SIMULATION GUIDE:
NUCLEAR CRISIS IN THE UKRAINE
SECURITY COUNCIL

WMUNC 2016
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Introduction

The United Nations Security Council has been called into session to deal with the deepening crisis in the Ukraine. The Ukraine is the largest country entirely within Europe and its capital is located in Kiev. Intelligence sources report that the Russians are deploying surface-to-surface nuclear weapons sites in the Crimea and may be preparing to renew expanded military operations in the eastern Ukraine which represents a significant escalation of tensions in the region. To compound the situation, Ukrainian leaders are demanding the reestablishment of a Ukrainian nuclear force that will deter further Russian expansion into Ukrainian territory. These actions may violate international agreements that address the sovereignty of the Ukraine, cease fire protocols to end the fighting in the eastern Ukraine, and nuclear disarmament treaties that were designed to prevent future warfare that involved the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Historical Background

The basis of this issue is whether the Ukraine is an independent nation state or a detached part of Russia (as claimed by many Russians). The Ukraine has a long history and was a major power in the Middle Ages—Kievan Rus dominated Eastern Europe from 980-1015. However, the Mongol invasion in 1240 totally destroyed Kiev and the country suffered domination by the Poles, Lithuanians, and Ottomans. By 1654, the Ukraine became an ally and recognized the sovereignty of Russia. The Russians annexed the Crimea in 1783 and began the first wave of Russian immigration into the Ukraine. In World War I, most Ukrainians fought for the Tsar but after the October Revolution of 1917, the Ukrainians declared their independence. The Ukraine fought to maintain its independence when the Polish Army invaded the country in May 1920. The Soviet Red Army launched a counter-offensive and seized control of the Ukraine. The Bolsheviks established the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic which joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in December 1922. Joseph Stalin, as Minister of Nationalities, strongly encouraged Russian migration into the Ukraine in a massive russification program.

In World War II, the German Army invaded the Ukraine in June 1941 and fought Red Army forces in the region for three years, devastating the country. After the war ended, the Ukraine and Byelorussia (today known as Belarus) gained their own seats in the United Nations General Assembly and were recognized globally as independent countries. This decision reflected a compromise between Joseph Stalin, who demanded a General Assembly seat for each Soviet Socialist Republic in the USSR and Winston Churchill, who insisted on seats for British dominions such as Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa. Although controlled by Soviet leaders in Moscow, the Ukraine maintained its own diplomatic relations and entered into international treaties.

Ukrainian Independence

When Communist power began to collapse at the end of the Cold War, the Ukrainians took action to assert their full political independence. In July 1990, the new Ukrainian Parliament adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine which established self-determination, democracy, independence, and the primacy of Ukrainian law over Soviet law. This led to confrontation with Soviet authorities and in August 1991 the Ukrainian Parliament passed the Act of Independence. A national referendum and the first presidential elections took place in December 1991. More than 90 percent of the electorate supported the Act of Independence and Leonid Kravchuk became the first President of the Ukraine. The Ukrainian economy experienced a deep economic recession with independence, losing 60 percent of its GDP from 1991 to 1999 while suffering five-digit inflation rates. By 2000, the country stabilized with the adoption of a new currency and the Ukraine experienced a steady real economic growth rate of 7 percent annually.

As a new nation, the Ukraine embraced neutrality and disarmament as the best means to achieve economic development and friendly diplomatic relations. The Ukrainian government signed the Treaty of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in November 1990, which resulted in a massive reduction in its
conventional military forces. The treaty called for the elimination of tanks, artillery, and armored vehicles as well as a drawdown of troops from 780,000 to 300,000 men. This was a radical cut in the country’s defense force but was applauded as a major step towards regional peace and security.

In December 1994, the Ukraine, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States signed the Budapest Memorandum. The Ukraine had the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world but was willing to send these weapons back to Russia and sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In response, the U.S., Britain, and Russia promised to respect the independence and sovereignty as well as the existing borders of the Ukraine. This included a pledge that the three Great Powers would never use the threat of force or economic coercion against the Ukraine. The treaty also commits Russia, Britain, and the U.S. to seek immediate UN Security Council action to provide assistance if the Ukraine should become a victim of a threat or act of aggression if nuclear weapons are involved. The Budapest Memorandum was considered a great achievement for nuclear disarmament. The Ukraine sent its last nuclear weapons to Russia in 1996 and also destroyed or dismantled its fleet of strategic bombers to reflect its commitment to peace in the region.

The Ukraine held presidential elections in October 2004 and Viktor Yanukovych was declared the winner in rigged elections (as determined by the Supreme Court of the Ukraine). Yanukovych was accused of massive corruption, voter intimidation, and direct electoral fraud. The results led to a non-violent popular revolution, known as the Orange Revolution, which lasted from November 2004 to January 2005. Viktor Yushchenko became the new President but the country's economy was undermined by a financial crisis from 2008 to 2009 and GDP fell by 15 percent. The Russians also strove to create economic havoc by cutting off all natural gas supplies to the Ukraine in 2006 and 2009, which led to serious energy shortages. Presidential elections were held again in 2010 and Yanukovych came to power with 48 percent of the vote.

Political problems reemerged as Yanukovych moved away from the West by cutting off negotiations with NATO and the European Union, and adopted pro-Russian policies. Most Ukrainians demanded closer ties with the West and the Euromaidan Revolution broke out in November 2013. Violence escalated after January 2014 when Yanukovych introduced new Anti-Protest Laws. Anti-government demonstrators took to the streets in February and riots in Kiev led to 98 dead, 15,000 injured, and 100 missing over a three-day period. Counter-demonstrations in support of Yanukovych emerged in the eastern Ukraine. The Members of Parliament found that the President was unable to fulfill his duties and scheduled a new presidential election for May 2015 for his replacement. Yanukovych, seeking to avoid arrest, fled the Ukraine and went into exile in Russia. Petro Poroshenko, running on a pro-European Union platform, won over 50 percent of the vote in the presidential election. Poroshenko made his priorities to end the civil unrest in the eastern Ukraine and improve relations with Russia.

The new president achieved his first goal as the Ukraine ratified the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement in December 2014, which Poroshenko declared to be the first and most important step toward Ukrainian membership in the EU. On 1 January 2016, the Ukraine (along with Moldova and Armenia) joined the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the European Union. This agreement will help the Ukraine modernize and develop its national economy, improve governance, and enhance the rule of law which will lead to future membership in the EU. Poroshenko set 2020 as the target date for EU membership accession.

Russian Seizure of the Crimea

The situation grew increasingly tense as Vladimir Putin mobilized Russian forces along the border with the Ukraine in February 2014. Exiled President Yanukovych requested that Russia use military force to establish legitimacy, peace, law and order, stability, and defend the people in the Ukraine on March 1st. That same day, Putin received authorization from the Russian Parliament to send troops to the Ukraine and Russian forces seized control of the Crimea the next day. This action secured the Russian Black Sea Fleet's port facilities at Sevastopol. On March 6th, the Crimean Parliament voted to enter into
the Russian Federation. A referendum was held in the Crimea which asked people whether they wanted to join Russia or return to the Ukraine. A majority of the population voted in favor of annexation by Russia but the referendum was challenged internationally because it was not monitored by foreign observers and armed groups enforced voting according to their demands. The Republic of Crimea declared its independence from the Ukraine and signed a treaty of accession into the Russian Federation. The UN General Assembly voted in favor of a non-binding statement in opposition to the Russian annexation of the Crimea (General Assembly Resolution 68/262, 27 March 2014—100 states voted in opposition to Russian annexation, 11 voted in favor of Russian annexation, and 58 states abstained).

In response to the Russian seizure of the Crimea, President Poroshenko ordered a buildup of Ukrainian military forces north of the peninsula and established a blockade of the region. Unfortunately for the Ukrainians, the country’s military forces were unprepared for the Russian military operations and only a small number of units were considered to be battle ready. The Ukraine has a large military industrial complex but it is geared towards the export market. Only after the Russian invasion did the Ukrainians begin to divert its weapons exports to replacing outdated and poorly maintained equipment. With increased defense expenditures, the Ukraine has rebuilt its military forces to over 200,000 front line troops (making it the second largest military force in Europe). In January 2016, Poroshenko asked the Minister of Defense and the General Staff of the Armed Forces to reinforce the border with the Ukraine, increase the country’s defense systems in the Kharkov region, and expand defensive assets along the entire Black Sea coast to prevent future Russian encroachments on Ukrainian territory. It has also been reported that the Ukrainians are developing new Special Forces units which will be tasked with the goal of regaining the Crimea from Russian control. Over 40,000 Ukrainian troops enforce the blockade of the border with the Crimea.

In response, President Putin declared the right of Crimeans to reunite with Russia through the universal right of national self-determination under the United Nations Charter, despite the actions of the General Assembly. The Russians continue to recognize Yanukovych as the lawful president of the Ukraine and brands the Poroshenko regime as illegal usurpers. To defend their interests in the Crimea, the Russians have continued its military buildup on the peninsula with troops and advanced equipment. However, the impact of Western economic sanctions in response to the seizure of the Ukraine and the low price of petroleum on the world market has taken a severe toll on the Russian economy.

**Warfare in the Eastern Ukraine**

In March 2014, unrest broke out in the eastern and southern regions of the Ukraine and armed irregulars, led by Russian intelligence officers, seized key buildings in several cities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Many of these insurgents are well armed with Russian weapons and armor and were initially Ukrainian citizens that supported Russia. The insurgent forces were supported by artillery located in Russian territory. After seizing territory, the insurgents set up the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) as the new governments of the eastern Ukraine. By August 2014, it was estimated that these civilians had been replaced by Russian paramilitary troops who represented up to 80 percent of the insurgent forces. Fighting in the region intensified as Ukrainian forces began counter-offensive operations against rebel-held territory.

Talks between the EU, Russia, the U.S. and Ukraine began, which led to the **Geneva Pact** in April 2014. Under the terms of the agreement, unlawful militia were to lay down their arms, evacuate government buildings, and a political dialogue would begin that could lead to more autonomy for regions in the Ukraine. When Poroshenko was elected in May, he vowed to send Ukrainian military forces to end the armed insurgency. To reinforce the separatist forces, the Russians dispatched a large convoy across the border on a “humanitarian mission” in August without the Ukrainian government’s approval. Western military leaders characterized the operation as a “stealth invasion of the Ukraine” as Russian military units participated in the “mission.” This influx of military equipment and forces bolstered the insurgent forces despite the agreement reached in Geneva. With the infusion of weapons and troops, the rebels were
able to recover much of the territory that they had lost to the Ukrainian Army.

Warfare in the region resulted in an international incident on July 17, 2014. A Malaysian Airlines Boeing 777 went down in the Donetsk People’s Republic killing 298 passengers and crewmen. Most of the passengers were from the Netherlands and the Dutch government demanded an immediate investigation. Pro-Russian separatists sealed off the crash site and the Russian government claimed that the Ukrainian Air Force was responsible for the attack. A Dutch investigation determined that a Russian air defense unit in Kursk had fired a surface to air missile which resulted in the destruction of the aircraft. It is believed that the Russian troops inaccurately determined that the plane was a Ukrainian military aircraft and shot it down.

The fighting between the Ukrainian Army and Russian insurgent forces continued to intensify. Poroshenko negotiated a cease-fire with separatist troops in September 2014 in the Minsk Agreement in Belarus. Military forces were to disengage and the rebel regions had to decentralize their control over the territory they controlled by December. By this time, warlords had seized control in the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. In November, the separatist governments conducted “special elections” by which the populations overwhelmingly approved their independence from the Ukraine and declared their desire for reunification with Russia. As in the case of the Crimean elections, these elections were not recognized as lawful by the rest of the world. By January 2015, the cease-fire had broken down and heavy fighting between Ukrainian and pro-Russian forces resumed. In an effort to restore order, the Ukrainian government and separatists met again in Belarus and signed the Minsk II Protocol in February 2015. Both sides were to withdraw heavy weapons from the front lines and establish buffer zones. The agreement also included conditions such as Ukrainian control over the border with Russia and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Ukrainian territory. The cease fire was set to begin at midnight on February 15th.

Despite the Minsk Agreements, fighting continues between Ukrainian forces and Russian insurgents. The insurgents, with Russian support, launched a major offensive and seized Debaltseve at the end of February 2015. The Russians have provided the rebels with tanks and heavy equipment to improve their fire power. But the Ukrainians have refused to withdraw from the eastern Ukraine. In July, they mounted a counter-offensive and regained control of this lost territory.

International Response to the Ukrainian Crisis and Potential Escalation of Fighting

The European Union and the United States have responded to the crisis by implementing economic sanctions on Russian banks and corporations and establishing travel sanctions on Russian leaders. Despite the growing military power of the insurgents, the U.S. government has refused to send lethal military assistance to the Ukrainians, which has angered many Ukrainians who view this policy as American indifference to their plight. However, the United States and European leaders have conducted negotiations with the Ukraine since 2008 for Ukrainian membership in NATO. Ukrainian military units regularly conduct military and naval exercises with U.S. and European forces.

A Russian Foreign Ministry official, Mikhail Ulyanov, declared on March 11, 2015 that Russia had the legal right as a sovereign state to deploy nuclear missiles in the Crimea to defend their territory. This represents a major escalation in tensions in the region. Surface-to-surface nuclear missiles in the Crimea are a direct threat to Europe because they are closer than Russian deployed missiles. Russian officials have stated that they are operating advanced surface-to-air missile systems and Krasukha electronic warfare systems in the Crimea to defend their national air space and undermine surveillance activities by other countries. The Russians have since dispatched 19,000 troops to the Crimea and another 51,000 to the border of the peninsula. In addition, the Russians have provided main battle tanks to the insurgent forces in Donetsk and Lugansk. British intelligence suggests that the Russians have already deployed surface-to-surface missile systems in the Crimea.
In response to Russian provocation, the U.S. and the EU have increased their military and naval presence in the region. The U.S. deployed 100 M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks to Latvia to shore up Baltic defenses. The U.S., Canada, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey are now conducting naval exercises in the Black Sea as a show of force. The U.S. has also sent 30 armored Humvees and 100 unarmored Humvees as well as drones to the Ukraine to bolster their forces (these systems are non-lethal). Many Ukrainians feel dejected by the lukewarm American and European response to their national survival. Some Ukrainian Members of Parliament are openly calling for the Ukraine to scrap their adherence to the NPT and develop their own nuclear weapons arsenal as the best means to stop Russian interference in their territory. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists have reset the "Doomsday Clock" to three minutes to midnight (the closest point of nuclear war since 1983) due to the crisis in the region.

Events in other parts of the world threaten to complicate the situation in the Ukraine. In January 2016, Ukrainian military commanders drew up plans to send troops to fight against ISIS in Syria at the request of the Poroshenko government. While the U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter has been seeking European support for counter-terrorism operations, Ukrainian entry into the conflict raises red flags with NATO members. A military engagement between Ukrainian and Russian forces in Syria could lead to an extension of the war in new directions.

The number of people killed in the fighting in the Ukraine is difficult to ascertain. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated in September 2015 that over 8,050 people had been killed, of which 2,500 were civilians. The Ukrainians claim to have killed as many as 14,600 separatists with another 12,000 missing. Pro-Russian forces state that they had killed 10,000 Ukrainians, wounded 20,000, and that 13,500 had defected or were missing by June 2015. There are also reports that over 2,000 Russian troops had been killed in the fighting by February 2015. In addition, it is estimated that 730,000 Ukrainians have fled over the border to Russia and another 117,000 have moved to other parts of the Ukraine.

Summary and Directives

As a result of the renewed tensions between the Ukraine and the Russian separatists, the situation in the region is volatile. The Ukrainian Parliament’s call for the reestablishment of a nuclear arsenal may deter the Russians from supporting the insurgents who are seeking more territory. The Russian decision to station surface-to-surface missiles in the Crimea is not only a warning to the Ukraine to prevent any attempts to regain the peninsula but also serves as a significant threat to the security of European and Middle Eastern countries as well. There is growing evidence that the Russians may decide to strike before the Ukrainians can restore their nuclear armory. Russian forces are concentrating on the border of the southern Donetsk Oblast in preparation to invade and occupy the southeastern region of the Ukraine along the Black Sea. A successful military operation would establish a land corridor between Russia and the Crimea and undermine the Ukrainian blockade of the peninsula. Such an action would seriously undermine international peace and security.

At this session, the Security Council must consider the evidence and address the following issues to ensure global peace:

1. Has Russia violated any international agreements by threatening to deploy nuclear weapons in the Crimea?

2. If Russia has deployed nuclear weapons in the Crimea and the United Nations does not recognize that region as lawful Russian territory, has Russia violated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?

3. If the Ukraine develops a nuclear weapons arsenal, will the Ukraine be in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?
The success of these deliberations will promote future peace in the Black Sea region while the escalation of warfare may result in a general war that threatens the security of all nations.