

War in Ukraine

Background:

In early 2022, the largest conflict in Europe since World War II broke out when Russia invaded its neighbouring country of Ukraine. This came as a surprise to the modern world, as no one expected such a conflict between two highly developed countries resulting in the loss of thousands of lives, both military and civilian.

The conflict had its roots in earlier events and had multiple explanations. The first armed invasion of Ukrainian territory by Russia occurred in 2014, when the Russian government "liberated" a region of Ukraine called Crimea. They claimed it was for integration and to become part of Russia, based on a 2014 referendum where 97% of Crimea's population voted in favour of integration. However, this referendum was deemed illegal by the Ukrainian Constitution, and the UN General Assembly also invalidated the voting. Despite Russian efforts to politically annex the region, they ultimately resorted to force. In response to Russia's actions, Ukraine signed agreements to strengthen ties with NATO and the EU. However, Ukraine's official entrance into NATO and the EU was delayed due to the pro-Russian government in power at the time. With President Zelensky in power, Ukraine made renewed efforts to join NATO and the EU, which fuelled concerns from the Russian government about the possibility of NATO countries extending their borders closer to Russia. Russia warned Ukraine not to take any actions that could result in a Russian invasion.

However, at the beginning of 2022, the Russian president announced that Russia had no plans to take any special actions against Ukraine. Yet, within three weeks, Russia invaded Ukraine and initiated a war that caught the world off guard.

UN Involvement:

The UN Security Council became involved in the Ukraine conflict in 2014, passing a resolution condemning the referendum that took place prior to the first Russian invasion. The UN declared both invasions as violations of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, as they went against the principles of the UN Charter. The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution denouncing the "aggression" committed by Russia against Ukraine. The resolution established ground rules for the conflict and attempted to halt Russian actions. Additionally, the UN appointed three human rights experts to investigate possible violations of international law during the conflict. The UN General Assembly then passed a resolution suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council.

The main focus of UN involvement is providing emergency aid and assistance to people across Ukraine and neighbouring areas. Currently, there are over 1,400 UN personnel on the ground throughout all 24 oblasts in Ukraine.

Useful links:

The role of the UN in the conflict in Ukraine

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/events/2023/06/the-role-of-the-un-in-the-conflict-in-ukraine>

The UN and the war in Ukraine: Key informations

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

The UN and Ukraine: year-long war spreads global fallout | UN News

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134122>

Ukraine | World news

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/ukraine>

Ukraine war | Analysis, news and insights from The Economist

<https://www.economist.com/ukraine-crisis>

Questions to consider:

1. What is the extent of my country's relations with both sides?
2. How can my country contribute to resolving the conflict?
3. Has my country voted in favour or against all resolutions pertaining to the conflict?
4. What strategies are most effective in bringing an end to the conflict?

Sources:

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Ukraine | World news

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<https://www.economist.com/ukraine-crisis>

Russia invaded Ukraine. Why does this matter to the world | Official Ukraine web

<https://war.ukraine.ua/russia-invaded-ukraine-why-does-this-matter-to-the-world/>