any violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity would be deeply destabilizing, which is not in the interest of Ukraine, Russia and Europe." This statement was made even clearer as on 1 March President Obama made it clear on a phone conversation with Putin that Russia will suffer an even bigger political and economic isolation if the sovereignty of Ukraine is further neglected. Moreover, Obama also threatened the withdrawal of the United States from the 40th G8 summit held in Russia.

### Russia

Russia was always the principle that countries are free to choose their alliances. For this it has constantly tried to derail NATO enlargement into its neighbourhood. Now Putin is challenging these principles explicitly by both restoring and re-legitimising spheres of influence as an organising principle of European order. This is a direct challenge to Europe and the West as a whole. It seems less likely than before that Russia will accept Western-led order. Nevertheless, the Ukraine crisis led to the imposition of sanctions on Russia threatening to change the trajectory of political and economic development for the worse. Economic sanctions imposed on Russia by western nations contributed to the collapse in value of the Russian rouble, and the resulting Russian financial crisis. While sanctions were no doubt intended as a signal to Russia of Western anger at its actions in Ukraine, it is not clear that they were intended to strengthen statist factions within Russia. However, this may prove to be an unintended outcome. If so, it just goes to show how doing something for the sake of action can prove worse than doing nothing at all.

## **Ukraine and EU**

In addition to this a number of legislations have been passed including the ratification of Ukraine's Association Agreement with the European Union. This brought Ukraine closer to the European Union. Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko has an ambitious vision for further integration with Europe by implementing a six year economic and political reform called "Strategy 2020", which would address points such as corruption, reforming the tax and economic system, and fixing the justice system. Ukraine is also reportedly considering temporary closures of its border with Russia in an effort to better regain control over its own territory.