

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

58 East 68th Street, New York, New York 10065
tel 212.434.9400 fax 212.434.9800 www.cfr.org

Teaching Notes

What to Do About Russia and Ukraine

Ukraine's recently held presidential election has been deemed a success, but the country faces a number of continuing challenges including an ongoing separatist rebellion in the east. Karen Donfried of the German Marshall Fund and CFR Fellows Robert Kahn and Stephen Sestanovich join CFR President Richard N. Haass to discuss the crisis in Ukraine and its implications for U.S. foreign policy. The panelists outline potential steps that the United States can take to help stabilize the country and promote political and economic reform. They also consider the impact of the crisis on U.S.-Russia relations going forward.

This meeting is part of the "[What to Do About](#)" series, which highlights specific issues and features experts who put forward competing analyses and policy prescriptions in a mock high-level U.S. government meeting.

- [Event video](#)
- [Event transcript](#)
- [Event audio](#)

Background

Questions for Class or Writing Assignments

1. How did the Ukrainian crisis begin? What were the most important events leading up to today?
2. Why did Russia oppose the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union?
3. Why did protestors oppose President Yanukovich's decision not to sign the Association Agreement?
4. What is Crimea and why is it important in this crisis?
5. Who is fighting in Ukraine? Who is supporting each side? What are the goals of each side?
6. How are regional and linguistic distinctions in Ukraine important to the current crisis?

7. What actions have the United States and Europe taken thus far regarding the crisis in Ukraine? How have the United States and Europe differed in their approaches to resolving this crisis and why?

Supplementary Readings

1. [Ukraine in Crisis](#), CFR Backgrounder Series, updated August 25, 2014
This piece introduces students to the Ukraine crisis (2,400 words).
2. [NATO Member and Partner Countries](#), NATO
A map of Eurasia indicating NATO members and others.
3. [Ukraine Crisis Timeline](#), BBC
This detailed timeline records the progression of the crisis (3,400 words).
4. [Ukraine Crisis in Maps](#), *The New York Times*
A collection of maps illustrating the fighting taking place in Ukraine (26 maps and images with extended captions).
5. [Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy](#), Congressional Research Service, July 8, 2014
Background on the crisis and an overview of U.S. policy in Ukraine (10,000 words)
6. [Nuanced Views in Eastern Ukraine](#), Brookings Institution, April 28, 2014
This report discusses public opinion about the crisis amongst people living in south and east Ukraine (1,400 words).
7. [Europe Divided over Russia as NATO meets on Ukraine crisis](#), *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2014
Europe's response to the crisis discussed in a news article (1,100 words).
8. [EU and US Present United Front with Tough Sanctions on Russia](#), *Financial Times*, July 29, 2014
A news article announcing new sanctions by the United States and European Union against Russia (800 words, paywall).
9. [Advancing Ukraine troops take fight to heart of pro-Moscow rebellion](#), Reuters, August 19, 2014
The progress of the July 2014 Ukrainian offensive in Donetsk is discussed in this news article (1,200 words).

Stakes

Questions for Class or Writing Assignments

1. What does President Putin's speech tell you about his view of Russian interests in Ukraine?
2. Why is the United States interested in what happens in Ukraine?
3. Could the United States tolerate a divided Ukraine? What factors should Washington consider when making that decision?
4. The United States and Russia collaborate on a number of diplomatic issues, including nuclear non-proliferation, negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, and the future of Afghanistan. How do you think Ukraine should fit into this mix of interests? Is it more important? Less? How does that assessment affect your argument about what the United States should do in Ukraine?
5. What risks does Europe face by taking stronger action against Russia? What risks does it face by not acting?

Supplementary Readings

1. [Remarks by President Putin](#), eng.Kremlin.ru, March 18, 2014
Russian President Vladimir Putin's address to the Russian Duma after Crimea voted in a referendum to join Russia(5,300 words).
2. [Remarks by Chancellor Merkel](#), Germany.info, March 13, 2014
German Chancellor Angela Merkel lays out the German position on the Ukraine crisis (2,600 words).
3. [Where's the U.S. on Ukraine?](#), *The Boston Globe*, May 8, 2014
Professor Nicholas Burns writes that President Obama needs to develop a strategy in Ukraine to counter President Putin (700 words).
4. [What MH17 Means for Russia-Ukraine](#), *Reuters*, July 18, 2014
Ian Bremmer on why MH17 represents a serious escalation of the crisis (600 words).
5. [Troubling Secessionist Models for Ukraine](#), CFR, June 6, 2014
An interview with Professor Charles King about what other conflicts in post-Soviet states teach us about the crisis in Ukraine (1,300 words).

Options

Questions for Class or Writing Assignments

1. The United States and Europe have placed economic sanctions on Russia. Do you think sanctions are likely to change Russia's behavior? Will the current sanctions be sufficient or will the US and the EU need to turn to more serious sanctions, perhaps targeting particular sectors of Russia's economy? What costs might such sanctions impose on the US and the EU themselves?
2. The United States is already supplying limited, non-lethal aid to the Ukrainian military. Should this aid be continued? What conditions, if any, should Washington put on the aid?
3. Should Washington consider expanding its aid to include weapons, ammunition, and other lethal items? Why or why not?
4. Should the United States and its allies consider sending their own forces to Ukraine, either openly or secretly? Why or why not? What considerations should they take into account before deciding?
5. What diplomatic outreach should the United States and Europe conduct to resolve this crisis? What assurances, incentives, or threats about future behavior could be given to either Ukraine or Russia to help address their concerns and alleviate the conflict?
6. The European Union has been reluctant to place broad, punitive sanctions on the Russian economy. Is Europe right to hold back, or should it be doing more? Are there conditions under which it should definitely expand its efforts? What are they and why?
7. Under what conditions, if any, should NATO extend membership to Ukraine?
8. Should the United States simply stay out of this crisis and tolerate a potentially divided Ukraine? What factors should Washington consider when making that decision?

Supplementary Readings

1. [Henry Kissinger: To settle the Ukraine crisis, start at the end](#), *The Washington Post*, March 5, 2014
The former Secretary of State argues that the United States ought to be more understanding of Russia's position on Ukraine (1,000 words).
2. [Secure Ukraine, Isolate Russia, and Strengthen NATO](#), Foreign Policy Initiative Open Letter to President Obama, March 21, 2014
This open letter from former officials and experts recommends a number of actions for President Obama to deal with the Ukraine crisis (700 words).
3. [How to bring the Ukraine crisis to a peaceful end](#), *Financial Times*, August 10, 2014
A former UK Ambassador to Russia suggests that diplomacy is the only possible solution to the situation in Ukraine (900 words).

4. [The U.S. Needs a More Ambitious Role in Ukraine and Gaza](#), *Washington Post*, August 7, 2014
CFR President Richard Haass advocates a stronger diplomatic effort in Ukraine (890 words).
5. [Statement of Dr. Angela Stent](#), Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 6, 2014
Professor Angela Stent testifies about the situation in Ukraine and U.S. efforts toward resolving the conflict (3,300 words).

Class activities

1. Class discussion: Discuss the interests, stakes, and options facing the United States in Ukraine and see if consensus can be reached on a course of action. Specific questions might include: What are U.S. interests in Ukraine? What outcomes are preferable to the United States? What options are available and what risks do they bear? What might be the consequences of not acting? What has been the president's course of action so far? Do you agree with his strategy? Explain your reasoning.
2. White House role play: Either individually or in small groups, students should place themselves in the shoes of a presidential adviser. Taking into account regional and international political dynamics, they should make clear and internally coherent recommendations as to what the United States should do in Ukraine. [As a more challenging variant, hold a National Security Council-style meeting, in which each student or group represents the interests and positions of a particular U.S. department. Players could include the secretary of state, secretary of defense, director of national intelligence, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff and the U.S. permanent representative to the UN.]
3. Regional role play: Divide the class into multiple small teams covering a variety of countries and groups active in the Ukraine conflict (e.g., the Ukrainian government, the Ukrainian rebel groups, Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom, the EU as a whole, and the United States.). Each team should prepare a presentation outlining its principal interests; describing its role in the conflict to date; and discussing what their group could contribute to a potential solution. Class discussion after the presentations should explore a) what the presentations illustrate about why agreement has not been reached and b) what an agreement to settle the Ukraine crisis might include.