**Ukrainian crisis**

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In 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed and in December 1991, the Soviet Union finally broke into 14 republics. On December 25, 1991 the Soviet flag was lowered from Kremlin for the last time. Ukraine was the first state, with Belarus, that broke away and today, it is again coming into conflict with Russia. Let us have a look at the background of the crisis in the region.

Historically, Ukraine was a Muslim Khanate and also an Ottoman vessel until it was annexed by Russia in 1783. During the reign of the Bolsheviks, the Ukrainian republic gained a separate identity. For hundreds of years, Crimea has been the home of the Tatars–a group of Turkic speakers under Ottoman empire. The historic Crimean war was fought by France and Britain with Russia in 1856. The result was Russia’s defeat, after which the treaty of Paris was signed and Russia agreed to dismantle its naval base at Sevastopol in Crimea. However, Russia rebuilt it during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. Sevastopol was again in the news during World War II and the famous battle (Siege of Sevastopol) was fought for the control of Sevastopol between German and Russian forces.

[Back with Barca, new manager Xavi 'excited,' eyes 'good football,' success](https://nation.com.pk/09-Nov-2021/back-with-barca-new-manager-xavi-excited-eyes-good-football-success)

In 1944, it was annexed by Stalin who deported two lac Tatars to Siberia and Central Asia and replaced them with ethnic Russians as a workforce. In 1954, Khrushchev transferred Crimea to Ukraine in a surprising decision however, it proved to be a politically motivated one later on. On March 16, 2014, Crimea was annexed by Russia following a controversial referendum despite opposition from Crimean Tatars and all of Ukraine. This move sparked a war that displaced nearly two million people besides destroying property and infrastructure. Tatars who returned to their ancestral home in the 1980s and 1990s were driven out after the annexation by Russia. When the Soviet Union broke up, Crimea voted for independence from Russia and later joined Ukraine with special privileges. In 1997, Russia was allowed to keep its Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol. In 2008, the Ukrainian government said they would not renew the agreement for the retention of the fleet. However, ultimately, the agreement was extended up to 2042.

[Just settlement of J&K dispute a prerequisite for durable peace, stability in South Asia: PM](https://nation.com.pk/09-Nov-2021/just-settlement-of-j-k-dispute-a-prerequisite-for-durable-peace-stability-in-south-asia-pm)

In 2014, voting was held in the regional parliament of Crimea to join Russia and secede from Ukraine. The Ukrainian government rejected the voting and termed it controversial. The question then became, why is Crimea important enough to Russia that it annexed it by force? Firstly, with the annexation of Crimea, Russia now has a direct and cheaper route to its gas pipeline to Europe. Secondly, through its base at Sevastopol, Russia can dominate the Black Sea and have easy access to the Mediterranean Sea. Russia during its war with Georgia used its Black sea fleet at Sevastopol for creating a blockage. Thirdly, due its geographical location, Russia is in search of a port in the North and South seas. Sevastopol is an important naval base in Crimea and the only warm water base that Russia has.

In the meantime, the issue of Crimea was a setback for Ukraine where a separatist movement by ethnic Russians in the East of Ukraine started. Ukraine is now divided into two major regions, the West and East. In the East, over six lac ethnic Russians have been granted citizenship by Russia, claiming that it is acting under the ambit of the law. In the past, millions of Russians moved to Ukraine as a workforce and in those days, the pre-requisite to get a job was fluency in the Russian language. After the annexation of Crimea, the pro-Russian separatist started seising territory in the Eastern Ukraine. Ukraine has accused Russia of crossing into its Eastern region with tanks, artillery and soldiers to support separatist movements. The Ukrainian government forces and the separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine are fighting a large scale conventional war.

[Banned TTP announces ceasefire with govt for one-month time period](https://nation.com.pk/09-Nov-2021/banned-ttp-announces-ceasefire-with-govt-for-one-month-time-period)

Russian is actively supporting ethnic Russians and has made it clear that it has every right to protect Russians living in Eastern Ukraine. Pro-Russian separatist groups attacked Ukrainian troops in the Donetsk and Donbas region in 2014 with the support of Russia. The separatists claimed two states, Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic, through a referendum on May 11, 2014. A cease fire, which was agreed on July 27, 2020, is being frequently violated. Until 2020, some 4100 Ukrainian soldiers, 5650 pro-Russian separatists and 13,000 civilians have been killed in clashes. Recently, Russia carried out a massive exercise closer to Eastern Ukraine and has also decided to station an air borne regiment in Crimea. There is a sizeable Russian deployment of troops to the East of Ukraine and a large scale operation against Ukraine cannot be ruled out. On September 1, 2021, the Ukrainian president met US President Biden who assured him that the US is firmly committed to Ukraine’s territorial integrity. In September last month, Ukraine conducted a military exchange with the US and NATO troops at a time when Russia and Belarus held large scale war games. NATO has declared that they will not recognise Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and its influence in the Eastern Ukraine. President Putin, while addressing Russian law makers, warned the US and NATO on crossing the redline with Russia over this escalating conflict. Apparently, Russia is trying to reclaim its past glory by positioning itself as a strong competitor to the US and NATO.