Ukraine in Crisis: An Assessment by The Henry Jackson Society

This strategic briefing was compiled by Dr Andrew Foxall, Director of the Russian Studies Centre at HJS, and Dr Alan Mendoza, Director of The Henry Jackson Society.

Ukraine is in crisis. Protestos that initially began in November 2013 in opposition to President Viktor Yanukovych's decision to turn his back on an Associate Agreement with the European Union, led to the February 2014 collapse of the country's government and March 2014 military invasion by Russia of the Crimean peninsula.

Key events leading up to the crisis

21 November 2013: President Yanukovych announces Ukraine will not sign an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), leading to small protests centred on Independence Square in Kiev.

Late November – Early December: Protests grow, with as many as 800,000 people on the streets of Kiev.

17 December: President Yanukovych agrees to a deal with Russia whereby Russia buys $15 billion of Ukrainian debt and reduces the price of its gas supplies by about a third.

16 January 2014: Ukrainian parliament passes a law restricting the right of citizens to protest.

22 January: Two protesters are killed during clashes with police in Kiev. Protests spread throughout Ukraine with protestors occupying public buildings in western Ukraine.

28 January: As pressure mounts, parliament annuls the ‘protest law’ and President Yanukovych accepts the resignation of his Prime Minister and entire cabinet.

29 January: Parliament passes an amnesty law against all those arrested in protests if protesters leave public buildings – rejected by the opposition.

17 February: Parliament’s amnesty for protestors goes into effect. Protestors abandon Kiev’s city hall, which had been occupied since 1 December, as well as public buildings in western Ukraine.

19-20 February: Clashes erupt in Kiev; at least 88 people are killed. Three EU foreign ministers – from France, Germany and Poland – fly to Kiev to broker a peace deal; Russia sends an envoy.

21 February: President Yanukovych signs a deal with three opposition leaders, brokered by the EU foreign ministers. The deal states that a government of ‘national unity’ would be formed with constitutional changes handing powers back to parliament and early presidential elections, to be held by December. Violence continues.

22 February: Protesters take control of presidential administration buildings without resistance. Parliament vote to remove President Yanukovych from power. Opposition leaders call for elections on 25 May; parliament agrees. Former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko freed from jail and travels to Kiev to address protestors.

23-26 February: Parliament names Oleksander Turchynov as interim President, and an arrest warrant is issued for Viktor Yanukovych. Rival, pro-Russian, protests erupt in Crimea.
27-28 February: Pro-Russian gunmen seize key buildings in Simferopol, capital of Crimea, as well as appearing at Crimea’s main airports and erecting roadblocks. This gives rise to fears of a Russian military intervention.

1 March: Russian parliament approves President Vladimir Putin’s request to use Russian forces in Ukraine. In Kiev, interim President Turchynov puts his army on full alert. Pro-Russian rallies take place in several Ukrainian cities outside Crimea. President Putin states Russia has the right to protect its interests and those of Russian-speakers in Ukraine.

2 March: Ukraine’s interim Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk states Russia has declared war. Ukraine’s newly appointed naval chief defects to Russia.

3 March: With the possibility of war apparent, Russia’s stock markets plunge.

4 March: President Putin denies Russia has invaded Crimea, arguing that Russian troops are local self-defence forces.

5 March: Russia agrees to hold talks with the US and key EU states to resolve the crisis.

6 March: Crimean parliament votes to hold a referendum on 16 March on the status of Crimea. EU leaders hold an emergency summit to discuss ways to pressure Russia to de-escalate tension. First Western sanctions on Russia are introduced by US and target Russian officials accused of orchestrating military occupation of Crimea. Monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are barred from entering Crimea.

7 March: Russia states it will support Crimea if the region votes to leave Ukraine as a result of the referendum on 16 March.

8 March: Pro-Russian militia fired warning shots to prevent OSCE observer mission from entering Crimea.

9 March: President Obama invited Ukrainian PM Arseniy Taysenyuk to the White House. Rival pro-Ukraine and pro-Russia rallies are held across Ukraine, with pro-Russia protesters attacking pro-Ukraine protestors in Sevastopol.

11 March: US Secretary of State John Kerry rejected an offer of talks with President Putin until Moscow engages with US proposals for a negotiated solution to the crisis in Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov described the US’ proposals as “not suitable”.

What Can We Expect?

Since 27 February 2014, Russian troops have occupied Crimea, a region that is part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine. In spite of this, Western countries have been slow to take any actions against Russia. Initially, these countries made statements expressing their ‘concern’ over Russia’s actions and their desire that Russia uphold regional peace and stability. Only on 6 March, a week after Russia’s occupation of Crimea began, did the US begin to impose sanctions on Russian officials involved in orchestrating the country’s military intervention.

The absence of decisive and substantive actions by the West against Russia will have long-term negative consequences for world order, mainly because:

- Russia’s actions are a clear breach of international law, including Russia’s obligations under the United Nations (UN) Charter.
- Russia’s occupation of Crimea is a direct violation of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, wherein France, Russia, USA, and UK guaranteed to respect the territorial integrity and security of Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine abolishing its nuclear weaponry.
- Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine, together with its occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia since August 2008, establishes a precedent for the use of military force to annex a sovereign territory in the 21st century.
The existence of a number of nuclear sites in Ukraine, including atomic stations, nuclear fuel processing plants, and nuclear waste storages, underlines European nuclear safety.

Events in Iran, North Korea, and Syria have already demonstrated the inefficiency of international institutions as the UN, NATO and EU. Failure to act in Ukraine will not only further discredit the authority of these institutions, but also result in the West losing its moral leadership in the world.

The West cannot afford for Ukraine’s future to be determined by an aggressive Russia. We call the international community to undertake decisive actions.

What the West Should Do

- President Putin’s power is based upon Russia’s financial stability. In this sense, the most effective pressure that the West can exert on Russia is financial and economic. Possible policy options include:
  - Freezing the assets of and denying visas to:
    - Members of the Russian parliament (Duma) who voted on 1 March 2014, in favour of providing military support to Ukraine, and therefore supported Russia’s illegal invasion and continued occupation of Ukrainian sovereign territory;
    - Members of the Russian elite suspected of financial foul-play or human rights abuses;
    - Freezing the foreign currency assets of the Russian government, Russia’s Central Bank, and Russian state-owned companies.
    - Cancelling participation in the G8 summit to be held in Sochi between 4-5 June 2014, or suspending Russia’s membership in the G8;
    - Suspending Russia’s membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO);
    - Halting Russia’s application for membership to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD);
    - Revising the ‘NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997’, in particular the voluntary prohibitions that prevent forward deployment of NATO forces in the former Warsaw Pact countries;
    - Halting cooperation with Russia through the NATO-Russia Council;
    - Suspending all existing trade negotiations with Russia, in particular those relating to military supplies;
  - Decrease Western dependence on Russia’s energy supply in the long-term. In the short- and medium-term, policies might include:
    - Making clear to Russia’s state-controlled energy companies that ‘business as usual’ is not an option while Russia’s occupation of Ukraine continues;
    - Diversifying Western energy imports away from Russia.
    - A delegation of senior political figures from the European Union and the United States should travel to Russia to deliver these messages. The delegation should include representatives from European countries that have traditionally had close relations with Russia, including Germany and Italy.

With regards to Ukraine, it is important that the West provides support to (i) the interim government in advance of the 25 May 2014 presidential elections, and (ii) the newly elected government beyond the 25 May 2014 elections. It is critical that:

- The situation in the country is normalised as soon as practically possible;
- The West gives initial, non-conditional financial aid to Ukraine to clear its gas debt with Gazprom in order to reduce Russia’s leverage over the country;
- The European Union does not go back on its commitment to the Association Agreement with Ukraine;
- The European Union announces a clear timetable and set of conditions for the release of its €11 billion financial assistance package to Ukraine;
- The European Union signs a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the newly elected Ukrainian government;
- International organisations, including the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, have significant presence in Ukraine ahead of future elections and possible referenda;
- Future elections and referenda are conducted in accordance with the Ukrainian constitution;
- Conflicts are settled through multilateral diplomatic mechanisms;
If (and only if) the interim government in Kiev makes a request, the West should consider sending peacekeepers to Ukraine as part of a preventative deployment similar to the one that successfully stopped conflict from the Croatian and Bosnian Wars spreading to Macedonia in the 1990s;

All possible options for the future of Crimea should be explored, including the devolution of powers from Kiev and increased autonomy for the region.

**HJS coverage on Ukraine**

The Henry Jackson Society's work on the Ukraine crisis is ongoing and includes:

**Analysis**

*Why the West was right to support protestors in Ukraine*, *The Huffington Post*, 7 March

*As the EU decides to slap symbolic sanctions on Russia, will this move achieve anything?*, *CITY A.M.*, 7 March

*As the political and economic chaos goes on, who will win the tug of war over Ukraine?*, *CITY A.M.*, 3 March

*As Ukrainian politicians warn of separatism, could Russia intervene militarily in the crisis?*, *CITY A.M.*, 28 February

*Russia's options for intervention in Ukraine*, *TIME Ideas*, 27 February

*Ukraine crisis: West is fiddling as Kiev burns*, *The International Business Times*, 20 February

**Media appearances**

Dr Alan Mendoza appeared on BBC Radio 4 to discuss Western foreign policy responses to the Ukraine crisis, 5 March

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on Sky News examining Russian-UK ties, 4 March

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on BBC Radio Three to discuss Ukraine crisis, 4 March

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on CNBC to discuss Russia-Ukraine economic relationship, 3 March

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on France 24 to discuss Russian military presence in Crimea, 1 March

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on Channel 5 to discuss Russian military presence in Crimea, 28 February

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on France 24 to discuss Ukraine crisis, 25 February

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on France 24 to discuss Ukraine crisis, 21 February

Dr Andrew Foxall appeared on Huffington Post Live to discuss Ukraine crisis, 20 February

For further enquiries, please email alan.mendoza@henryjacksonsociety.org or andrew.foxall@henryjacksonsociety.org or call +44 (0)207 340 4520