



BURUNDI

TOPIC: RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

BACKGROUND TO THE TOPIC

The **Russo-Ukrainian War** is an ongoing war between Russia (together with pro-Russian separatist forces) and Ukraine. It began in February 2014 following the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, and initially focused on the status of Crimea and the Donbas, internationally recognized as part of Ukraine. The first eight years of the conflict included the Russian annexation of Crimea (2014) and the war in Donbas (2014–present) between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists, as well as naval incidents, cyberwarfare, and political tensions. Following a Russian military build-up on the Russia–Ukraine border from late 2021, the conflict expanded significantly when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Following the Euromaidan protests and a revolution resulting in the removal of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014, pro-Russian unrest erupted in parts of Ukraine. Russian soldiers without insignia took control of strategic positions and infrastructure in the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, and seized the Crimean Parliament. Russia organized a controversial referendum, whose outcome was for Crimea to join Russia. This led to the annexation of Crimea. In April 2014, demonstrations by pro-Russian groups in the Donbas region of Ukraine escalated into a war between the Ukrainian military and Russian-backed separatists of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk republics.

In August 2014, unmarked Russian military vehicles crossed the border into the Donetsk republic. An undeclared war began between Ukrainian forces on one side, and separatists intermingled with Russian troops on the other, although Russia attempted to hide its involvement. The war settled into a static conflict, with repeated failed attempts at a ceasefire. In 2015, the Minsk II agreements were signed by Russia and Ukraine, but a number of disputes prevented them being fully implemented. By 2019, 7% of Ukraine was classified by the Ukrainian government as temporarily occupied territories.

In 2021 and early 2022, there was a major Russian military build-up around Ukraine's borders. NATO accused Russia of planning an invasion, which it denied. Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized the enlargement of NATO as a threat to his country and demanded Ukraine be barred from ever joining the military alliance. He also expressed Russian irredentist views, questioned Ukraine's right to exist, and stated wrongfully that Ukraine was created by Soviet Russia. On 21 February 2022, Russia officially recognized the two self-proclaimed separatist states in the Donbas, and openly sent troops into the territories. Three days later, Russia invaded Ukraine. Much of the international community has condemned Russia for its actions in post-revolutionary Ukraine, accusing it of breaking international law and violating Ukrainian sovereignty. Many countries implemented economic sanctions against Russia, Russian individuals, or companies, especially after the 2022 invasion.

IMPOSED SOLUTION AND BURUNDI'S POSITION

Russia found itself further isolated in the international community on Thursday, when the U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in support of a resolution demanding Moscow immediately stop its war against Ukraine.

On a vote of 140 in favor, five against and 38 abstentions, nations supported a text put forward by Ukraine with the backing of more than 80 countries that also demands the protection of all civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as humanitarian and medical personnel and journalists.

“Together, a strong majority of U.N. member states made clear that Russia – Russia – bears sole responsibility for the grave humanitarian crisis and violence in Ukraine,” U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters after the vote. “Together, we called for the protection of all civilians fleeing the conflict and for steps to mitigate the increase in food insecurity caused by this senseless war. And together, we reaffirmed the U.N. Charter.”

Thursday's vote largely mirrored a vote on March 2, in which 141 states condemned Russia's invasion and called for it to immediately withdraw its troops. The same five countries voted against that resolution as they did on the humanitarian measure: Russia, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea and Syria.

As Russia's invasion of Ukraine escalates, Moscow's growing influence in Africa has led to divergent responses among the continent's leaders.

Heads of state from around the world, including many from Africa, have lambasted the Russian attack over the last week, with the U.S., EU and U.K. imposing punitive economic sanctions.

A draft United Nations resolution on Wednesday condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine and called on the Kremlin to “immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.”

The resolution passed overwhelmingly with 141 nations voting in favor, but a host of African nations were among the 34 that abstained from the vote: South Africa, Mali, Mozambique, the Central African Republic, Angola, Algeria, Burundi, Madagascar, Namibia, Senegal, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Burundi remains silent as to issuing a position statement that will take sides for either Ukraine or Russia, but remain very positive for the amicably cessation of hostilities between the two countries that will make peace to reign in those countries.