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The Russo-Ukrainian War

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Introduction to the topic:

The topic of Russia and Ukraine has been a major news flash for the past year. However, even though the topic has been stirred into conversations and so many news articles, the topic itself hasn't really been discussed and explained properly, and many still ask the question of what is actually going on in this conflict and behind the front scopes of media platforms? As representatives of the Security Council delegations must always be reminded to intercept, tackle, and resolve any peace and security threat the world may face. Russia and Ukraine are two neighboring countries lying in the east of Europe. Relations between the two countries have been hostile since the 2014 Ukrainian revolution, which was followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. Further, Russia is backing the separatist fighters of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic which resulted in a war that had killed more than 13,000 people by early 2020 and brought Western sanctions on Russia. Throughout 2021 and 2022 a Russian military buildup on the east border. This military buildup made the tensions between Russia and Ukraine increase even more. All these tensions resulted in a war, which resulted in Western countries implementing sanctions against Russia and 'accusing' Russia of an invasion, while Russia and its allies claim Russia has not started an invasion of Ukraine but rather started a special military operation. The threats that arise from this conflict will have enormous consequences for the entire world. Furthermore, we do not know what kind of weapons will be used in this war and what the consequences for the rest of the world will be. This topic brief will provide a survey of what happened in the past and how the tensions between Russia and Ukraine have increased over the years.

Overview of the situation and issues:

In 1991, the Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc collapsed, ending communism throughout eastern Europe and leading to the newfound independence of multiple states in the region, including Ukraine. In 1954, the Crimea had been transferred from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and when Ukraine gained independence upon the collapse of the Soviet Union Crimea remained a part of Ukraine, despite the majority of its population being ethnically Russian. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the borders of the former Soviet states in eastern Europe were largely respected by Russia. Pro-Russian separatist forces then rebelled against the Ukrainian government in Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine, receiving support from Russia as well. Violence has continued between Ukraine and the allied separatist and Russian forces since the annexation, with steady fighting sometimes punctured by more intense confrontations occurring in eastern Ukraine, and also the Russian attacks and the invasion.

Definition of Key Terms:

Eastern Bloc: The collection of eastern European countries that were under Soviet communist rule from the end of World War II until 1991.

Annex: To seize territory from a country and incorporate it into your own nation.

Appeasement: Appeasement in an international context is a diplomatic policy of making political, material, or territorial concessions to an aggressive power in order to avoid conflict.

Cease-fire: cease fire is a temporary stoppage of a war in which each side agrees with the other to suspend aggressive actions.

Guerrilla warfare: Guerrilla warfare is a form of irregular warfare in which small groups of combatants, such as paramilitary personnel, armed civilians, or irregulars, use military tactics including ambushes, sabotage, raids, petty warfare, hit-and-run tactics, and mobility, to fight a larger and less-mobile traditional military.

Timeline of Related Events:

- 17th September 1991 - The Eastern Bloc collapsed and broke free from Soviet control.
- 25th December 1991 - The Soviet Union collapsed, breaking up into separate nation states, including Ukraine.
- 23rd February 2014 - Pro-Russian demonstrations erupted in Sevastopol, the capital of the Crimean region.
- 27th February 2014 - Russian troops took over the Supreme Council of Crimea and captured other strategic sites across the peninsula.
- 28th February 2014 - Checkpoints were established at Armyansk and Chongar, the main road crossing between Ukraine and Crimea.
- 16th March 2014 - A pro-Russian government was installed in Crimea, Crimea declared independence from Ukraine and a Crimean Status Referendum was held.
- 18th March 2014 - Russia formally incorporated Crimea into the Russian Federation as two federal states.
- April 2014 - Pro-Russian separatist forces emerged and seized large amounts of territory in Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbas region, with support from Russian forces.
- May 2014 - Separatist forces held a referendum, declaring independence from the rest of Ukraine.
- July 2014 - A Malaysian Airlines flight was shot down over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board. By September 2016, it had been concluded that the plane was destroyed by a Russian surface-to-air missile system that had been moved into separatist territory in Donbas before being moved back into Russia.
- December 2015 - A cyberattack caused 225,000 people in Ukraine to lose power.
- December 2016 - A Ukrainian utility company suffered a cyberattack, causing loss of power in multiple areas throughout Kiev.
- June 2017 - Computer systems belonging to the Ukrainian government and Ukrainian businesses were hit by a cyberattack that also spread to other systems across the world. The attack was attributed to Russia.

- 14th April 2021 - Up to 14,000 extra Russian troops began to move into Crimea and the areas around the Ukrainian border, leading to a buildup of Russian forces in the regions.

February 24: Russian President Vladimir Putin announces his decision to launch a “special military operation” in Ukraine in a pre-dawn speech and the land, sea, and air invasion begins.

- February 26-27 - Zelenskyy refuses a US offer to evacuate, saying: “The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride”.

- February 28 - Ukraine applies to join the EU.

- March 1 - A 65km (40.4-mile) Russian military convoy moves towards the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

- March 2 - Russian forces enter the southern city of Kherson. A million Ukrainian refugees have now fled the country.

- March 4 - Russian forces shell Europe’s biggest nuclear plant of Zaporizhzhia, raising fears of a Chernobyl-style disaster.

- March 8 - The European Commission unveils REPowerEU, a plan to reduce dependence on Russian natural gas by two-thirds by the end of the year. The US imposes a ban on Russian crude oil imports. Ukrainian refugee numbers reach two million. US Congress approves \$13.6bn in spending for Ukraine, divided equally between aid for refugees and military aid for the front.

- March 11 - Russian armour enters the northwestern outskirts of Kyiv, but already faces manpower shortages. Putin approves the deployment of up to 16,000 irregular fighters from Syria.

- March 13 - Russia broadens its targets westward, firing 30 cruise missiles at a military training base in Yavoriv, 25km (15.5 miles) from the Polish border, killing 35 people.

- March 14 - Top Putin aide Viktor Zolotov, who heads the national guard, becomes the first high-ranking Russian to admit the war in Ukraine is not going as planned.

- March 16 - Russia bombs a theatre in the southern port city of Mariupol, killing at least 300 civilians sheltering there.

- March 23 - NATO estimates that Russia has lost 7,000-15,000 troops in one month of war and that the number of Russian dead, wounded, captured and missing is 40,000.

- March 25 - Russia says it will focus on consolidating its control over the eastern Ukrainian provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk, in an apparent redefinition of its war aims.

- April 2 - As Russian troops withdraw from Bucha, a town northwest of Kyiv, dozens of apparently civilian corpses are found on the streets.

- April 4 - US president Joe Biden calls for Putin to be tried in a war crimes tribunal for the alleged Russian killings of civilians in Bucha.

- April 5 - Internally displaced Ukrainians now number 7.1 million. Al Jazeera uncovers testimony from Bucha residents saying they were tortured and their lives threatened by Russian soldiers.
- April 21 - Putin declares victory in the battle for Mariupol, even though some 2,500 Ukrainian marines remain barricaded in the azovstal steel plant.
- April 28 - US Congress revives lend-lease facilities to speed up weapons shipments to Ukraine. President Biden asks congress to approve a \$33bn spending package for Ukraine.
- May 4 - Ukrainian and Russian reports say a Ukrainian counteroffensive north and east of Kharkiv has pushed Russian troops 40km (24.9 miles) back from the city, in the first significant Ukrainian success since winning the battle for Kyiv. The European Commission unveils a sixth round of sanctions, including a complete import ban on all Russian oil, seaborne and pipeline, crude and refined, effective by the end of the year.
- May 11 - Ukraine for the first time limits Russian gas transiting its territory to Europe, cutting by a quarter the flow of gas through one of two major pipelines.
- May 12 - Finland announces it will seek NATO membership.
- May 15 - Sweden announces it will apply for NATO membership, ending two centuries of neutrality.
- May 18 - The European Commission announces a 220 billion euro (\$219bn) plan to ditch all Russian fossil fuels over five years.
- May 19 - US Congress approves a \$40bn aid package for Ukraine, significantly more than the \$33bn Biden initially asked for, about half of which is intended for military aid and supplies.
- May 30 - After some hesitation, Biden decides to send “more advanced rocket systems” to Ukraine to enable greater precision artillery raids. The US will send GMLRS and high mobility artillery rocket systems (HIMARS) with 80km (49.7-mile) range rockets.
- June 6 - The UK announces it will send M270 multiple launch rocket systems with 80km (49.7 mile) range to Ukraine.
- June 9 - Putin likens his conquest of Ukraine to peter the great’s conquest of what is today northwestern Russia in a war fought against Sweden in 1700-1721.
- June 13 - NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg appears to suggest that Ukraine will have to accept a loss of sovereignty or territory in return for peace, during a press conference in Finland.
- June 15 - Russia cuts gas deliveries to Europe through the nord stream 1 pipeline to 40 percent of capacity.
- June 22 - Ukraine says it has taken 1,026 settlements back from Russian control.

- June 29 - NATO formally invites Finland and Sweden to become members of the alliance, after Turkey lifts its veto.
- July 4 - Some 40 countries participate in an International Conference on the Restoration of Ukraine in Lugano, Switzerland. Ukrainian prime minister Denys Shmyhal says \$750bn will be needed.
- July 22 - Russia and Ukraine sign a UN-brokered agreement allowing the export of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.
- July 29 - At least 50 Ukrainian PoWs are killed when their detention facility is blown up in Olenivka, Donetsk. Russia says Ukraine targeted its own men. Ukraine says Russia blew up its own penal colony “to cover up war crimes”.
- July 31 - A presumed Ukrainian drone flies into Russia’s Black Sea fleet headquarters in Sevastopol on Russia’s Navy Day, wounding five people.
- August 7 - Ukraine’s southern command reports the destruction of 24 Russian multiple rocket launchers, a T-62 tank, five armoured vehicles and an ammunition warehouse in attacks against Berislavsky and one other location in Kherson oblast.
- August 9 - An estimated nine Russian war planes were destroyed on the ground at the airbase of Saky in Crimea, 225km (136.7 miles) behind the front line, in what would appear to be the first significant Ukrainian attack on a Russian base on the peninsula.

Main Parties Involved:

Ukraine:

Ukraine protests against the annexation of Crimea and still regards Crimea to be a part of Ukraine. They oppose the separatist movements and their objectives in the eastern parts of the country. Ukraine condemns the Russian military buildup as a threat to the nation of Ukraine.

Russian Federation:

Russian federation believes their annexation of Crimea was legal and justified, based on the will of the people there. They support the separatists in eastern Ukraine, believing the people there should be allowed to secede and create their own nation states. Russia justifies their military buildup near Ukraine as a response to hostility from Ukraine and NATO and as a means of carrying out exercises.

North Atlantic Treaty Association (NATO):

The NATO believes that Russia’s annexation of Crimea was illegal. They consider Russia’s military involvement in eastern Ukraine and their recent buildup to be unjustified and concerning acts.

The Russian Annexation of Crimea:

The Russian threat to Ukraine primarily began with the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014. Trouble between Russia and Ukraine that ultimately led to the annexation started in November 2013, when protests erupted in Kiev against President Viktor Yanukovich as a result of his refusal to permit greater economic integration between Ukraine and the European Union. Such protests persisted and worsened, despite a crackdown from the President, until February 2014, when President Yanukovich fled the country after failing to calm the situation. Another set of protests also took place at this time in Crimea, however these protests were pro-Russian rather than anti-Yanukovich.

The protests against and expulsion of President Yanukovich deeply troubled Russia, who had been a supporter of the President, but the pro-Russian demonstrations in Crimea were also inviting for them. Taking advantage of the unrest in Ukraine, Russian troops invaded Crimea on 27th February 2014. They first targeted and seized strategic points across the peninsula, including the Supreme Council of Crimea, before establishing checkpoints at Armyansk and Chongar on 28th February that brought the main crossings between Crimea and Ukraine under Russian control.

Following the invasion and securing of the region by Russian troops, a Russian government was installed in Crimea and made to declare independence from Ukraine on 16th March 2014. This brought Crimea firmly under Russian control, though the process was formally completed on 18th March 2014 when a Crimean Status Referendum was held, the result of which favoured unification with Russia. As a result of this, Russia incorporated Crimea into the Russian Federation as two federal states, completing the annexation of the region and undermining the security of Ukraine and her borders.

The War in Eastern Ukraine:

Russian hostility towards Ukraine continued after the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 when rebels started a conflict against the Ukrainian government in the east of the country.

In April 2014, pro-Russian separatist forces seized large amounts of territory throughout Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine before holding a referendum to declare independence from the rest of Ukraine the following month. This started a war between Ukraine and the separatists, who were receiving support from the Russian Federation.

Throughout the conflict, the Russian threat to Ukraine heightened and was demonstrated in a number of incidents from 2014-2017. The first such incident occurred in July 2014, when a Malaysian Airlines flight was shot down over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board. By September 2016, it had been concluded that the plane had been destroyed by a Russian surface-to-air missile system that had been moved into Donbas and then back into Russia after it had been fired.

A series of cyberattacks attributed to Russia also struck Ukraine throughout the conflict. The first occurred in December 2015, when 225,000 people throughout the country lost power, then a second attack in December 2016 caused the loss of power in most of Kiev after a utility company was targeted. Finally, in June 2017, the computer systems belonging to the Ukrainian

government and key businesses in Ukraine were hit by a cyberattack that went on to spread to systems around the world.

Ultimately, the war between Ukraine and the Russian-backed separatists in Donbas has killed over 13,000 people and injured at least 24,000 since April 2014, whilst the cyberattacks have also caused massive amounts of damage and disruption to the government, businesses and people of Ukraine. Russia has been heavily involved in the conflict, supporting the separatist forces and launching cyberattacks, demonstrating their ongoing threat to Ukraine.

The Russian Military Buildup on the Ukrainian Border:

Though the conflict in Donbas has essentially become a stalemate without serious fighting since 2018, the threat to Ukraine from Russia was heightened recently by a military buildup along the Russo-Ukrainian border.

In April 2021, up to 14,000 Russian troops were deployed to Crimea and the border with Ukraine, leading to a buildup of Russian forces in the regions. By mid-April, it was believed that Russia had accumulated roughly 40,000 soldiers near the

Ukrainian border and another 40,000 in Crimea, as well as stationing military equipment such as artillery and vehicles alongside the troops.

Such events spiked tensions between Russia and Ukraine and NATO, increasing fears of a Russian invasion or greater involvement in the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and the Donbas separatists, again demonstrating the threat posed to Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

Natural gas crisis:

The background is a long-running dispute between Russia and Ukraine in terms of gas relationships over two things: One is over the price that Ukraine pays, and the second is over debt that Ukraine owes Russia for gas shipments in the past that it hasn't paid for. There's also a political subtext because Ukraine, since 2004, has had a government that is interested in pursuing integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO. Ukraine, until the current crisis, relied on Russia for half its gas supplies. Some EU member states such as Slovakia take all their gas from Russia. In total, Russia supplies 23% of the EU's gas. Russia's supply lines run through Ukraine to several EU countries and as much as 70% of its gas to the EU is carried through those pipes. So, while Russia has in recent years tried to bypass Ukraine, with the Nord Stream and South Stream projects, the two countries are, for now, inextricably linked.

Current situation:

Ukraine, which declared itself an independent country in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union has been forming closer ties with the European Union and with NATO. Russia, however, sees these ties as an economic and strategic threat to its own security. More than 7 million people have fled across borders to seek safety since Russia deployed its military into neighboring Ukraine on February 24. Bombs and shelling have continued, deliberately targeting homes and civilian infrastructure in what could become the worst humanitarian crisis Europe has seen in decades. Ukrainian territorial gains in mid-September have exposed large-scale damages and an extreme need for humanitarian support in regions formerly held by Russian forces. Given the importance of Ukraine wheat and grain exports, the conflict has had catastrophic impacts on many regions already facing conflict and crises. The United Nations

recently announced that “famine is at the door” in Somalia as the disruption in food supply and a severe drought ravage East Africa. Over 14 million people across Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya are already on the verge of starvation about half of them children. That number could rise to 20 million if the world fails to take urgent action. The Sahel region of Africa is experiencing its highest levels of severe food insecurity since 2014. Up to 18 million people are experiencing severe hunger. In the Middle East, the war in Ukraine has sent prices of wheat and fuel spiraling. Syrian refugees are among the hardest hit, as many do not have the incomes to cover the dramatically increased cost of living. Action must be taken as if Action is taken who knows what could happen.

Links for further research:

<https://www.rescue.org/article/ukraine-russia-crisis-what-happening>

<https://www.britannica.com/event/2022-Russian-invasion-of-Ukraine>

<https://www.statista.com/topics/9087/russia-ukraine-war-2022/>

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>

<https://warontherocks.com/understanding-the-russo-ukrainian-war-a-guide-from-war-on-the-rocks/>

<https://www.usip.org/current-situation-ukraine>

<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/09/06/energy-crisis-why-has-russia-cut-off-gas-supplies-to-europe.html>