Tufts University Seminar

Ukrainian Separatists

Columbia Prep

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**Briefing Paper: Ukrainian Separatists**

**A. Introduction**

Good Afternoon,

The Ukrainian Separatists are pleased to be here today at Tufts University to discuss the current situation. We hope to analyze and respond to the issues at hand and hope to move forward towards an agreement with Ukraine. As we all know, the current situation in Ukraine has caused much uproar among Western powers. However, this should not be the case as we are simply fighting to return to Mother Russia. The current situation in Ukraine should not be blown out of proportion as it does not signify the return of all the post-Soviet States to the Russian Federation: we, the Ukrainian people, simply want to use the help of Russia to become autonomous. It is of vital importance that our position and the issue at hand be addressed and dealt with as soon as possible. The most important topics on Ukrainian Separatists’ list being:

**B. Key Points**

* We, the Ukrainian Separatists, deserve more rights, as well as legitimacy in political affairs, and hope to gain support from Russia in our quest for increased autonomy.
* Although in the short-term we are in favor of lower oil prices, which will permit us to purchase more oil, we are worried that if the price of oil were to remain low for a prolonged period of time, the detrimental impact on Russia’s economy would hinder them from assisting us in our fight for autonomy.
* Currently, the greatest threat to our movement is the potential armament and strategic assistance that countries such as the United States could provide to the pro-Ukrainians.
* During this time of upheaval, it is imperative that human rights are upheld and it is a great concern that the Ukrainian government may not do so.
* We would like increased ties with Russia—both economically and militarily—and would like to separate ourselves from institutions such as the European Union and NATO.
* International interference in this conflict is both unnecessary and unwarranted as this is a battle between Ukraine and Russia—not Russia and the West.
* We believe that integration with Russia and the Eurasian Trade Union is fiscally beneficial for us individually as well as economically.

**C. Background**

Although there have always been Ukrainian citizens in favor of rejoining the Russian Federation, the Ukrainian unrest that is currently transpiring here ignited in November 2013 when President Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union. Concomitantly, a movement known as ‘Euromaidan,’ was lobbying for increased relations with the European Union and the resignation of Yanukovych. The Euromaidan movement’s success ultimately led to the revolution in February 2014, which removed Yanukovych, as well as his administration. Although many Ukrainians were pleased with Yanukovych’s departure, those of us in eastern and southern Ukraine—areas which have always served as traditional bases for support of Yanukovych and his party— were opposed to both Yanukovych resignation as well as the composition of the transitional government. Over the last year, us in eastern and southern Ukraine, commonly referred to by others as the Ukrainian Separatists, have been protesting for union with Russia, the transformation of Ukraine into a federal state, and referendums on status’ for Eastern and Southern Ukraine.

When our movement first emerged, it was most rampant in Crimea: we led many protests in Crimea favoring leaving Ukraine and joining the Russian Federation. A poll conducted in early February 2014, found that in Crimea 41% of those polled were in favor of our cause and union with Russia; in Donetsk, 33% of those polled were in favor of our cause and union with Russia. On February 26, our pro-Russian forces, alleged by some to be Russian troops sent by Vladimir Putin, began to gradually obtain control of the Crimean Peninsula. Concurrently, the dispute of whether of not to join the Russian Federation was put to a referendum. Though condemned by the European Union, the United States and Ukraine itself, the referendum resulted in a 96% affirmative vote for joining the Russian Federation. Protests of this sort are one of our primary methods for furthering our cause—gaining autonomy and land.

On March 1 in Donetsk, our movement had gained significant momentum and we were able to occupy state buildings in several eastern Ukrainian districts: the occupation of administrative buildings is the second method we implement to further our cause. Although our pro-Russian forces carried out this act of occupation, the plan itself was formulated by the Russian Federation in an effort to destabilize Ukraine. Despite the fact that the local police and Security Service of Ukraine were able to reclaim the buildings, by March 13, violent protests were transpiring in Donetsk between us and pro-Ukrainians. Many Russian citizens came across the boarder to attend the protests and to support us. The amount of Russians entering the country to attend our protests reached such an extremity that by the end of March, an average of 600 Russians were being denied entry into Ukraine daily.

While everything was transpiring in Donetsk, in Crimea, on March 17, the Crimean Parliament declared independence from Ukraine and requested to join the Russian Federation. On the following day, Russia and Crimea signed a treaty of accession; the treaty was ratified several days later. However, while we were celebrating our victory, the United Nations General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution proclaiming the referendum invalid and the annexation of Crimea into the Russian Federation as illegal.

On April 17, Ukraine, the United States, Russia, and the European Union held a meeting in Geneva in hopes to negotiate an end to the crisis here. This meeting produced the **Geneva Statement on Ukraine**, which stated that all four parties had agreed that steps towards de-escalation were imperative, that the illegal military formation in Ukraine needed to be dissolved, and that those individuals occupying the federal buildings—us— must be disarmed and banished. At the meeting it was also decided among the four powers that the Constitution of Ukraine be revised. This agreement also temporarily hindered additional economic sanctions against Russia by the United States and the European Union.

Despite the meeting in Geneva, in the beginning of April, we continued our rallies in Donetsk and demanded that a similar referendum on independence from Ukraine be held there too. We stormed and seized control of the RSA building and insisted that if the government did not announce a referendum for Donetsk to join Russia, then we would declare unilateral control by forming a “People’s Mandate” and dismiss all elected council members. Later that day, it was announced that a referendum would be held no later than May 11, 2014. On April 26th, the Donetsk People’s Republic released a series of leaflets notifying citizens of a referendum that was to be held on May 11. However, the next day, several members of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, special monitoring mission were detained by a group of men from the Donbass People’s Militia. This event ignited a large pro-government rally in the city in protest against the violence in Donetsk, and the attempted assassination of Kharkiv mayor Hennadiy Kernes on 28 April. However, with baseball bats, iron rods, firecrackers and shields, we were able to skillfully disperse the protesters.

The referendum on the status of the city of Donetsk was held on May 11: 89% voted in favor of self-rule, and 10% voted against it with a turnout of about 75%. Following the announcement of the results of the referendum, the leader of the Republic Denis Pushilin pronounced, "all Ukrainian military troops in the region would be considered occupying forces." Fighting, however, continued through the month of June. On June 20, Poroshenko announced a peace plan. This plan called for a week-long ceasefire, for us to abandon the buildings we were occupying, for the decentralization of power from the government in Kiev, and for the protection of Russian-language rights. Although Mr. Putin showed some support for the plan, he asserted that Poroshenko was the one who had to bring us into the negotiations. Poroshenko met with a representative of the Donetsk People's Republic on June 21 to discuss the peace plan. Our representative, however, declared that we would reject the ceasefire, and communicated to Poroshenko that our primary demands were the "withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from Donbass" and recognition of our Republic. Although following the initial talks it looked as though a cease-fire could be reached, in the end, Poreshenko declared that we had broken the ceasefire and ended it on June 30th.

After the ceasefire was disbanded, the Ukrainian government renewed its offensive and inflicted heavy losses on us. Unfortunately, this ultimately forced us withdraw from northern Donetsk Oblast. Heavy fighting between the two of us continued into September with the signing of the Minsk Protocol, another ceasefire; this agreement was signed at talks attended by representatives of Ukraine, Russia, and us at the OSCE in Minsk, Belarus. By mid September, Ukraine’s president also offered for parts of our new territory to be under limited self-rule for three years. The peace talks also created both a buffer zone between government troops and us, as well as the withdrawal of foreign fighters and heavy weapons from the area of conflict. However, the agreements made in Minsk quickly disintegrated amid continued fighting. The European Union and the United States, following the collapse of the Minsk agreements, have continued to impose a series of financial sanction against Russia as well as some of our leaders. However, we have been able to weather these sanctions and Russia continues to support us.

On November 2, we held elections in Donetsk and Luhansk. The elections appointed new parliaments and prime misters to our new territory. The elections, however, were condemned by the United States, European Union and Ukraine as they allegedly violate the September Minsk agreement. The claim that we violated the Minsk agreements with this election is completely arbitrary as in the Minsk protocol it says we have the right to hold our own elections—the date on which this could occur was not specified. After this occurrence and the complete termination of the Minsk agreements, we were able to renew our offensive and capture Donetsk airport: this was a huge success for us. We also drove Ukrainian troops out of Debaltseve, is a huge transport hub—this was another big win for us.

On February 11, leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France met at Minsk to, again, address the current crisis. An agreement was eventually reached between the four powers and we are very pleased: the deal contains several elements, specifically constitutional changes that will challenge Kiev and will consign the Kremlin control over key parts of the agreement. This new cease-fire agreement is set to begin on February 15th with the removal of weapons as well as the ratification of constitutional reforms. This new cease-fire closely resembles the one implemented in the beginning of September. However, this cease-fire has some stricter confinements: it requires the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from Ukraine. This concession in the agreement could have significant repercussions for our movement. Both Russia and us, however, are willing to de-escalate the situation to a certain extent and keenly await to see what transpires next.

**D. Issues**

*Committee on Sovereignty: Johanna Suskin*

**What is your nation’s view on sovereignty?**

* We deserve a greater degree of sovereignty than we currently have
* We should be recognized as a legitimate, autonomous region within Ukraine by the global community

**Where do you stand on the annexation of Crimea?**

* The annexation of Crimea was justified and more autonomy should be granted to the territory in question
* Given the similarities between the smaller conflict in Crimea in relation to the larger current one transpiring in Ukraine, we would like to emphasize the importance that increased autonomy is granted to us

**What do you think the annexation means regionally?**

* Because we do not have possession of territory that is internationally recognized as our own, the annexation of Crimea does not have "regional effects" that impact us

**Given the large populations of ethnic Russians living in the near abroad, does Russia have the privilege or right to intervene in another nation’s affairs in order to prevent perceived abuses or crimes on behalf of the government?**

* Russia does have the privilege to intervene in the affairs of other nations—specifically their neighbor Ukraine—because of the significant Russian contingency living there
* There should be a clear limit to the amount of power and influence that Russia can exert in foreign territories
	+ This influence and power should consist primarily in the form of aid
* Russia, however, does not have the right to take or regain absolute control of whichever regions or countries it desires

**Do you think the current borders of Russia and the post-Soviet states are the ones that should be permanent? Please explain.**

* The current borders should not be the permanent ones as they do not accurately represent the political landscape of today's world
* Especially for us, the reorganization of post-Soviet Eastern Europe would be logical and beneficial

**Concerns have been raised about the growing lack of freedoms in the region – do you agree or disagree?**

* Although there may be a lack of certain freedoms in the region of Eastern Europe, we do not believe that recent times have brought about a drastic increase in lack of freedoms
* The restrictiveness has remained a relatively static feature of this part of the world
* Although we feel somewhat repressed living in Ukraine, we have felt this way for many years—not just recently
* We believe that Ukraine granting us autonomous control of our region could help relieve recent concerns

**What form of governance does your country have?**

* The separatists are not a state and consequently do not have a recognized government, so the question of what form of governance is exercised here is not applicable

**How would you describe political engagement and civil society in your country?**

* Because we do not have our own country it is not applicable to ask about political engagement and civil society within our "country"
* However, political engagement for our cause is constantly growing, and our movement is gaining momentum

**Do you see any changes on the horizon?**

* We see changes on the horizon: the current state of this Russian-Ukrainian conflict cannot continue indefinitely
* We are hoping for a favorable outcome, in which we would gain more autonomy in Ukraine with the assistance of Russia
* Ideally we would like increased Russian assistance in the form of monetary and protective aid

*Committee on Security: Teddy Dubno*

**What are your country’s security concerns?**

* The largest threat to our security right now is if the United States were to provide weapons and cyber assistance to Ukraine
* Another large concern we have is the possibility that Russia fully stops supporting us

**Do you feel you have the adequate infrastructure and/or alliances to contend with these concerns?**

* We do not have the infrastructure to handle a sizable Ukrainian threat, however, due our ties with Russia, we would be able to garner support
* With that being said, if Russia were to stop supporting us, we would not have the resources nor the infrastructure to handle any threats

**How do you handle external security threats?**

* Fast military strikes

**How do you handle internal security threats?**

* Fast military strikes

**What has been the role of your military?**

* Although we do not have a formal military, we do have many elements of one
	+ Our forces can function as a military if necessary

**How do you deal with organized crime?**

* Due to there not being an established state yet, there isn't much organized crime

**Have you experienced cyber attacks?**

* Yes, we have experienced some cyber attacks

**How have you addressed them?**

* Cyber attacks have been handled by Russia

*Committee on Terrorism: Harrison Samuels*

**Do you face any threats from terrorism (political, religious, ideological, nuclear, cyber)? Please identify them and what you believe their origins are.**

* The biggest threat to our pro-Separatist movement is the armament and strategic/logistical assistance for pro-Ukrainian forces by outside nations such as the U.S.
	+ Armament and or assistance would further compromise our efforts to maintain peace in our land that we have so rightfully claimed
* The main political threat we face is the West, lead by their clever creation N.A.T.O.

**Are you concerned about terrorism in general in the post-Soviet states?**

* Yes, the radical Islamic threat, ISIS specifically, has spread to the boarders of many of the post-Soviet states

**What steps have you taken to address potential terrorist concerns in your country?**

* We will look to Russia to help us deal with and subdue the threats of radical Islam that has taken advantage of the power vacuum created in the midst of our on-going fight with Kiev
* As the war does not cease to let up on the pro-Ukrainian bloc, we will look to Russia for more help in assisting us in whatever manner they can and we look to create even closer ties with Moscow
* We will take a hard stance against all forms of terrorism, paralleling our agenda to the Kremlin’s

**Have you cooperated with other countries in addressing potential threats?**

* In order to strengthen our cyber security, we will look for help from Russia and its allies for infrastructural and strategical assistance

*Committee on Human Rights: Abbott Van Doren*

**How would you describe the status of human rights in your country?**

* On the front lines of the conflict between the Ukrainian government and us, the Ukrainian separatists, there is an unintended risk posed to civilian safety and rights
* As a cost of this war, civilians in towns across Eastern Ukraine have been displaced into shelters and basements, as their neighborhoods have become violent and unstable zones of conflict
* The Ukrainian government does not seem to have any reservations about firing openly into civilian areas
	+ Civilians are killed all the time: numerous civilians have lost their lives in artillery attacks; schools and medical care facilities have been severely damaged; and much civilian housing was destroyed beyond compare
* Although we receive humanitarian aid from Russia, but we do not distribute it, as the Cossack anti-Ukraine armed forces in control of Pervomaisk, provide forms of aid independently

**What are the major human rights concerns in your country?**

* The ongoing conflict right now poses the greatest concern to our country
* Unfortunately, while we attempt to fulfill our responsibility to preserve human rights, it seems that Ukraine is not paying attention to the Minsk accords
* The violence, however, varies in different regions:
	+ In our controlled segment in the east, violence abounds
	+ In Crimea, it is more complex
		- There, the Russian government has apparently begun curtailing human rights
			* However, we trust that the Russian government is doing its best to respect human rights laws internationally, after all, we want to re-integrate with Russia and become a legitimate territory in eastern Ukraine

**Does your country tend to emphasize their political/individual or social/cultural rights?**

* The country doesn’t emphasize individual rights
	+ Specifically in relation to police brutality, individual rights are not respected

**How does that affect the perception of your country?**

* Generally speaking, Ukraine is not an upholder of human rights and, in turn, this reflects negatively on the country
* This negative perception has further developed after Amnesty International and the UN issued repeated recommendations that Ukraine ignored

**Are there ethnic divisions in your country?**

* The country is divided into strata
* One stratum is ideological—certain factions identify with mother Russia, while others identify as Ukrainian and with the Ukrainian government
* The other stratum is truly ethnic
* While the conflict is most notably between the Ukrainians and the Russians, it is also true that the Crimean Tatar group is at odds with the population of the country:
	+ The Crimean Tatar group, in addition to being Muslim, openly oppose Russia’s presence in the region of Crimea
		- The Crimean Tatar population makes up 12% of Crimea itself
* Ethnic breakdown of Ukraine: 77.8% Ukrainian, 17.3% Russian, .6% Belarusian, .5% Moldovan, .5% Crimean Tatar, .4% Bulgarian, .3% Hungarian, .3% Romanian, .3% Polish, and .2% Jewish (with 1.8% labeled as “other”)

**Are these divisions contentious?**

* The divisions are contentious

**What rights do minority groups have in your country?**

* The minorities have the same rights as everyone else

**Does your country have freedom of religion?**

* Yes

**How religiously homogenous is your country?**

* Ukraine is relatively homogenous
* Many people don’t identify with a particular religion but, for those who do, most are Russian Orthodox
* There are also Muslims in the country

**Do religious minority groups have rights in your country?**

* Religious minority groups do have rights

**Are they harassed or persecuted?**

* While the Crimean Tatars are an ethnic minority, they are also a religious minority
* Crimean Tatar oppression is manifested through enforced disappearances, unlawful detention, ill-treatment as well as the banning of mass public gatherings by the community and issuing “’anti-extremist warnings’” to their representative body, the Mejlis
* The authorities have harassed pro-Ukraine and Crimean Tatar media outlets: searching their offices, shutting down some, and threatening others with closure

**How do you respond to the mistreatment of minority groups in other countries?**

* The way we see it is that Russia is protecting her people
	+ Extremism is a malignant force and we support Russia’s efforts to eradicate dangerous gatherings and plots that may arise from certain communities.
* As the separatists, we feel that any Russian effort to defend itself against dissents is necessary in this time of war, both for national security and the security of Russians across eastern Europe and eastern Ukraine.

**Please describe your speech and freedom of expression policies?**

* Ukraine has never really had freedom of speech
* Even before the conflict, the president curtailed freedom of speech to the point where it was difficult for the mass population to figure out the truth, especially on television
* Currently, the curtailment of freedom of speech is more forceful, as the conflict presents that necessity

**Is there media censorship?**

* Yes

**Is there internet censorship?**

* There is not Internet censorship, at least not on a mass scale
* Occasionally, Ukrainian law enforcement monitors the Internet

*Committee on Economics: Isaac Shapot*

**Describe your economic system.**

* While we do not yet have an internationally recognized state, if we were to have one, we would want to have a free market capitalistic economy with strong state influence
	+ Similar to our Russian brothers to the east.

**What is your economy based on?**

* Crimea's main industries are tourism and agriculture
* There are on-shore and off-shore drilling sites
* The city also has great access to the Black Sea, which is essential for military defense and trade
* Donetsk is known for its coal mining industry—there are 17 coal mines, 200 industrial organizations that have a total production output of more than 50 billion hryvnias per year, and more than 20,000 medium-small sized organizations
* In 2012, Forbes named Donetsk the best city for doing business in Ukraine, and despite Ukraine's struggles, it is a "developing city"
* Luhansk is known for its heavy iron ore production
* These two regions account for 16 percent of Ukraine's GDP and supply 95% of its coal.

**Who are your significant trading partners in the region and what do you trade?**

* Russia has been instrumental in helping us achieve our independence through their military and economic support
* We hope to join the Eurasian Economic Union, the economic pact that contains Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan
* We trade coal, iron ore, transport equipment, and chemicals

**Have the Western sanctions had an impact on your economy?**

* Western sanctions have affected us but in an indirect way
* The sanctions have hurt Russia and has made their economy very unstable, which is detrimental to us as they're our greatest economic ally
* However, if our pursuit to unify with Russia is achieved, then the sanctions will directly affect us
* One way in which the sanctions have affected us is that Russia now doesn't have as much revenue to invest in our industries
* Also, because the ruble has dropped drastically due to the sanctions, Russian citizens won't have as much spare money to visit Crimea and stimulate our tourism industry

**Has the global drop in oil prices affected your economy?**

* The drop in oil prices has been good in the short-term
* We can buy more oil for a lower price than before, and we can import more as well
* The cheaper price of oil has also put more money into our citizen’s pockets and has allowed them to spend their extra money elsewhere in the economy
	+ Thus, it's been like a mini stimulus.
* However, in the long run, the drop in the price of oil could be bad: Russia will have less revenue to both assist and invest in us

**Since the end of the Soviet Union, has wealth inequality in your country increased or decrease, why?**

* Ukrainians are 20% poorer than they were when the Soviets left—mostly due to an oligarchy that consumed a significant portion of the country's wealth in the 1990s
* There has also been an extremely powerful political elite since the USSR left, and these extremely corrupt leaders have allocated government resources for their own personal use

**What plans have you developed to boost your economy?**

* Further integration with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union will certainly help elevate our economy to a level Ukraine has never been before
* Russia has the 9th highest GDP in world; Ukraine, on the other hand, has the 44th highest
* We will establish better relations with Russian oil giants, such as Rosneft and Gazprom
* We hope to be included in the promising future deals between Russia and China

*Committee on Energy: Noah Martin*

**Are we energy exporters or importers?**

* If we had our own state, we would import (Crude) oil and natural gas
* We would export electricity and natural gas

**Who are we dependent upon for either acquiring our energy or for buying our energy?**

* Eastern Ukraine supplies much of Ukraine’s natural gas

**How do we view the drop in oil prices?**

* We are in favor of lower oil prices because it allows us to purchase more oil than would normally be available
* Lower oil prices also allow us to use more oil and thus heavier force against Ukraine than we would be able to otherwise
* However, lower oil prices could be bad in the long term because less oil revenue for Russia means Russia has less money to assist us

**How do we view the different plans in the region to build pipelines?**

* We are against most plans, specifically those which have the pipeline going around Eastern Ukraine and through the Black Sea
* We want plans that have the pipeline going directly through Eastern Ukraine: gives us leverage

**How will the $400 billion gas deal between China and Russia impact our country?**

* Would relieve some of the pressure on Russia which, in turn, would allow them to assist us to a greater degree

**What do we want the future of the energy market to look like?**

* We want moderate prices
* Balance between energy affordability
* The ability to receive assistance from Russia in relation to their revenue

**Has energy been a source of cooperation and/or coercion for our country in the past?**

* While the Ukrainian government may call it coercion, for us, energy has been a source of cooperation with Russia
* Many oil refineries in Eastern Ukraine are owned by Russian companies

**What do we think the future will look like?**

* We think that in the future there will be an increase in the reliance on Russian oil
* Expansion of domestic natural gas market

**What is the energy situation in the Black sea?**

* American drilling in the Black Sea (Exxon Mobil), and cooperation with Ukrainian government
* Potential Black Sea oil pipelines

**What is the energy situation in the Caspian Sea?**

* Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan are all oil producers in the region
* However, because waters are technically international, there has been some conflict—especially between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan

**What is the energy situation in the Arctic?**

* Canada, USA, Russia, Norway, Denmark (Greenland) all present in this region
* Russia has claimed large land areas in this region for drilling

*Committee on Ukraine: Teddy Dubno*

**The conflict in eastern Ukraine rages on as pro-Russian reels clash with the Ukrainian government. What do you see as the ramifications for semi-successful separatist movements in the post-Soviet space?Additionally, what are the ramifications of Russia’s re-claiming and/or seizure of Crimea?**

* We are entirely in support of the Russian reclamation
* The ramifications that we can foresee are almost entirely all positive

**What could it mean for the future of naval power and security on the Black Sea?**

* In the future, Russia could potentially have better access to naval ports and, in turn, stronger ties to the South East

**What should Russia’s role in the conflict be?**

* Russia’s role should be of total support

**What should the international community’s role in the conflict be?**

* There should be no international involvement as this is simply an act of the Ukrainian people to return to Mother Russia

**What does it mean for ethnic Russian communities in the region?**

* This means that Russian communities can be truly free