

Forum: Legal Committee
Issue: The Referendum Status of Crimea
Student Officer: Leen Al Saadi
Position: Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Distinguished delegates,

My name is Leen Al Saadi and it is my great pleasure to be taking on the honorable position of main chair at this year's PSMUN conference's Legal Committee. As many of you are aware, this committee is the sixth of the General Assembly.

It is a tremendous privilege to be the first international student to chair at the PSMUN conference and I sincerely hope that the experience that you and I have will be an impeccable and memorable one.

I am a student at the British International School of Riyadh, where MUN is one of the most important activities. Personally, MUN is not merely just a club or an extracurricular activity; it is one of the most important classes I engage in.

I have been an active member of my school's MUN club when it was first established five years ago, and have, ever since, been actively contributing and engaging myself to better the experience our delegates have, as well as the quality of our debate. For the past two years, I was given the honorable opportunity to chair our internal conferences, and last year I attended the SPIMUN conference in St. Petersburg.

As a chair, my role is to make your research as simple and straightforward as possible. I will also always be available if any assistance is required, whether it concerns resolution-writing or questions about debating regulations. This study guide is aimed to assist you with your research on the controversial issue of the referendum status of Crimea, however your research should not rely solely on this guide. Further independent research will be required in order to adapt your country's views on the issue.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are in need of any assistance.

I am looking forward to meeting you all and also to the fruitful debate that will take place.

Sincerely yours,

Leen Al Saadi

INTRODUCING TOPIC

The Crimean Peninsula is located south of the Ukrainian region of Kherson and west of the Russian region of Kuban.

The annexation of Crimea into the Russian Federation occurred in March 2014 after a military intervention of Russia into Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Masked and unmarked soldiers in green army uniforms, identified as the Russian military by numerous worldwide sources, entered and took over the Supreme Council of Crimea, leading to the installation of the pro-Russian Aksyonov government in Crimea, the declaration of Crimea's independence and the holding of a controversially discussed referendum.

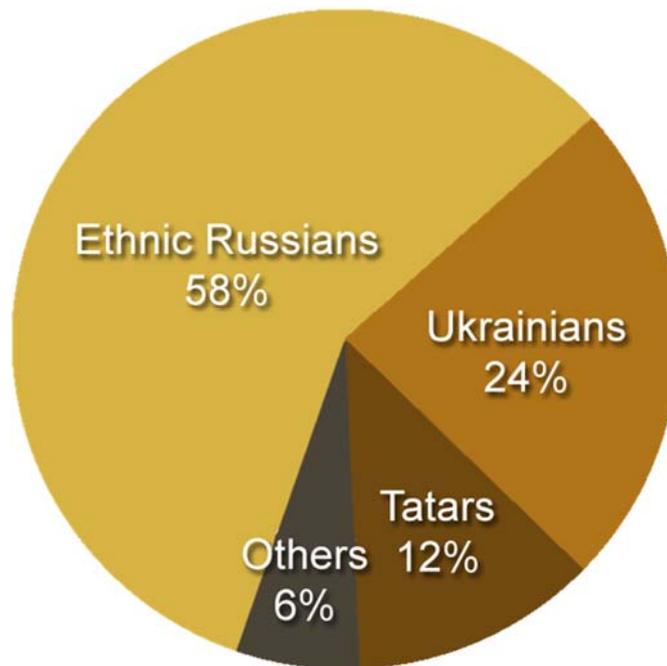
On March 16 2014, the legislature of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the local government of Sevastopol held a referendum on the status of the Crimea. The people of Crimea were asked if they wanted to join Russia as a federal subject, or if they wanted to restore the 1992 Crimean constitution and maintain Crimea's status as a part of Ukraine.



ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF CRIMEA

From a census in 2001, it is evident that ethnic Russians compose the majority of the population (58.5%), whereas Ukrainians make up 24.4% of the region's population and Crimean Tatars 12.1%.

Distribution of ethnic groups in Crimea (2001)



RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM

96.77% of the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea *supposedly* voted to join Russia and 2.51% voted to restore the 1992 constitution. 95.60% of the population of Sevastopol voted to join Russia and 3.37% voted to restore the 1992 constitution.

The referendum and the plebiscite were labelled as illegitimate by most countries including all European Union members, the United States and Canada because of the peninsula's occupation of Russian soldiers during the vote.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Referendum

A general vote by the electorate on a single political question that has been referred to them for a direct decision.

Soviet Union

The USSR was a group of countries of the former Russian Empire that united to form one communist country.

Crimea

Located on the northern coast of the Black Sea to the south of Ukraine and west of Russia.

EU

European Union - political-economic union of 28 European members.

Annexation

Occupying and invading a territory.

Plebiscite

A direct vote of the qualified voters of a state in regard to an important public decision.

Sevastopol

City located in the South-Western region of the Crimean Peninsula on the Black Sea.

Restoration of 1992 Constitution

Voters were given the choice to restore the 1992 constitution which establishes the republic's status and authority with Ukraine and grants Crimea the right to draft a budget and manage its own property.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1922, Crimea became part of the Soviet Union, known as the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. During the Second World War, the peninsula was occupied by Nazi Germany from July 1942 - May 1944. After Crimea was liberated in 1944, more than 230,000 people were deported and in 1954, it became a territory of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union. Finally, in 1991, the Crimean peninsula became a part of independent Ukraine.

In February 2014, a Ukrainian Revolution took place after a series of violent events between special police forces and protesters against the then-Prime Minister, Viktor Yanukovich, which saw many deaths and injuries. A civil war was on the edge and on February 21st, Yanukovich claimed that he had reached an agreement with the opposition, yet eventually exiled to Russia. The next day, the Ukrainian parliament voted to remove him from his position.

In the aftermath of the Ukrainian revolution, the First Yatsenyuk Government was created on the 27th of February 2014, the previous constitution was restored, and the call to hold presidential elections was made within months. Russia refused to recognize the new interim government which signed an agreement with the EU which required them to commit to adopting reforms in its judiciary and political system, as well as in its financial and economic policies. Foreign investment came in the form of more than \$18 billion loans.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

RUSSIA

Due to the background and history of the region and Crimean Peninsula, Russia has, in recent years, claimed that Crimea originally belongs to the Russian Federation.

UKRAINE

Formally a part of Ukraine, Crimea lies in South Ukraine and is home to Ukrainian civilians who do not support the Russian intervention.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

NATO

The North-Atlantic Treaty Organization condemned the referendum as an illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory.

UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations drafted two resolutions, one from the Security Council, which was vetoed by Russia, and another from the General Assembly, which was passed as a non-binding resolution.

EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union has condemned Russia and the referendum and has also imposed sanctions against Russia.

G8

The Group of 8, of leading and advanced economies of the world, decided to suspend Russia from the group, thereby returning it to the previous “G7,” also introducing the first round of sanctions against Russia.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DAY	MONTH	YEAR	EVENT
21	November	2013	President Yanukovich abandons agreement on closer trade ties with EU and seeks closer co-operation with Russia
-	November	2013	100,000 protesters attend demonstration in Kiev
17	December	2013	Vladimir Putin agrees to buy \$15 billion of Ukrainian debt and reduce price of Russian gas supplies by around a third.
20	February	2014	88 people killed in 48 hours.
21	February	2014	President Yanukovich signs compromise deal with opposition leaders
22	February	2014	Yanukovich disappears, protesters take control of Presidential administration buildings, parliament votes to remove President from power with elections set for 25th of May, Yanukovich appears on TV to denounce "coup"
23-26	February	2014	Parliament names Turchynov as interim president, arrest warrant issued for Yanukovich, Arseniy Yatsenyuk is nominated as prime minister
27-28	February	2014	Pro-Russian gunmen seize key buildings in Crimean capital, Simferopol. Unidentified troops in combat uniforms appear at Crimea's main airports
1	March	2014	Russia's parliament approves Putin's request to use force in Ukraine to protect Russian interests
16	March	2014	Referendum on joining Russia is backed by 97% of voters, claimed by organizers, yet

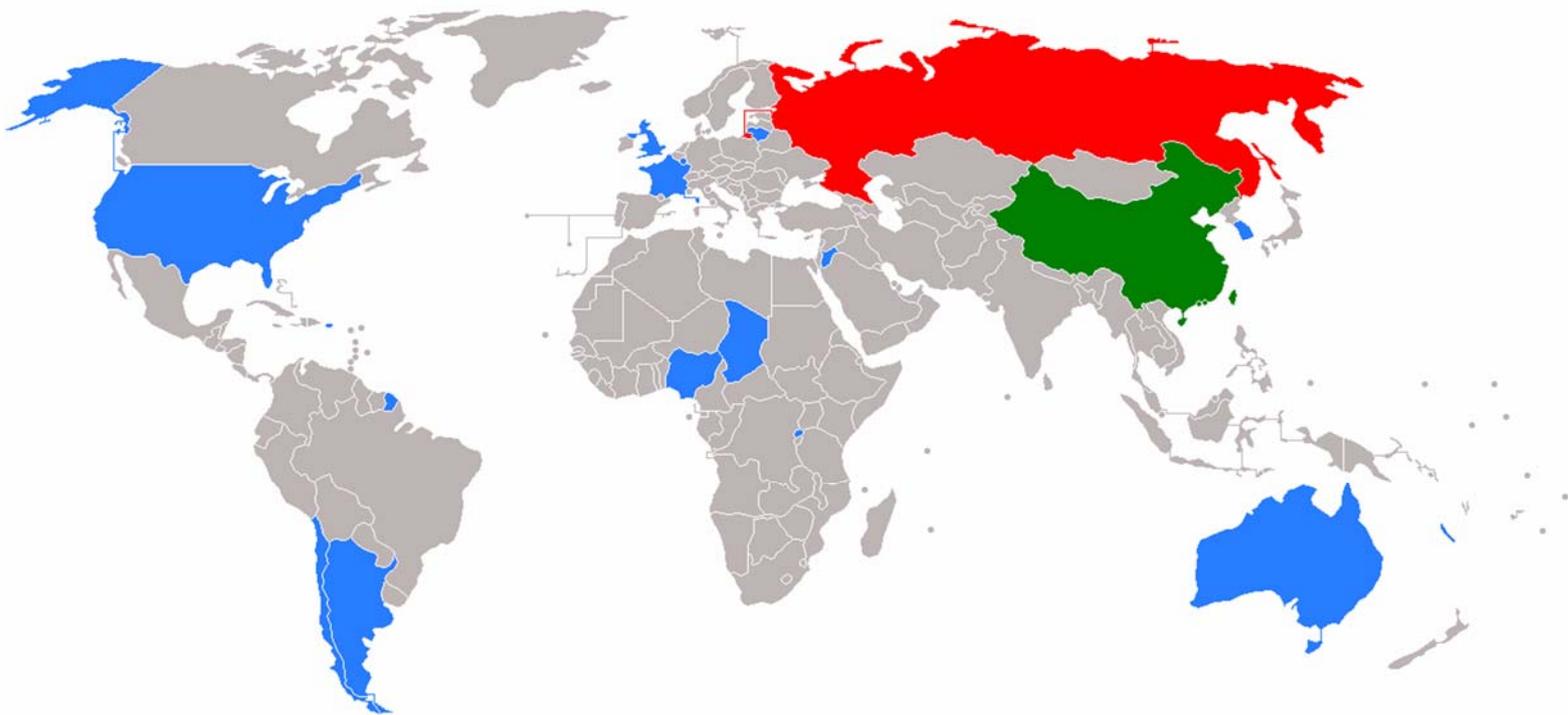
DAY	MONTH	YEAR	EVENT
			vote is condemned as illegitimate by the West
17	March	2014	EU and USA imposes travel bans and asset freezes on Russian and Ukrainian officials
18	March	2014	Putin signs bill to absorb Crimea into Russian Federation
28	March	2014	Obama urges Moscow to “move back its troops”
17	April	2014	Russia, Ukraine, USA and EU agree on steps to de-escalate the crisis
25	May	2014	Ukraine elects Petro Poroshenko as president in election
25	June	2014	Russia's parliament cancels a parliamentary resolution authorizing the use of Russian forces in Ukraine
27	June	2014	EU signs a landmark association agreement with Ukraine
30	July	2014	EU and USA announce new sanctions against Russia
24	September	2014	NATO reports a significant withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Ukraine
12	October	2014	Putin orders thousands of troops stationed near the Ukrainian border to return to their bases

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (PAST UN RESOLUTIONS)

Thirteen members of the United Nations Security Council voted in favor of a resolution declaring the referendum invalid, but Russia vetoed it and China abstained. A United Nations General Assembly resolution was later adopted, by a vote of 100 in favor vs. 11 against with 58 abstentions, which declared the referendum invalid and affirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People called for a boycott of the referendum.

United Nations Security Council Resolution S/2014/189

In March 2014, the United Nations Security Council failed to pass a resolution which urged countries not to recognize the results of the Referendum held in Crimea. The resolution reaffirmed Ukraine's "sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity." 13 out of the 15 members voted in favor of the resolution, China abstained and Russia vetoed the resolution.



 Voted in favor of the resolution

 Abstained

 Vetoed the resolution

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262

Adopted on the 27th of March, the resolution titled as the Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, was supported by 100 United Nations member states. The resolution reaffirmed the UN's commitment to recognize Crimea within Ukraine's international borders and condemned the invalidity of the 2014 Crimean referendum.

Countries which voted against the resolution include:

Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, North Korea, Nicaragua, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

There were 58 abstentions and 24 uncalled votes due to absence when the vote took place. The resolution was submitted by Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. The resolution took place after the unsuccessful resolution of the UN Security Council which gave Russia the opportunity to veto.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Information on Crimea

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimea>

Information on timeline of events

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>

Information on Security Council Resolution

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47362#.VNncAtwdvx4>

http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_189.pdf

Information on General Assembly Resolution

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_68/262

Information on the referendum

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_status_referendum,_2014