6. COALITION

A coalition is a pact or treaty among individuals or groups, during which they cooperate in joint action, each in their own self-interest, joining forces together for a common cause. This alliance may be temporary or a matter of convenience. A coalition thus differs from a more formal covenant. Possibly described as a joining of 'factions', usually those with overlapping interests rather than opposing.

A coalition government, in a parliamentary system, is a government composed of a coalition of parties. In Australia, the Coalition is also used to refer to an alliance (coalition agreement) of three parties (the Liberals, Nationals and Countiy Liberals) existing in federal politics since 1922—this constitutes a parliamentary coalition. A coalition of parties is also an electoral fusion. The Cambridge Dictionary defines coalition as: the union of different political parties or groups for a particular purpose, usually for a limited time.

In international relations, a coalition can be an ad hoc grouping of nations united for a specific purpose. Sometimes, such groups are diverse and are characterized by some degree of commonalities. Sometimes, the degree of uncommonalities would lead some to perceive the group's bond as being ordinarily unlikely; here it can indicate the fact the historical ties may no longer be in operation, and the coalition members, instead, are joined by a new intention, not necessarily prior bonds.

A coalition might also refer to a group of citizens uniting behind a common goal. Many of these are grassroots organizations, like the Christla n Coalition.

It can also be a collaborative, means-oriented arrangement, especially a temporary one, that allows distinct people or organizational entities to pool resources and combine efforts in order to effect change. The combination of such persons or entities into one body, as a union, variously organized and structured, but generally less formal than a covenant. Although persons and groups form coalitions for many and varied reasons, the most common purpose is to combat a common threat or to take advantage of a certain opportunity; hence, the often-temporary nature of coalitions. The common threat or existence of opportunity is what gives rise to the coalition and allows it to exist. Sucfafeoilaborative processes can gain political influence and potentially initiate social movements.-The,four elements are necessary to maintain a coalition:

1. Members must frame the issue that brings them together with a common interest.
2. Members' trust in each other and believe that their peers have a credible commitment to the common issue(s) and/or goal(s).
3. The coalition must have a mechanism(s) to manage differences in language, orientation, tactics, culture, ideology, etc. between and among the collective's members (especially in transnational coalitions).
4. The shared incentive to participate and, consequently, benefit.

Coalitions manifest in a variety of forms, types and terms of duration:

- Campaign coalitions with high intensity and long-term cooperation
- Federations, characterized by relatively lower degree of involvement, intensity and participation, involving cooperation of long duration, but with members' primary commitment remaining with their own entities
- Instrumental coalitions, involving low-intensity involvement without a foundation to mediate conflict
- Event-based coalitions that have a high level of involvement and the potential for future collaboration.

Coalition, in politics and international relations, a group of actors that coordinate their behaviour in a limited and temporary fashion to achieve a common goal.

As a form of goal-oriented political cooperation, a coalition can be contrasted with an alliance and a network. An alliance suggests a robust partnership of at least medium-term duration, as compared with the more fleeting coalition. Alternatively, a network is a more informal but potentially broader grouping, suggesting more ad hoc cooperation than in a coalition but over a wider array of concerns. In coalitions, alliances, and networks, the actors involved—whether states in wartime, political parties in government, or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in political movements—each retain their distinctive identity and interests, but the purpose of collaboration across all three is ultimately the same: to aggregate actors' strengths to achieve some shared goal that none could achieve individually. The coalition is, howeverTthe most ephemeral of the three.

Coalitions generally form from the voluntary accession of their constituent members. However, because actors rarely have the same intensity of interests with regard to the given goal or goals, some actors may provide rewards or threats to induce others to participate. As such, differences in power among potential and actual coalition members matter, in determining both who becomes a member of the coalition and, after the coalition forms, who has the most influence in determining agendas, strategies, and the like. For instance, in prosecuting the war to oust addam ussein in Iraq (2003), the international coalition may have been a "coalition of the willing" or a "coalition of the coerced and the bribed," but either way it was not a coalition of the equal; the United States was clearly leading the effort. As this e: internal structures often reproduce the structure of relations* ' generally, though the cooperative nature of the endeavour may co power within the coalition.

Although all coalitions tend to be temporary, disbandi proven unachievable, given the circumstances), some .may; may be a function of power relationships: a dominant coalition membver or set of members may be able to either dissolve the coalition or maintain:ongoing correspondence of interests among;coalition,member's also affects duration. Participation over time in a coalition may cause individual members to perceive a broader set of shared interests and beliefs among therrij leading them to transform the coalition into a more-integrated political community (in which caseit is no longer merely a coalition). For instance, repeated coordination in the great conflicts of the 20 th century transformed what was initially a loose entente among the Western democraciesjjrit6 a broader and deeper "Atlantic Community." Thus, while any one of a number of factors might determine whether coalitions actually achieve their goals, it is, as much as anything else, the relative breadth and depth of shared interests that determine their capacity to persist "and perhaps pursue other common goals

THE POWER 6F SANCTIONS BETWEEN COUNTRIES

A sanction is a penalty levied on another country. It is an instrument of foreign policy and economic pressure, that can be described as a sort of carrot-and-stick approach to dealing with international trade and politics. A country has a number of different types of sanctions at its disposal. While some are more widely used than others, the general goal of each is to force a change in behavior.

A sanction can be exercised in several ways. These include:

- Tariffs - Taxes imposed on goods imported from another country.
- Quotas - A limit on how many goods can be either imported from another country or sent to that country.
- Embargoes - A trade restriction that prevents a country from trading with another. For example, a government can prevent its citizens or businesses from providing goods or services to another country.
- Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) - These are non-tariff restrictions on imported goods and can include licensing and packaging requirements, product standards and other requirements that are not specifically a tax.

Types of Sanctions

Sanctions are categorized in several ways. One way to describe them is by the number of parties issuing the sanction. A "unilateral" sanction means that a single country is enacting the sanction, while a "bilateral" sanction means that a group or block of countries is supporting its use. Since bilateral sanctions are enacted by groups of countries, they can be considered less risky because no one country is on the line for the sanction's result. Unilateral sanctions are more risky, but are more likely to be effective if enacted by an economically powerful country.

The second way sanctions can be described is by the types of trade they limit. Export sanctions block goods flowing into a country, while import sanctions block goods leaving the country. The two options are not equal and will result in different economic ramifications. Blocking goods and services from entering a country (an export sanction) generally has a lighter impact than blocking goods or services from that country (an import sanction). Export sanctions can create an incentive to substitute the blocked goods for something else. A case in which an export sanction could work is the blocking of sensitive technological know-how from entering the target country (think advanced weapons). It is harder for the target country to create this sort of good in-house.

Blocking a country's exports through an import sanction increases theipossibility that the target countiy will experience a substantial economic burden. For example, on July 31, 2013 the U.S. passed the bill H.R. 850 that basically blocked Iran from selling any oil abroad because of its nuclear program. This bill followed a year in which Iran's oil exports had already been cut in half by international sanctions. If countries don't import the target country's products, the target economy can face industry collapse and unemployment, which can put significant political pressure on the government.

A Military Threat Alternative

While countries have used sanctions to coerce or influence the trade policies of others for centuries, trade policy is rarely the sole strategy employed in foreign policy. It can be accompanied by both diplomatic "and military actiiSfffA sanction, however, might be a more attractive tool because it imposes an economic cost for a country's actions rather than a military one. Military conflicts are expensive, resource-intensive, cost lives and can illicit the ire of other nations due to the human suffering caused by the violence.

In addition, itas,%iot feasible that a country can react to every political problem with military force: armies are simply not large enough. In fact, some problems are simply not well-suited for armed intervention. Sanctions are generally used when diplomatic efforts have failed.

Why Sanctions?

Sanctions may be enacted for several reasons, such as a retaliatory measure for another country's economic activities. For example, a steel-producing country might use a sanction if another country tries to protect a nascent steel industry by putting an import quota on foreign steel. Sanctions may also be used as a softer tool, especially as a deterrent to human rights abuses. The United Nations might condone the use of bilateral sanctions against a country if it perpetrates human rights abuses, or if it breaks resolutions regarding nuclear weapons.

Sometimes the threat of a sanction is enough to alter the target country's policies. A threat signals that a country does not approve of the target country's policies, and implies that the country issuing the threat is willing to go through economic hardship to punish the target country if change does not occur. The cost of the threat is less than military intervention, but it still carries economic weight. For example, in 2013 Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and his inner circle were sanctioned by the U.S. because of alleged rights abuses.

The domestic politics of the country looking to use a sanction play a big role. International trade and international politics can take the back seat when nationalism comes into play, and a government can use a sanction as a way to demonstrate resolve or to create a distraction from domestic trouble. Because of this problem, international organizations such as the World

Trade Organization (WTO) have been created to relieve some of the pressure and create arbitrary panels to objectively review disputes between countries. This is especially helpful, because sanctions can lead to economically damaging trade wars that can spill over into countries uninvolved in the original dispute.

The extent of economic suffering caused by a sanction and who feels it the most is often not immediately known. Research has shown that the severity of the economic impact on the target country increases as the level of international cooperation and coordination in its creation increases. It also will be more pronounced if the countries involved in the sanction previously had close relations, since trading ties are more likely to be significant if the countries have a rapport.

Economic sanctions

Economic sanctions are domestic penalties applied by one country (or group of countries) on another country (og between two greater powers. The invasion of a buffer state by one of the powers surrounding it will often result in war between the powers. Buffer states, when authentically independent, typically pursue a neutralist foreign policy, which distinguishes them from satellite states. The concept of buffer states is part of the theory of balance of power that entered European strategic and diplomatic thinking in the 17th

Some examples of buffer states include:

- Tibet was a buffer between Russian Empire, the British Raj; 20 th century.
- Mongolia, between the People's Republic of CI
- North Korea during and after the Cold War, s between the military forces of the People's Republic of China and American forces in South Korea.
- Afghanistan was a buffer state between the British Empire (which ruled much of South Asia) and Russian Empire (which ruled much of Central Asia) during the Anglo-Russian conflicts in Asia during the 19th century.
- The Himalayan nations of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim were buffer-states between the British and Chinese empires, later between China and India, which in 1962 fought the Sino-Indian War in places where the two regional powers bordered each other.

A buffer state-is a nation situated" m between two separate powers. In general, the buffer state acts as an independent country unassociated with the rival nations or empires. This nation provides a cushion that prevents belligerent actions from occurring. This differs from a satellite state in that the nation generally holds a neutralist foreign policy, creating a buffer zone rather than apposition for the hostile powers to hedge military and economic objectives.

The concept of a buffer state was first developed during the 1600s when the major European powers began to establish global empires. These empires, traditionally segmented into isolated regimes around the world, started to meet on foreign continents. Certain powers took control of large swaths of land next to other powers. To prevent major conflicts from arising all around the planet, certain nations positioned between colonized states were left to their own devices to help maintain the balance of power.

Over time, as colonization continued into areas previously uninhabited, buffer states were established by sheer natural occurrence. Sometimes, neutral zones were created because of natural geographic challenges such as highly mountainous regions or dense woodlands. Other times, the areas simply featured native populations that could not be conquered by the hostile powers. If both sides supported factions in the country, many times the two powers were stuck in a quagmire without gains, creating a buffer zone.

One of the most famous buffer states in history is that of Afghanistan. During the 1800s, the mountainous nation was positioned between the Russian Empire to the north and a major section of the British Empire, namely the future nations of India and Pakistan to the south.Central Asia was the center of strategic rivalry between the two empires known as "The Great Game." Each of the powers vied for control over tribal lands and nations throughout the region, setting up satellite states. The British Empire in particular, launched a major conflict, the First Anglo-Afghan War in 1838, in an attempt to set up Afghanistan as a puppet state.

Since the end of the World Wars, the concept of a buffer state has been replaced by the idea of a demilitarized zone (DMZ). These are generally intentionally placed regions between conflict areas established by treaties in an effort to halt military action. Major modern examples include the Cypriot DMZ between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the Republic of Cyprus, the buffer zone between North Korea and South Korea, and the Sinai Peninsula separating Israel from Egypt.

UKRAINE: THE PERPETUAL BUFFER STATE

A few months ago, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was expected to sign some agreements that could eventually integrate Ukraine with the European Union economically. Ultimately, Yanukovich refused to sign the agreements, a decision thousands of his countrymen kftmediately protested. The demonstrations later evolved, as they often do. Protesters started calling for political change, and when Yanukovich resisted their calls, they demanded new elections.

Some protesters wanted Ukraine to have a European orientation rather than a Russian one. Others felt that the government was corrupt and should thus be replaced.' These kinds of demonstrations occur in many countries. Sometimes they'rersuccessful; sometimes they're not. In most cases, the outcome matters only to the country's citi: sens or to the citizens of neighboring states. But Ukraine is exceptional because it is enormously important. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has had to pursue a delicate balance between the tenuous promises of a liberal, wealthy and somewhat aloof Europe and the fact that its very existence and independence can be a source of strategic vulnerability for Russia.

Ukraine's Importance

Ukraine provides two tilings: strategic position arid agricultural and mineral products. The latter are frequently important; .but the former is universally important. Ukraine is central to Russia's defensibility. The two countries share fe. long border, and Moscow is located only some 480 kilometers (about 300 miles) from Ukrainian territory — a stretch of land that is flat, easily traversed and thus, difficult to defend. If some power were to block the Ukraine-Kazakh gap, Russia would be cut off from the Caucasus, its defensible southern border.

Moreover, Ukraine is home to two critical ports, Odessa and Sevastopol, which are even more important to Russia than the port of Novorossiysk. Losing commercial and military access to those ports would completely undermine Russia's influence in the Black Sea and cut off its access to the Mediterranean. Russia's only remaining ports would be blocked by the Greenland-Iceland-U.K. gap to the west, by ice to the northeast, by Denmark on the Baltic Sea, and by Japan in the east.

This explains why in 1917, when the Bolsheviks took power and sued for peace, the Germans demanded that Russia relinquish its control of most of Ukraine. The Germans wanted the food Ukraine produced and knew that if they had a presence there they could threaten Russia in perpetuity. In the end, it didn't matter: Germany lost Word War I, and Russia reclaimed Ukraine. During World War II, the Germans seized Ukraine in the first year of their attack on the Soviet Union, exploited its agriculture and used it as the base to attack Stalingrad, trying to sever Russia from its supply lines in Baku. Between the wars, Stalin had to build up his industrial plant. He sold Ukrainian food overseas and used it to feed factory workers in Russia. The Ukrainians were left to starve, but the industry they built eventually helped the Soviets defeat Hitler. After the Soviets drove the Germans back, they seized Romania and Hungary and drove to Vienna, using Ukraine as their base.

From the perspective of Europe, and particularly from the perspectives of former Soviet satellites, a Ukraine dominated by Russia would represent a potential threat from southern Poland to Romania. These countries already depend on Russian energy, fully aware that the Russians may eventually use that dependence as a lever to gain control over them. Russia's ability not simply to project military power but also to cause unrest along the border or use commercial initiatives to undermine autonomy is a real fear.

Thinking in military terms may seem more archaic to Westerners than it does to Russians and Central Europeans. For many Eastern Europeans, the Soviet withdrawal is a relatively recent memory, and they know that the Russians are capable of returning as suddenly as they left. For their part, the Russians know that NATO has no will to invade Russia, and war would be the last thing on the Germans' minds even if they were capable of waging one. The Russians also remember that for all the economic and military malaise in Germany in 1932, the Germans became the dominant power in Europe by 1939. By 1941, they were driving into the Russian heartland. The farther you move away from a borderland, the more fantastic the fears appear. But inside the borderland, the fears seem far less preposterous for both sides.

Russian Perspectives

From the Russian point of view, therefore, tighter Ukrainian-EU integration represented a potentially mortal threat to Russian national security. After the Orange Revolution, which brought a short-lived pro-EU administration to power in the mid-2000s, Russian President Vladimir Putin made clear that he regarded

Ukraine as essential to Russian security, alleging that the nongovernmental organizations that were fomenting unrest there were fronts for the U.S. State Department, the CIA and MI6. Whether the charges were true or not, Putin believed the course in which Ukraine was headed would be disastrous for Russia, and so he used economic pressure and state intelligence services to prevent Ukraine from taking that course.

In my view, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War had as much to do with demonstrating to Kiev that Western guarantees were worthless, that the United States could not aid Georgia and that Russia had a capable military force as it did with, Georgia itself. At the time, Georgia and Ukraine were seeking NATO and EU membership, and through its intervention in Georgia, Moscow succeeded in steering Ukraine away from these organizations. Today, the strategic threat to Russia is no less dire than it was 10 years ago, at least not in minds of the Russians, who would prefer a neutral Ukraine if not a pro-Russia Ukraine.

Notably, Putin's strate^,toward the Russian periphery differs from those of his Soviet and czarist predecessors, who took direct responsibility for the various territories subordinate to them. Putiq. considers this a flawed strategy. It drained Moscow's resources, even as the government could not hold the territories together.

NATIONAUIN INTERSET

The national interest, often referred to by the French expression raison d'Etat (reason of the State), is a country's goals and ambitions whether economic, military, or cultural. The concept is an important one in international relations where pursuit of the national interest is the foundation of the realist school. The concept of national interest refers to public interest or opinion. It involves the security, education, peace, the rule of law, good governance, sovereignty and basic necessities of life like food supplements, shelter and infrastructure for the people.

History of the concept

In early human history the national interest was usually viewed as secondary to that of religion or morality. To engage in a war rulers needed to justify the action in these contexts. The first thinker to advocate for the primacy of the national interest is usually considered to be Niccolo Machiavelli.

The practice is first seen as being employed by France under the direction of its Chief Minister Cardinal Richelieu in the Thirty Years' War when it intervened on the Protestant side, despite its own Catholicism, to block the increasing power of the Holy Roman Emperor. The notion of the national interest soon came to dominate European politics that became fiercely competitive over the next centuries.

States could now openly embark on wars purely out of self-interest. Mercantilism can be seen as the economic justification of the aggressive pursuit of the national interest.

A foreign policy geared towards pursuing the national interest is the foundation of the realist school of international relations. The realist school reached its greatest heights at the Congress of Vienna with the practice of the balance of powers, which amounted to balancing the national interest of several great and lesser powers.

These notions became much criticized after the bloody debacle of the First World War, and some sought to replace the concept of the balance of power with the idea of collective security, whereby all members of the League of Nations would "consider an attack upon one as an attack upon all," thus deterring the use of violence for ever more. The League of Nations did not work, partially because the United States refused to join and partially because, in practice, nations did not always find it "in the national interest" to deter each other from the use of force.

The events of World War II led to a rebirth of Realist and then Neo-realist thought, as international relations theorists re-emphasized the role of power in global governance. Many IR theorists blamed the weakness of the League of Nations for its idealism (contrasted with Realism) and ineffectiveness at preventing war, even as they blamed mercantilist beggar thy neighbor policies for the creation of fascist states in Germany and Italy. With hegemonic stability theory, the concept of the U.S. national interest was expanded to include the maintenance of open sea lanes and the maintenance and expansion of free trade.

Concept today

Today, the concept of "the national interest" is often associated with political Realists who wish to differentiate their policies from "idealistic" policies that seek either to inject morality into foreign policy or promote solutions that rely on multilateral institutions which might weaken the independence of the state. As considerable disagreement exists in every country over what is or is not in "the national interest,Vthe term is as often invoked to justify isolationist and pacifistic policies as to justify interventionist or warlike policies.

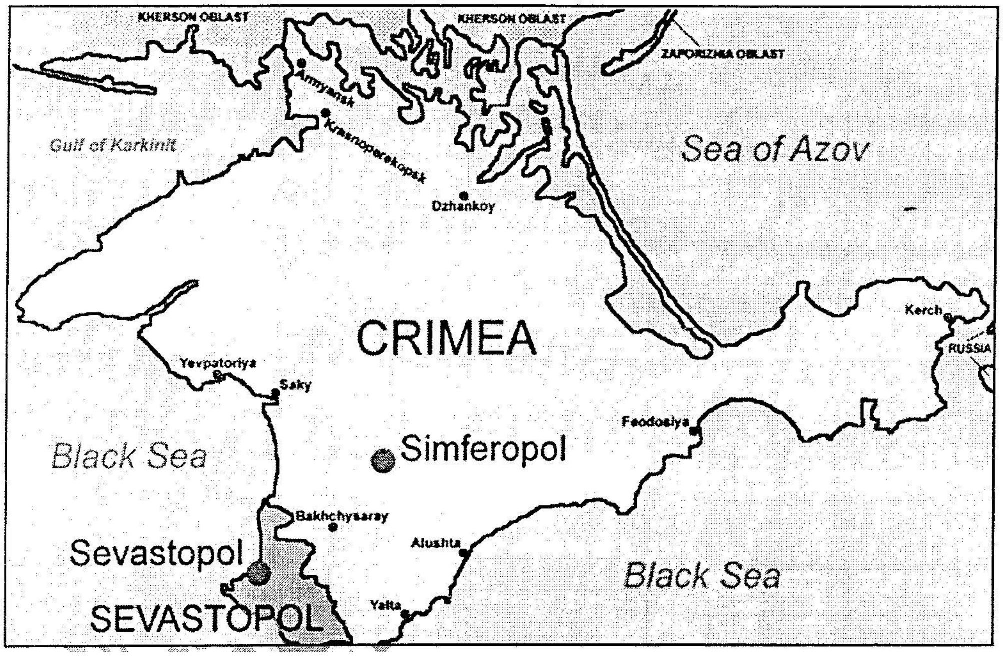
The maiority of the jurists consider-that the "national interest" is incompatible with the "rule of law". National interest and a stajte subject to the rule of law are not absolutely incompatible:

While the notioN of slate reason comes first as a theme of study in political science, it is a very vague concept in law and has never been an object of systematic study. This obvious lack of interest is due to a deliberate epistemological choice - a form of positivism applied to legal science; and as a result legal science affirms its autonomy regarding other social sciences while constituting-with exactness its own object - law - in order to describe it. In doing so it implies deterministic causes'which have an influence on its descriptive function. This method which puts aside state reason is not without any consequence: the fact that state reason is not taken into account by legal science is to be integrated within a-global rejection of a description of law as presented in political science. A fundamental dynamic in modern constitutionalism, "the seizure of the political phenomenon by law" is all the more remarkable when it claims a scientific value, thus a neutrality aiming at preventing all objection. This convergence of legal science and constitutionalism has the tautological character of a rhetorical discourse in which law is simultaneously the subject and the object of the discourse on law. Having as a basis state reason, it allows a reflexion on the legitimacy of power and authority of modern Western societies; this in connexion with the representations which make it and which it makes "state reason and public law."

The scope of national interests is not limited by national boundaries. There is a misperception regarding the acknowledgement of national interests existing abroad as an idea of invaders or hegemonists. Some see national interests beyond boundaries as an invasion of territorial sovereignty. They insist, "for China, the scope of national interests should be only China. It should never be stretched to other countries or regions. This idea reflects a lack of knowledge about the international nature of national interests. National interests have domestic aspects, such as territorial security, national unification, sovereignty and so forth. However, the most important aspects of national interests in international politics are all outside a country's territory. Stability of the international order, maintaining fare relations, establishing a peaceful environment, expanding export markets, importing overseas resources, establishing transnational forms of cooperation, protecting international air transportation security, etc. are all examples.

2014 CRIMEAN CRISIS

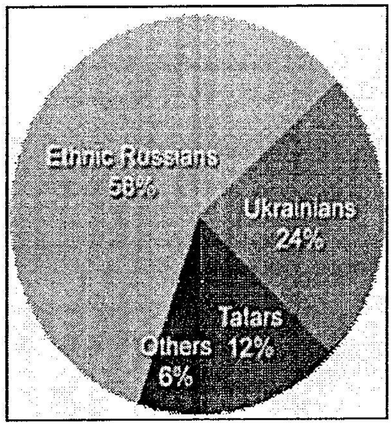
The Crimean Khanate, a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, was conquered by the Russian Empire in 1783. Following its incorporation into the Russian Empire, Crimea became the "heart of Russian Romanticism" and the region continued to attract vacationers well after the Russian Empire was replaced by the Soviet Union. The demographics of Crimea have undergone dramatic changes in the past centuries.



Crimea had autonomy:within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic as the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic from 1921 until 1945, when Joseph Stalin deported the Crimean Tatars and abolished Crimean autonomy. In 1954, the Soviet Union under Nikita Khrushchev, who was himself half-Ukrainian transferred the Crimean "Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR, in a "symbolic gesture" that seemed insignificant at the time, since both republics were a part of the Soviet Union. Crimea's pre-1945 autonomy was re-established with the Crimean sovereignty referendum in 1991, the final year of the Soviet Union's existence.

In 1992, the Crimean Parliament voted to hold a referendum to declare independence, while the Russian Parliament voted to void the cession of Crimea to Ukraine. In 1994, Russian nationalist Yuri Meshkov won the 1994 Crimean presidential election and organized a referendum on Crimea's status. Later in that same year, Crimea's legal status as part of Ukraine was recognized by Russia, which pledged to uphold the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the Budapest memorandum signed in 1994. This treaty (or "executive agreement" for purposes of US law), was also signed by the United States, United Kingdom, and France. Ukraine revoked the Crimean constitution and abolished the office of Crimean President in 1995. Crimea would gain a new constitution in 1998 that granted the Crimean parliament lesser powers than the previous constitution, including no legislative initiative. Crimean officials would later seek to restore the powers of the previous constitution.

The further developments in Crimea and the future of the Ru there have been a point of contention in Russian-Ukrainian relations. Under the now defunct Russian-Ukrainian Partition Treaty determining the fate of the military bases and vessels in Crimea - signed m 1997 and prolonged in 2010 - Russia was allowed to have up to 25,000 troops, 24 artillery systems (with a caliber smaller than 100 mm), 132 armored vehicles, and 22 military planes, on the Crimean peninsula. The Russian Black Sea fleet was given basing rights in Crimea until 2042. Moscow annually wrote off $97.75 million of Kiev's debt in return for the right to use Ukrainian waters and radio frequencies, and to compensate for the Black Sea Fleet's environmental impact.



According to the 2001 census, ethnic Russians make up about 58% of the two million residents of Crimea. In Sevastopol, which houses a base for the Russian Navy's Black Sea Fleet, ethnic Russians make up 70% of the city's population of 340,00 Ukrainians make up 24% of the Crimean population, while 12% are Crimean Tatars. Ethnic Russians did not become the largest population group in Crimea until the 20th century, after Soviet leader Joseph Stalin ordered the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 for alleged collaboration with Nazi invaders in World War Two. Crimean Tatars were not permitted to return to Crimea after their deportation in 1944, and became an international cause celebre, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The continuing return of Crimean Tatars to their homeland in Crimea since the Soviet collapse has caused persistent tensions with the Russian population of the peninsula. A news report claimed pro-Russian forces marking "X'^on the doors of houses of Crimean Tatars. The leader of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People Refat Chubarov protested against the intervention of Russia.

In the 2010 local parliamentary elections, the Party of Regions received 357,030 votes, while the second-placed Ukrainian Communist Party received 54,172 votes. Both parties were targeted by protesters during the 2014 Ukrainian revolution.

In July 2011, Yuny Olexandrovich Meshkov the former president of Crimea (1994-95) called for a referendum on restoring the 1992' version of the Constitution of Crimea. The District Administrative Court of Crimea responded by deporting Meshkov from Ukraine for a period of 5 years.

According to the International Centre for Defense Studies, since the Orange Revolution in 2004, Russia has pressured Ukraine for its preferences to associate itself with the West. It has been stated that the information campaign in Crimea has become especially proficient and systematic, becoming particularly intense during the 2006-08 Ukraine bid for NATO membership. Each of Ukraine's attempts to achieve European integration has led to increased Russian hostility to the idea via its use of information campaign. Russia opposes Ukrainian integration with the West for various reasons, including a fear of NATO expanding to Russia's Western borders and Russia's claimed desire to include Ukraine in an Eurasian Union.

During the Viktor Yushchenko presidency (2005-2010), Russia's relations with Ukraine deteriorated, prompting the Russian security service (FSB) and Russian military intelligence (GRU) to expand their covert support for pro-Russian forces in Southern Ukraine and Russian separatists in Crimea. Following the Orange Revolution and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, American diplomatic cables leaked to the public noted that Russian military action against Ukraine was "no longer unthinkable."

Revolution in Kiev

Towards the end of 2013, Euromaidan protests began after President Viktor Yanukovych postponed the signing of Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement under severe economic pressure from Russia, even though previously he had been eager to sign it and stated it on multiple occasions. Instead, Yanukovych struck a deal with Putin which meant, amongother things, that Russia would buy $15 billion in Ukrainian bonds, and discount gas prices to Ukraine by one-third. Opposition leaders were suspicious of the true cost to Ukraine for Russian support.

The protests escalated in early 2014 and eventually led to deaths of both protesters and police between February 18 and February 20. According to most reports in Ukraine, violence was used mostly by the police. Numerous snipers, whose identity is still disputed, killed tens of protesters. President Yanukovych and the opposition leaders signed a compromise deal on February 2J_that was brokered by the foreign ministers of France, Poland and Germany, but it soon became redundant as Yanukovych left the capital, government forces withdrew, and protesters took control of the city without resistance. According to the deal, the Verkhovna Rada was obliged to adopt a bill about the constitutional reform and Yanukovych was obliged to sign it within 48 hours. The bill was adopted, but Yanukovych didn't sign it. On February 21, Yanukovych fled Kiev. Evidence shows that Yanukovych had started to prepare his leave on February 19, removing goods and riches. The guards of Yanukovych's residence opened it to the protesters. The protesters found vast evidence of Yanukovych's unprecedented corruption in his residence. The Rada impeached Yanukovych, but not according to the constitutional procedure. Even though the decision was not constitutional, it was supported by the vast majority in the Ukrainian parliament. According to the opposition leaders, they had no other choice, because, as they see it, Yanukovych had usurped power, including the courts, and disregarded and violated the Constitution and other laws many times. Members of the opposition appointed Oleksandr Turchinov as the new speaker of Verkhovna Rada and also appointed him as the interim President. The Rada set May 25 for a new presidential election. A new Council of Ministers was elected on February 27. Russia refused to recognize the new authorities in Kiev, saying that they had come to power through armed insurrection by extreme-right political forces and unconstitutional methods. The United States and European Unionimmediately recognized the government in Kiev.

Some residents of the eastern and southern parts of the country, which are primarily Russian-speaking and constitute President Yanukovych's support base, felt disenfranchised by these developments and protested against the government in Kiev. The Parliament of Crimea called for an extraordinary session on 21 February. The leader of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People Refat Chubarov stated that he suspected that the session might ask for Russian military intervention.

On February 21, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) issued a statement which promised that "it will use severe measures to prevent any action taken against diminishing the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine." The same day the pro-Russian Party of Regions who held 80 of the 100 seats in the Crimean Parliament did not discuss issues relating to the separation of Crimea frorri'Ukrame and appeared to support the deal struck between President Yanukovich and the opposition fo end the crises signed the same day.

On February 23, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a bill to repeal the law on minority languages, which—if signed by the Ukrainian President—would have established Ukrainian as the sole official state language of all Ukraine, including Crimea which is populated by a Russian-speaking majority. The Christian Science Monitor reported: "The [adoption of this bill] only served to infuriate Russian-speaking regions, who saw the move as more evidence that the antigovernment protests in Kiev that toppled Yanukovich's government were intent on pressing for a nationalistic agenda." A few days later, on March 1, 2014, the acting President of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov, vetoed the bill effectively stopping its enactment. However on March 11 the newly installed Ukrainian authorities demanded that Russian language TV and Radio channels be shut down, a move that the OSCE slammed as repressive censorship. The Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group and the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union have both denied any human rights violations against Russian speakers in Ukraine that would justify Russia's actions.

LEGAL ASPECTS

The Russian-Ukrainian Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet signed in 1997 and prolonged in 2010, determined the status of the military bases and vessels in Crimea prior to the current crisis. Russia was allowed to maintain up to 25,000 troops, 24 artillery systems (with a caliber smaller than 100 mm), 132 armored vehicles, and 22 military planes, on the Crimean Peninsula and Sevastopol. The Russian Black Sea fleet had basing rights in Crimea until 2042. However it is controversial if the recent troop movements were covered by the treaty. The point may be moot in light of current events, however.

Both Russia and Ukraine are signatories to the Charter of the United Nations. The ratification of said charter has several ramifications in terms of international law, particularly those that cover the subjects of sovereignty, self-determination, acts of aggression, and humanitarian emergencies. Vladimir Putin on one hand, claims that the Russian intervention on Ukraine is for humanitarian purposes. Ukraine and other nations, on the other hand, argue that such intervention is a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. Russia claims that its armed forces are not involved in the present stand-off, and also asserts that use of force for the purposes of humanitarian intervention in Ukraine has not occurred.