

Unit 23. Euromaidan, Ukrainian revolution and Crimean crisis



Ukraine Crisis makes news headlines almost every day now. In this globalized world, no event occurs in isolation. Whether or not involved, every crisis, revolution or peace treaty has impact on almost all nations. It is in this perspective that we should see Ukraine crisis. As you might be aware the major parties involved as Ukraine, Russia and the West (mainly US). We shall analyse the background details of the present crisis in layman's language

Euromaidan, 2014 Ukrainian revolution and Crimean crisis

When we analyze the present Ukraine crisis, we should note that there are multiple events involved like the Euromaidan, the 2014 Ukrainian revolution and the 2014 Crimean crisis, and every event has close connection with each other. Since the events started with Euromaidan, in this article I have included everything currently related with Ukraine in the blanket cover of Euromaidan.



Euromaidan [21 November 2013 –present]

The **Euromaidan** is a wave of ongoing demonstrations, civil unrest and revolution in Ukraine, which began on the night of 21 November 2013 with public protests demanding closer European integration. President **Viktor Yanukovych's government** announced Ukraine is abandoning an agreement to strengthen ties with the European Union and is instead seeking closer cooperation with Moscow. This was the immediate cause of the Euromaidan protests. There were other reasons too.

Causes of Euromaidan

- Suspension of the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement by the government.
- Russian foreign policy.
- Threat of Russian trade sanctions.
- Government corruption.
- Police brutality.

Goals of Euromaidan

- Signing of the EU Association Agreement and Free Trade Agreement.
- Impeachment of President Viktor Yanukovych.
- Re-adoption of the 2004 Constitution of Ukraine amendments.
- International sanctions against Yanukovych and Azarov government members.
- Rejection of Customs Union membership.

Result

1. **2014 Ukrainian Revolution.**
2. Impeachment of **Viktor Yanukovych**.
3. Return of 2004 constitution.
4. **Oleksandr Turchynov** becomes Acting President.
5. Early presidential election.
6. Implementation and subsequent cancellation of laws restricting civil liberties.
7. Former Ukrainian prime minister and opposition leader, Yulia Tymoshenko freed from jail.
8. Occupation of local governments.
9. Banning of Party of Regions by local governments under control of anti-government activists.
10. Resignation of Prime Minister Mykola Azarov.
11. President Yanukovych offers opposition the position of Prime Minister of Ukraine.
12. Worsening of the economic situation, including credit downgrading by American credit agencies like Moody's.
13. **Beginning of Crimean crisis and invasion by Russia.**
14. The new Cabinet of Ukraine resumed preparations in signing of the EU Association treaty.

The 2014 Ukrainian revolution [18–23 February 2014 (5 days)]

The **2014 Ukrainian revolution** began with a series of violent episodes of civil unrest in Kiev, Ukraine, as part of Ukraine's ongoing Euromaidan protest movement

against the government. The conflict escalated rapidly, leading to the downfall of the government of President Viktor Yanukovich and the setting up of a new government to replace it within a few days. Yanukovich fled to Russia, and is wanted in Ukraine for the killing of protesters.

PS: In brief, the 2014 Ukrainian revolution was anti-Yanukovich who is pro-Russia. Those who protested wanted close Ukraine-EU relations and not Ukraine-Russia partnership.

The 2014 Crimean Crisis [23 February 2014–present]

The Crimean Crisis happened when pro-Russian forces seized control of the Crimea region. The Causes of Crimean Crisis can be summed up as below :

- Opposition to the Euromaidan movement.
- Opposition to the Yatsenyuk Government.
- The Verkhovna Rada's vote on 23 February to repeal language law that protected minority languages.

Who is in charge of Ukraine? Different perspectives!

- **Russia's take:** Viktor Yanukovich remains Ukraine's elected leader, and Ukraine's new government is illegitimate. Russian United Nations envoy Vitaly Churkin called it an "armed takeover by radical extremists."
- **Ukraine's take:** Ukraine has a legitimate government and is set to have new presidential elections on May 25. "Let's give an opportunity for that to work," Ukrainian Ambassador to the U.N. Yuriy Sergeyev said.
- **United States' take:** Yanukovich abandoned his post last month, fled the country and was then voted out of office by Ukraine's democratically elected parliament.

Do Russian troops have a right to be in Crimea?

Russia's take: Yes. A treaty between the neighboring nations allows Russia to have up to 25,000 troops in Crimea. Yanukovich requested Russia to send military forces.

Ukraine's take: No. Russian troops amassing in Crimea and near the border with Ukraine are an "act of aggression."

United States' take: No, and Russian President Vladimir Putin is playing a dangerous game. The consequences of military action "could be devastating."

What is the Russian interest in Crimean Peninsula?

Russia's take: Russia has said its parliament approved Putin's use of military force to *protect Russian citizens in the Crimean peninsula*.

Ukraine's take: There's no evidence of any threat to Russians inside Ukraine. Russia wants to annex Crimea.

United States' take: Russia is responding to its own historic sensitivities about Ukraine, Crimea and their place in Moscow's sphere of influence. Russia fears that Ukraine is falling under European or Western influence.

US-Russia-Ukraine Diplomatic Talks and Latest Happenings!

- U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry held the first direct talks with his Russian counterpart as Washington warned Moscow it *risks losing its coveted G8 place* over the worst East-West crisis since the end of the Cold War.

- *Crimea's parliament votes for the region to become part of Russia, and to hold referendum in 10 days' time on endorsing the move.*
- Ukraine's interim economy minister dismisses the move as "unconstitutional".
- EU leaders are holding an emergency summit to decide their response to Russia's troop deployment in Crimea.
- The US imposes visa restrictions on people who are "threatening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine"

Summary:

Former President of Ukraine who was pro-Russia was ousted as part of the Euromaidan protests (2014 Ukraine Revolution to be precise). The protesters in general were of pro-west (read EU and US) attitude who demanded closer EU relations. As President of Ukraine sought Russia's help, Russian troops entered Crimean peninsula in Ukraine. Crimea's parliament voted for the region to become part of Russia, and to hold referendum in 10 days' time on endorsing the move.

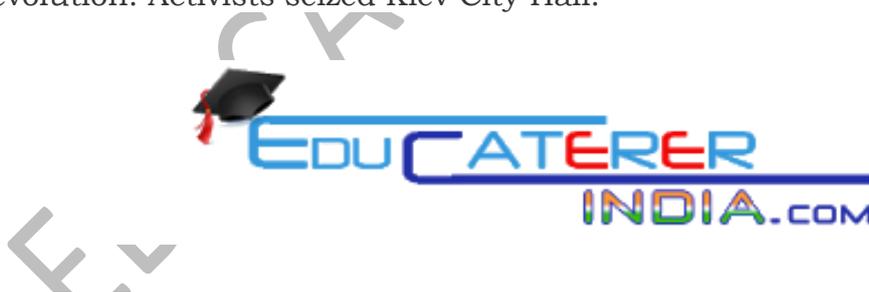
Ukrainian Crisis and UPSC!

An understanding of key events in Ukraine political crisis would help to answer the 2014 UPSC interview questions. Adding below, some important key words related with Ukraine crisis. Check them out. Interested aspirants may explain about some of them in comments. (Of-course, there are terms not mentioned in this article!)

Exercise: Keywords related to Ukrainian revolution

Keywords: Ukraine crisis, Crimea coup, Russia Ukraine dispute, Simferopol, Crimean airports, Sevastopol, Kerch ferry terminal, Vladimir Putin, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Viktor Yanukovich, Oleksandr Turchinov, Euromaidan, Orange Revolution.

Eg: Euromaidan : Protest which attracted around 300,000 people on Kiev's Independence Square, known as the Maidan, the largest since the 2004 Orange Revolution. Activists seized Kiev City Hall.



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