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Ukraine and Russia Conflict: A Proposal to Bring Stability

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Abstract: Fighting in eastern Ukraine has been ongoing since 2014 despite multiple attempts to end the conflict. This article presents a multilateral cooperative policy proposal to help ease tensions in Ukraine and create a stronger, independent nation. Continued conflict in the region presents strategic concerns for the United States and European allies. However, active measures to mitigate the conflict by Western powers are challenged, given the strained relations with Russia. After reviewing the history of the conflict, Russian involvement, and western concerns, a comprehensive policy is proposed that focuses on political, economic, and military mechanisms. These policy proposals do not guarantee peace in Ukraine, but we look into how the implementation of this strategy can create a positive future for the people of Ukraine.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, European Union, foreign policy, intervention, cooperation.

Introduction

Since February 2014, due to internal and external political forces in Ukraine, Russia has been actively involved militarily in eastern Ukraine. Although Ukraine is not a major international actor, such involvement has significant repercussions throughout Europe. The resultant international humanitarian, political, and economic problems captured the attention of major western powers, including the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United States. All have recent diplomatic stress and a history of confrontational relations with Russia within the past fifty years with concern about Russia's expanding sphere of influence. Other actors involved in this conflict include rebel groups in the Ukrainian regions of Donbas, Luhansk, and Donetsk. They often took part in outright armed actions to separate from Ukraine with the support of the Russian government.

Due to the negative impacts that conflict in the region causes, several questions arose about how to solve the issue and bring peace to the region. How can one bring involved actors to the negotiating table? What incentives will they have? How long will the process take? What requirements will need to be met for incentives to be awarded? What actions may involve a step back in progress? Will this halt the chance to bring peace to the region at all? How can the international community support the region? What actors may cause strife between involved actors? Because of the constant uneasiness of the conflict and the fact that one wrong move may create the entire proposal to fall apart, this proposal needs to be cognizant of all actors involved.

To understand the current situation between Russia and Ukraine, this article provides a review of the Ukrainian situation from both historical and comparative perspectives. After assessing the conflict through the analysis of Ukrainian history, Russian involvement, Western concerns, policy recommendations to resolve the dispute are presented. The

purpose of these policy recommendations is for Ukraine to become a stronger, independent nation, free from Russian interference, with greater reliance and orientation to Western Europe. Considering the history of conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, there are other actors or states interested in future involvement, like the U.S. and the EU. After examining the problems shown in these areas, cooperative policies are proposed to help resolve the conflict in Ukraine. The policies are a combination of economic, political, and military aspects that reinforce each other. Each component builds off the other and presents the best options to minimize damage and mitigate future conflicts. While the implementation of these recommendations will not guarantee peace in Ukraine, the article will conclude with thoughts on how these recommendations would positively impact the future of Ukraine. The primary question is whether Russia will understand that the proposed policies could provide advantages economically and politically, as well as bring about increased security in the region. Ukraine must also develop internal stability to interact as a fully sovereign influence in the region.

Ukrainian Crisis: A Brief History

Ukraine's history since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 has been tumultuous in attempting to stand alone in a region that has not seen Ukraine independent for nearly seventy-five years. Russian customs, language, and governmental influence in the region led to conflict among the Ukrainian people as they struggle to identify with a Ukrainian identity. After gaining independence, Ukraine survived despite its instability and numerous changes of government because Russia's government was weak and unstable, limiting Russia's ability to influence Ukraine or other former Soviet satellite countries. With stabilization, mainly because of oil wealth, Russia regained political and economic influence in the world. Particularly, Ukraine's dependence on Russian oil to support its economy makes resisting Russian influence in the region difficult.

With independence, Ukraine sought to create a government that was impenetrable to outside influence to avoid another Soviet Union-like coalition. Early presidents of Ukraine believed an orientation toward Western Europe would help establish an economy based on private, independent businesses instead of the Soviet model of government ownership. However, Ukrainian leadership became corrupt and overbearing, leading to the Orange Revolution in 2004, which brought Western and democratic ideals to the Ukrainian government. Viktor Yushchenko emerged from the Orange Revolution as the democratically-elected president in Ukraine and attempted to align Ukraine with the West.¹ Like many countries, the 2008 economic recession hit Ukraine hard, affecting vital economic sectors, including steel and chemical production.² Due to the failing economy, Ukraine was unable to pay the market price for Russian oil that the nation desperately needed. In 2009, a stalemate between Ukraine and Russia interrupted Ukrainian access to Russian gas for nearly two weeks and severely hurt Ukraine and the EU because Ukraine transports twenty percent of Europe's gas supply from Russia.³ The stalemate ended with a ten-year deal between Ukraine and Russia, forcing Ukraine to pay higher gas prices.⁴

This deal temporarily settled the issue of gas sales between the two countries, but Russia continues to use gas to threaten Ukraine politically and economically.

Following the gas crisis and seemingly improved relations created with Russia, Viktor Yanukovich was elected president in 2010, favoring pro-Russian relations instead of pro-European relations. Instead of accepting an association agreement with the EU, Yanukovich signed a deal with Russia, which led to protests among Ukrainians that were similar to those during the Orange Revolution. Such protests increased police violence with a call for Yanukovich's removal in February 2014.⁵ Russia took the opportunity to spread influence.

With the distraction of the positive media image of Russia created by the Sochi Winter Olympics, Russia's non-uniformed military units infiltrated the Ukrainian-held Crimea, which has always identified more with Russia than Ukraine. The annexation took less than two weeks.⁶ After the Crimean population voted to join Russia in March 2014, the local government made a declaration of independence and accepted Russia.⁷ The occupation of Crimea was reinforcing Russia's motivation to bring previously held Soviet regions, mainly where a majority of ethnic Russians lived, e.g., Eastern Ukraine, back into a sphere of influence if not outright control. Controlling Eastern Ukraine, however, would prove difficult for Russia.

Unlike Crimea, a majority of the Eastern Ukrainian population does not share the same desire to join Russia, even though the population often speaks Russian and relates to Russian ideals of culture and religion.⁸ Russia's military and political influence in the Eastern Ukrainian regions of Donbas, Luhansk, and Donetsk were met with resistance by not only the Western Ukrainian population but also from within the affected eastern regions. A surge in violent conflict ensued as Russian troops sent into the eastern regions provided separatist groups with supplies and training, and the Ukrainian military-backed local pro-Ukraine militias in the region resisted such movement. This increase in violence on the Ukrainian side ultimately led to the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 by Russian surface-to-air missiles held within the separatist regions, escalating the situation to a broader global impact.⁹ A meeting to end the conflict in Minsk, Belarus (The Minsk Agreements) that called for a cease-fire on September 5, 2014, failed.¹⁰

Russian Involvement

Ukraine is a pivotal state for Russia because of its strategic location and cultural-historical connection. Vladimir Putin stated, "Russians and Ukrainians are one people, they are the backbone of the broader 'Russian World.'"¹¹ Russian involvement in Ukraine is crucial and has critical aspects that can be viewed from several perspectives. Although the Soviet Union collapsed, Russian geopolitical and economic interests remained the same, and the new country sought to maintain its influences, especially in Russian speaking regions or where Russian culture remained dominant. Many Russian government functions and bureaus changed in name only even though a quasi-capitalist system developed. This transition lasted close to a quarter of a century, and the transformation process is still happening.

Since its founding, Russia promoted an authoritarian government, and such an approach is consistent through its recent formation as a Russian Federation.

Russia's influence is most significant in the region. Stability and accord would seem to benefit both Russia and Ukraine, as well as other nations of the immediate region. For Russia to accept the proposals in this article will indeed be tedious. Outsider's perspective, as presented in this article, assesses that if Russia comes to terms with these policies, they could only benefit economically and politically from increased regional stability. Nevertheless, this is a tall order.

Russia focused on trying to follow the path of multipolar global world order.¹² Russia rejected the Western hegemonic discourse of "universal values." The nation preferred a "civilizational" approach, championing the vision of the world as one consisting of civilizational blocs, which include Putin's concept of "an emerging Eurasian Union."¹³ Many of the once subservient realms of the Soviet Union were not cooperative in this view, and Putin made it clear that the current problems were a result of Ukrainian actions and philosophy. Russian nationalism has always been intense in eastern Ukrainian regions, and Russia believed that the true separatists were Ukrainian because they were trying to fracture the close historical relationship with Russia. Accordingly, Russia viewed Ukraine as a failed state. It believed that "relations would improve (and support for sanctions would collapse) if realists and nationalist populists were to come in power in the 2016 presidential elections."¹⁴ Ukraine was viewed as being enticed and oriented into a Western European or EU sphere instead of a focus toward Moscow.

The conflict occurring in the eastern Ukraine regions is supported by Russian-centric "imperialists" and "ethno-nationalists" due to a centuries-long military interest. These groups enthusiastically endorsed the annexation of Crimea. Still, for different reasons, "while the former sees the move as a step towards the rebuilding of the empire, the latter is an example of the successful Russian ethnic irredentism."¹⁵ The eastern Ukraine regions are composed of ethnic Russians, have abundant natural energy resources, and possesses some of the most agriculturally productive soils in the world. Russia has been accused of many violations, including the Convention for Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, which Kiev accuses Russia has violated in the Donbas region. The most intense charges were leveled against Russia for having a role in the "downing of the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over the occupied territory on July 17, 2014."¹⁶

Along Ukraine's eastern border, Russia regularly performs large-scale military exercises with Ukrainian concerns that a Russian military invasion is likely and easily facilitated.¹⁷ Military involvement includes Russian incursions of tactical troops into Ukraine, non-state actors including organized crime figures, mercenaries, and other volunteers.¹⁸ The disruption of the populace, including wanton killings, within these regions, is surprising—the Ukrainian death toll is thought to be more than 10,300 people, and the Russian death toll is estimated to be nearly the same.¹⁹

The Minsk Agreements included two major cease-fire agreements, the first being September 5, 2014 with a follow-up memorandum signed two weeks later, and the second cease-fire was February 12, 2015. However, widespread armed violence continued. “On May 7, 2015, Putin opened the door for negotiations by announcing that he had ordered a pullback of troops, requested that the separatists delay a referendum set for May 11, 2015, and that Russia was willing to work with whoever won the May 25th elections so long as autonomy was respected for the eastern republics.”²⁰ Ukraine again announced a cease-fire to occur on June 19, 2015 to allow the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) observers into the region to assure legitimate elections. With U.S. Vice President Biden’s announcement of a support package for Ukraine, Russia rejected the cease-fire. With Washington and the EU’s support toward Kiev, the Kremlin believed Ukraine would continue its interests toward alignment with or even membership in NATO.²¹ The situation escalated dramatically. Ukrainian President Poroshenko attempted to push the cease-fire for June 20, 2015, but it ended on July 1, 2015.²²

Western Involvement and Concerns

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the creation of Russia, the U.S. rose as a global superpower. From the ashes of the Soviet Union, the new state of Russia came to be with the same authoritarian regime as its predecessor. The Russian authoritarian ruler, Vladimir Putin, restored Russia’s internal strength during his tenure as president. The country then began to turn its focus to international affairs to regain its former global status and influence over previous satellite states. Russia’s new foreign policy, along with the 2004 NATO expansion into the former Soviet Union territories of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, led to the start of Russia’s hostility towards Western involvement.

At first, NATO had not considered Russia a global threat even though Russia identified NATO as an enemy in their 2003 and 2004 military doctrines.²³ Russia saw NATO as an enemy after its expansion into former Soviet territories because it contradicted Russia’s foreign policy of regaining its sphere of influence and the prior status during the Soviet Union with the implementation of expansionist policies in the 2000s.²⁴ Russia’s expansionist policies were once again undermined during the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. These revolutions “were the very first signals of the future eastward expansion of the EU and U.S. interests.”²⁵ During these revolutions, the countries of Georgia and Ukraine fell under the power of elites who supported pro-Western governments. The 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia was a peaceful protest demanding change from a Soviet-era communist party leader to a pro-Western leader. In Ukraine, the Orange Revolution from 2004-2005 also helped bring about a pro-Western leader. Ukraine and Georgia’s new presidents were not anti-Russia, but pro-Western democracy. They wanted to gain membership into the EU and NATO, thus removing the “buffer zone” between NATO territory and Russia.²⁶ These “buffer zones” prevent the encirclement by NATO member states and protect Russian borders.

Due to the superior strength western actors like NATO have economically and militarily, Russia resorted to nonlinear warfare in retaliation for NATO and EU expansion. Nonlinear

warfare consists of the aggressor state, in this case, Russia, attacking the defensive state, which would be the U.S., NATO, and the EU through political, military, and economic tools during peacetime since no war is officially declared. With the expansion of technology, Russia has been able to go beyond those three forms of warfare by targeting the defensive state's government, populations, and social functions.²⁷ A prime example of Russia using nonlinear warfare tactics can be seen with the creation of frozen conflict zones within Ukraine and Georgia because both countries share a border with Russia. To make sure Ukraine and Georgia never join NATO, Russia created frozen conflict zones in both countries since internal stability is one of the requirements to join NATO and obtain their protection. Georgia and Ukraine find themselves in a constant state of conflict and internal chaos due to Russia's nonlinear tactics through political, social, and economic infiltration. In Georgia, Putin "gradually instituted policies to punish Georgia, end Abkhazia's isolation, and change the balance of power in the conflict."²⁸ Putin's actions towards Georgia resulted in the August War, which was fought between Georgia, Russia, and Russian-packed self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Similarly, Russia's need for a frozen conflict zone in Ukraine resulted in the war in Donbas, which is being fought between Ukraine, Russia, and the separatist forces of the Russian-backed and self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic.

As a result of resorting to nonlinear warfare, Russia has raised the stakes of confrontation to deter the West from any direct harmful action against Russia and its allies. Nonlinear warfare has created a sense of uncertainty throughout the U.S., NATO, and the EU as to when, how, or even who will be behind Russia's next political, economic, or military attack. The uncertainty of nonlinear warfare makes it hard to attack the aggressor state first as no one is sure what Russia can do in retaliation for such actions. Despite the uncertainty and the fear of Russia's retaliation, something must be done to bring an end to Russian-Ukrainian conflict and to the expansion of the use of nonlinear warfare as a way of attacking western state actors to enforce a country's foreign policy agenda. This resolution will come in the form of three components operating simultaneously, political, economic, and military.

Political Policy Proposal

Russia's nonlinear warfare approach demands a political policy that focuses on preventing further aggression from the Russian government. As a way of regaining stability, the political aspect of the policy proposal focuses on the reintegration of rebel groups in the Ukrainian regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, and Donbas. It would begin with a total cease-fire within all conflict zones of Ukrainian territory being overseen by the OSCE. OSCE is qualified to monitor this cease-fire because it is the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organization. Some of its responsibilities include arms control, promotion of human rights, freedom of the press, and fair elections. State actors that would play a primary role in OSCE are Germany, France, Estonia, and Poland. These countries would all directly benefit from the resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. For Germany and France, they both depend on Russian oil that is transported through gas pipelines running through Ukraine.

As countries that were previously under the control of the Soviet Union, neither Estonia nor Poland would like to see the expansion of Russian sovereignty into Ukraine as they both run the risk of being the next country to fall under Russian control. Under the terms and conditions for the total cease-fire, the only state actors involved would be OSCE, Ukraine, and the rebel groups. Since Russia benefits from the war in Donbas, they would not be included in any part of the political-strategic policy resulting in the resolution of the conflict between Ukraine and its eastern separatist region.

Once the cease-fire occurred, there would be a removal of the temporary self-rule law that is currently in place. The removal of the interim self-rule would not guarantee the reintegration of Luhansk, Donetsk, and Donbas under the Ukrainian government. The high amounts of Russian influence in those regions have caused them to be more pro-Russia instead of pro-Western expansion, which is the direction Ukraine is going in. The removal of the temporary self-rule would, however, limit the rebel group's reliance on Russia as it removes the rebel groups' sovereignty and allows them to be reincorporated back into Ukraine. Otherwise, they would still be under the protection of self-government. In addition, Ukraine would approve a constitutional amendment to establish an electoral court to oversee elections and the approval of political parties after the reincorporation of the rebels, using Costa Rica's model as an example. During the election year, parties would have to submit their political party proposals to the electoral court, and it is the court's responsibility to monitor the ideals of the proposed political parties and where the monetary funding comes from. The monitoring of political party ideals would prevent the rebel groups from forming a pro-Russian interference political party and receiving financial funding from Russia while still having a voice in the Ukrainian government.

After the removal of the temporary self-rule, a conference would be held in Warsaw, Poland. The conference would review the terms and conditions of the reintegration of the rebel groups into Ukraine. The state actors involved would be Ukraine, the rebel groups, and the OSCE as the mediator. During this conference, the Ukrainian government would provide the rebel groups with incentives and deterrents to persuade the rebel groups to reintegrate. Incentives include an Amnesty Law that would forgive all terrorist, violent acts committed against the country and a regional council to understand the rebel groups' wants and needs regarding language, religion, eligibility to vote, and political party status. Before the rebel groups would be able to gain political party status, the Carter Center would train all political party leaders to ensure fairness within all upcoming elections. The Carter Center is an organization founded by former American president Jimmy Carter that focuses on preventing and resolving conflicts, while also enhancing freedom and democracy.

These incentives would persuade the rebel groups to join Ukraine because they would be able to voice their concerns and needs democratically without having to give up their Russian identity. A majority of the inhabitants within the rebel group regions identify more with Russia than Ukraine because of its proximity to Russia. Also, the majority of its inhabitants are directly from Russian descent. The deterrents that would be discussed in

the conference include the lack of international recognition as a state. This deterrent would prevent rebel groups from ever obtaining territorial and political sovereignty. They would not be able to gain any protection from major international actors like the EU or NATO, nor borrow money from international institutions. Once the rebels are incorporated, incentives will be removed if any form of treason, including, but not limited to, inciting violence, domestic terrorism, and/or coup attempts occurs. Through this policy, Ukraine would come out as a strong independent nation, which is why the Ukrainian government should oversee all interactions between the rebel groups. The EU and NATO will also not be directly involved because any direct involvement from outside parties could be viewed as a threat to Ukrainian sovereignty, and actions from either party could be seen as an immediate threat or act of war against Russia.

Economic Policy Proposal

The second component of the policy proposal concentrates on solving economic issues within Ukraine, creating an economic environment mutually beneficial to all. Currently, both sides of the conflict receive support from Russia and Ukraine and politically motivated groups like non-governmental organizations (NGOs).²⁹ The first recommendation is to infuse Ukraine with foreign capital to prop up its economy, which relies heavily on oil. Hosting an international donor conference to attract humanitarian and economic support for the region would kickstart external economic influence in Ukraine. A neutral location, like Warsaw, Poland, would ensure that other international disputes would not interfere with attendance, therefore promoting cooperation. External donors are incentivized to join due to potential profit opportunities, and humanitarian groups would be interested because they can advance their agendas. By bringing in companies and humanitarian groups instead of governments directly, diplomatic disputes may be averted, including those between Russia and the U.S. By developing other industries, Ukrainians can work, new money can flow into the region, and Ukraine's economy can diversify instead of depending heavily on Russian oil.

Ukraine's three main oil pipelines previously carried upwards of 80% of the total output of Russian gas in 2015. Still, the opening of Nord Stream under the Baltic Sea decreased Ukraine's transport of Russian oil to only 50%.³⁰ As oil transports decrease, so does Ukraine's opportunity for profit, preventing them from receiving the proper funds to help their people. Russia continues to look for more alternate routes, like Nord II, under the Baltic Sea, decreasing their dependence on the decaying Ukraine pipelines.³¹ Another pipeline that diverts oil away from Ukraine would put Ukraine in an even worse situation financially, so the need to diversify the economy through international business enterprising would help Ukraine be less dependent on Russia. Diversification through investment does not eliminate Ukraine's need for Russian oil. Still, it may help loosen Russia's iron grip on Ukraine's economy, allowing Ukraine to grow economically and improve numerous other sectors of their country.

New business interests and a diversified economy in Ukraine will also help pay debts

acquired since gaining independence and through the 2008 recession. Russia is still able to hold billions of dollars in debt over Ukraine, threatening to shut off Ukraine's gas, forcing Ukraine to abide by Russia's policies, and making them look weak on the international stage.³² The repayment of debt to Russia may ease some tensions between the two countries. However, the amount they owe would not resolve the conflict overnight. Not only is Ukraine indebted to Russia, but they are also indebted to international and European institutions and private banks for over US\$22.5 billion, and a diversified economy could help repay some of these debts.³³

A remaining question, though, is how to incentivize external businesses to enter the region, given the exponential debt and conflict zone. External money would be invested in new industries and enterprises in Ukraine, providing a profit margin to investors and putting Ukrainians back to work. It allows the Ukrainian government to collect taxes, rebuild its infrastructure, pay off debts, and help its people. By expanding its economy, Ukraine can depend less on Russian oil. Investors would need insurance for their investments in these unstable areas, which would need to be provided by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) or the European Investment Bank (EIB). These two entities have already loaned incredible amounts of money to Ukraine, but they would now be investing in private businesses directly. Insurance would incentivize new private companies, industries, and investors to move into the region.

The first part of the economic policy proposal incentivizes Ukraine and the rebels for following the cease-fire agreement. Still, the second part includes consequences if either side were to violate the cease-fire previously mentioned in the political policy proposal. If Ukraine violates the cease-fire agreement, new businesses that were brought into the regions would be removed, forcing Ukraine back to reliance on Russian oil. Since oil has ultimately been the cause of their downfall now, they will avoid this outcome as much as possible. To remove these businesses, insurance from the EBRD or the EIB would have to be removed, which would make it risky for them to operate within the region. Removing insurance and having businesses pull out would put Ukraine back into the situation they were previously in before this plan.

If Russia were to violate the cease-fire, the U.S. would increase tariffs against Russian goods, supplementing current sanctions. While sanctions against Russia have not been entirely successful in the past, studies show that sanctions placed on Russia by the EU and the U.S. caused a 1.5% drop in Russia's overall GDP in 2015.³⁴ Declines in GDP would drive Russia to change its behavior, as it prevents them from expanding their influence because they cannot support these new regions, as is seen in Crimea. Since the annexation, Crimea's economy fell apart when they lost Western investments, exports, and tourism due to a Western boycott of the peninsula.³⁵ As a result of this, Crimea rely solely on limited Russian support. If the rebel regions were incorporated into Russia, this would cause a similar boycott of industries in the regions, creating more economic strife than already exists. Russia would then be forced to financially support the rebel-held regions as well

as Crimea independently, which is already proving difficult. Russia's response to more sanctions may not include increased retaliation, considering many sanctions are already in place. However, the financial strain may wear on Russia enough to force them to give up on the conflict or find a way to make concessions.

Similar to Ukraine's consequences, if the rebel groups violate the cease-fire agreement, trade and business interests would be cut off from the rebel groups, forcing them to rely solely on Russia for support. Any contact that is made with the rebel groups by outside countries would include sanctions or fines by both the U.S., the EU, and Ukraine. Decreased Western support may seem like an advantage for the rebel-held areas because they want to be accepted into Russia and not Ukraine. Still, Russia does not have the economic capacity to support the rebels, mainly if sanctions placed on Russia due to violating the cease-fire would decrease Russia's GDP. Overall, the sanctions against Russia, Ukraine, and the rebels are meant to be used only if any of the groups violates the cease-fire, as happened with the Minsk Agreements. However, these consequences are intended to deter each group from violating the cease-fire, continuing the conflict, and possibly escalating the issue further.

Military Policy Proposal

Solving the eminent problems in Ukraine and Russia involves economic and political approaches first. Military strategies should be thoroughly planned and developed, but only implemented as a last resort. The first part is to set up an EU Training Mission (EUTM) and EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to support Ukrainian troops moving into eastern Ukraine, specifically the separatist or rebel-held areas. EUBAM will happen within four to six months after the cease-fire and will only occur if the military proposal is enacted.

The EU has seen success in these types of missions in other areas. Mali is an example of the EUTM in which EU troops were deployed to "train, educate, and advise the country's Armed Forces" to help create a "safe and secure environment within their borders."³⁶ EUTM had four central tenets: "Training of Malian military units, advise all levels to the Malian Armed Forces, contribution to the improvement of the Military Education System from schools to ministerial level, and advise and training to the G5 Sahel Joint Force headquarters."³⁷ The whole mission consisted of about six hundred soldiers from about twenty-five European countries. The goal was to help Malian forces become a self-sustained force to protect their territory and population. This same type of mission could be replicated in Ukraine.

Indeed, the military plan would be more difficult in Ukraine due to Russian power and strategic influence. The reliance and dependence for military success would need to originate with the EU forces. Eastern Ukrainian areas must be able to create political and economic viability and safety apart from Russian interference, i.e., they cannot be autonomous regions. The integrity of Ukraine is paramount. The forces that would be used need to come from "non-aggressive" European countries that do not have an anti-Russian history, e.g., Norway, Italy, France, and Greece. Training with Ukrainian troops and

teaching tactics that were taught in Mali would be replicated in Ukraine. Ukraine would need to acquire capable military equipment, most likely using support from either the U.S. or EU. For reinforcement of agenda and effect, training would occur in Ukrainian regions unaffected by Russian interference, or outside Ukraine if necessary. The main goals would be the support of a peaceful and economically productive existence of the regions' residents and support for Ukrainian forces to be effective for integrity at their borders and security within the country.

A temporary border between Ukraine and rebel-held areas is required, mostly focusing on Donetsk and Luhansk. EUTM and EUBAM would support Ukrainian troops. The goal of the border with the rebel regions would be to set a clear and firm limit at the current line of demarcation between Ukraine and Russia. A temporary border would be accomplished with Euro Corps troops and equipment support to bolster the Ukrainian military to defend their borders. The Euro Corps is a "highly experienced headquarters, having been engaged in NATO stand-by-periods and operations from the Balkans to Afghanistan as well as EU stand-by periods and training missions in Africa."³⁸ A Black Sea military border would be also enacted. Navies from EU member states (France, Italy, or Poland) could protect the sea border. However, this is likely not as critical as the land border region security strategy.

The final component of the military approach emphasizes cease-fire and inspections. To ensure that these aspects will work, all parties must meet and agree to a set of terms, similar to the Minsk agreements. Cease-fires have not worked. The new conditions for violating the cease-fire or involvement with rebel groups, Ukrainian, or Russian participation would lead to sanctions against products coming into or out of the Black Sea. Thus, they do not sell the products in the EU market. Banking or other financial transaction sanctions may be imposed for violations.

Inspections would monitor and secure products and transactions through Black Sea ports or on land border regions. Ukraine would remain able to trade to the West in all circumstances. These measures are designed to reduce tensions in the area. Although Russia will certainly not give up its naval facilities in the Crimea, economic sanctions will increase the impact on Russia. The main foci are the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions under the control of Russian-influenced paramilitary and separatist groups. A crucial aspect of any military solution to reduce tensions and separate combatants is a stable and influential government in Kiev. At the same time, "carrots" may work to reassure and increase the economic viability of the entire region.

Conclusion

Developing a policy response from political, economic, and military aspects provides a comprehensive approach to deescalating the Ukrainian crisis. The crisis in Ukraine has been going on for over five years. Even with advancements toward stability, nothing is working for Ukraine or Russia. This crisis leads politicians and scholars alike to believe something new needs to be done for the conflict to end and for all involved parties to put down their

weapons. Due to Ukraine's short time as an independent country, they are still trying to stabilize not only their government, but also their economy, and global events and outside influences are not helping progress. With Russia's thirst for power looming over Ukraine, Ukraine is under constant fear that Russia will cut off oil supplies, and the whole country will go dark. Ukrainian challenges are compounded by the Russian military influence at the borders, supporting and propping up separatists, and interfering with the Ukrainian government. As a solution, Western support for Ukraine would work best. Still, because Russia is firmly against the U.S. and NATO getting involved, these parties should remain on the outside of the conflict to make sure there is a cooperation between Ukraine and Russia.

The three aspects of the policy proposal are meant to be a multifaceted approach to this complex issue that involves many different parties with conflicting interests and goals in mind. The political aspect of our proposal is meant to provide a path for the reincorporation of the separatists into Ukrainian life. Even though the separatists want to be part of Russia, the conflict between the population within the region proves that not everyone in Luhansk, Donetsk, and Donbas wants to secede and join Russia. The conflict could continue without end if something is not done to make the separatists feel like they have a place in Ukrainian society. Only the Ukrainian government can address this issue, and there should be no outside influence from the West or Russia, allowing Ukraine to prove that they can create stability in their own country. Creating a stable government is an essential step on Ukraine's path to standing on its own in the international community.

The economic aspect of our policy proposal is meant to help diversify Ukraine's economy and help them reduce dependence on both the EU and Russia. By supporting new and old businesses and industries within Ukraine, their people and government can thrive, allowing them to be less dependent on oil and its fluctuating price. With independent economic sectors, Ukraine will be able to pay off debts, grow their economy, and stabilize their country. New interests, businesses, and jobs in not only the separatist regions, but Ukraine as a whole, will take the pressure off those involved in the conflict. Ukrainians will see new options and a brighter future not only for their businesses but for their neighbors and their country.

Lastly, the military aspect of the proposal is meant to be used as a final resort if political and economic strategies fail to bring peace in Ukraine. The EU Training Missions and EU Border Assistance Management operations worked in the past to stabilize a war-torn country, and they would work in Ukraine if needed. The fact that they are not excluded from the West, and they are removed from actual combat operations helps avoid additional conflict with Russia and can prevent the conflict from expanding. These operations would create military stability in Ukraine, as well as assisting them to become more self-reliant in the international community.

Stability in Ukraine will not only help the country, but it will help the rest of Europe and Russia, who have lent Ukraine billions of dollars, and who rely on Ukraine's pipelines

to transport their oil. However, for stability to occur, Ukraine, the separatist groups, and Russia, need to settle their disagreements, and compromises need to be made for death tolls to stop rising and peace to endure.

Research note: Although this research was done in early 2019, before the Ukrainian presidential election and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukrainian crisis remains constant today. The areas of Luhansk and Donetsk are still in a conflict zone, as they await movement from either side to accept them into society fully. The seeming “pause” that has occurred since the COVID-19 outbreak has not provided any side an opportunity to advance, but it could change the course of the conflict in the future. While international conditions have changed since the start of the conflict, violence remains, which brings about the need for a solution. This three-part proposal still offers the chance for Ukraine, Russia, and the rebels to work together to end the conflict in a way that benefits all involved, while still attempting to mitigate previous disputes among the actors.

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REFERENCES: JPWS uses The Chicago Manual of Style's notes and bibliography system with endnotes. For further information on references, please consult The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition.

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