The background of the page is a large, light blue circular emblem of the United Nations. It features a white map of the world centered on the North Pole, surrounded by a white laurel wreath. The emblem is set against a light blue circular gradient.

United Nations General Assembly
First Committee:
Disarmament & International Security
Committee (DISEC)
HUMUNC 2021

Dear Delegates,

It is my great honor and pleasure to welcome you to 2021's Hofstra University Model United Nations Conference! Each year, it is our privilege to host intelligent and industrious students from high schools across Long Island such as yourselves. It is in part, thanks to you all, that an interest in international issues and an empathy for the international community is being fostered in the next generation, and the importance of that cannot be overvalued.

My name is Nick Bekker, and I will be serving as the chair for this year's Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC). I am currently a Senior with a double major in Political Science and Linguistics. I have been in our university's Model United Nations Club for four years, serving as our club's secretary for three of those years. During my time in the club, I served as a delegate at the University of Pennsylvania Model UN Conference (UPMUNC) and Columbia Model United Nations Conference and Exposition (CMUNCE). At former HUMUNCs, I have also been a dais and chair in the Future Crisis committee, as well as a chair in DISEC.

I am excited to return to DISEC this year, and despite social distance restrictions, I expect that we can still have a rewarding committee experience. This spring we shall be debating the conflict in Ukraine and how to facilitate the reduction of arms in the region. The committee's topic is an opportunity to tackle an issue which has plagued the international community for many years. I believe we can foster a thoughtful debate and create innovative proposals for this issue. I cannot wait to see you through these deliberations!

Sincerely,

Nick Bekker
DISEC Committee Co-Chair
HUMUNC 2021

Introduction to the Committee

The First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly is the Committee for Disarmament and International Security (DISEC). This committee concerns itself with “disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.”¹ This committee also works in tandem with the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, which meets in Geneva. Sessions of DISEC take a tripartite structure. First, there is a general debate, wherein the committee decides on which topics will be covered. This is followed by a stage of thematic discussions, and the process is concluded with action on drafts.²

As enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, all member states and observers of the UN are permitted to be a member of DISEC. The First Committee may pass resolutions by a simple majority, recommending that member states take specific or general actions. As a General Assembly committee, it does not have the power to pass binding resolutions, nor does it have the power to sanction.³ Our aim for this weekend is to emulate DISEC’s above-stated debate structure, powers, and limitations to the best of our ability, so that we may deal with serious threats to international peace and security, just as the delegates in the chambers of the First Committee would.

Introduction to the Topic: Conflict and Arms Trafficking in Ukraine

The conflict in Ukraine may be one contained within the borders of the Ukrainian state, but it is one that has been steeped in international relations since its genesis. The issue originated in November 2013 when former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich rejected a deal for

Ukraine to become economically integrated with the European Union.⁴ This action was met with serious opposition from the Ukrainian population, and led to thousands protesting in the streets of Ukraine's capital, Kiev, within hours of the announcement.⁵ These protests only grew over the coming months, and "...morphed into a broader expression of popular discontent with Mr. Yanukovich's growing authoritarianism as well as his decision not to sign the EU association agreement."⁶ These protests, known as the "Euromaidan", were peaceful until mid-February 2014, when special police opened fire on protestors, killing approximately one hundred people and leaving many wounded.⁷

The violent response to the protests awakened an international response, as European diplomats arrived immediately after the incident to attempt to create a deal on European integration between the opposition and President Yanukovich. However, Yanukovich fled to Russia immediately after signing the agreement, acknowledging that the agreement had little chance of being accepted by the protestors.⁸ With the government in disarray, Russia saw its chance to intervene in the situation, in its favor, using more direct action. Russian irregular forces seized strategic locations on the Crimean Peninsula in the south of Ukraine, held a disputed referendum among the majority ethnic Russian population of the area, and annexed Crimea.^{9,10} Two months after this event, two regions in eastern Ukraine that have predominantly ethnic Russian populations, Donetsk and Luhansk, declared their independence from Ukraine.¹¹

Since the declaration of independence in 2014 by Russian separatists, there has been armed conflict in eastern Ukraine between the Russian separatist forces and Ukrainian forces, referred to as the War in the Donbas. While the Ukrainian armed forces are a primary actor on one side, much of the fighting is not carried out by an official state military, but rather by a collage of militias on both sides of the conflict.¹² Therefore, a large amount of the fighting is not

being conducted by trained military personnel with officially sanctioned arms, but by volunteer forces with arms that have flooded into the country via illegal channels or that were bestowed directly by foreign governments.¹³ Therein lies the goal of this committee: to find a solution to the small arms proliferation exacerbated by the War in the Donbas.

Background on the Conflict in Ukraine

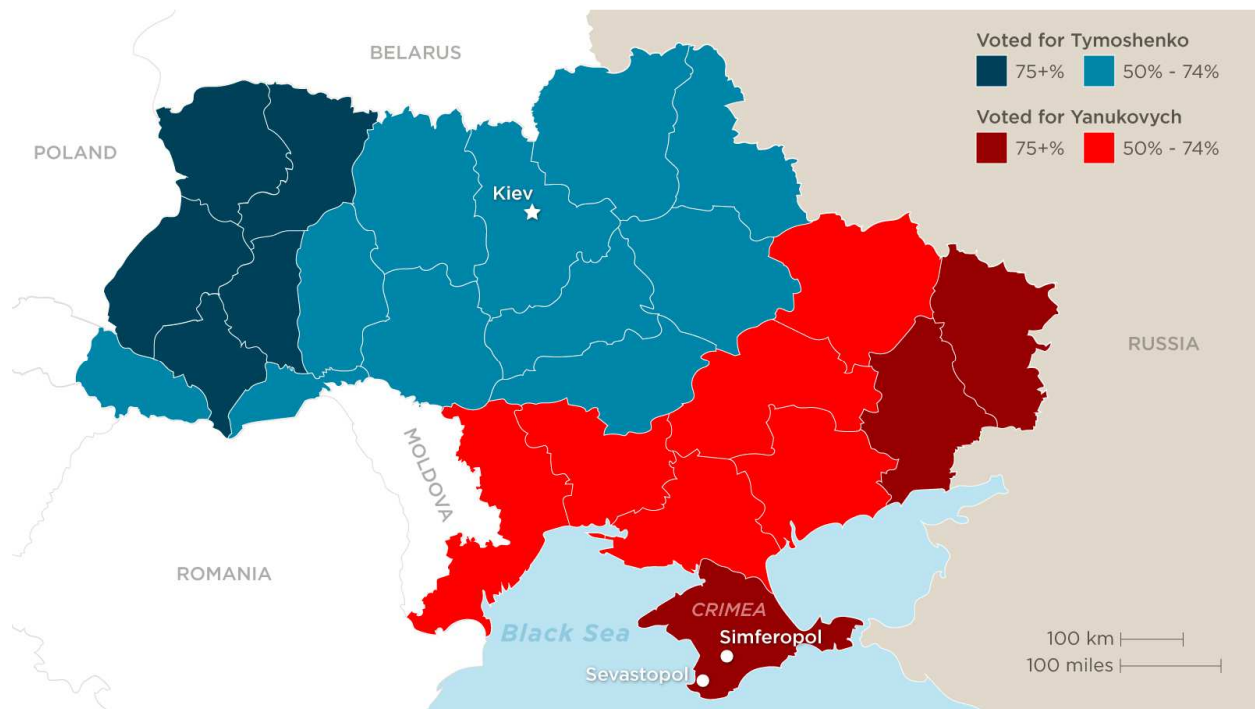
The task which lies before this committee must be understood from the political history of Ukraine as well as the history of arms in the country. Modern Ukraine is not so much a traditional nation-state as much as it is the remnant of various, since-fallen imperial territories cobbled together within a single border (see *Figure 1*). The area of Ukraine most involved in the antigovernment protests of the Euromaidan largely comprises Galicia, a section of western Ukraine which was once a part of the Austrian crownlands. In addition, antigovernment sentiment also emerged from the parts of western and central Ukraine which had once experienced Hungarian, Romanian, Moldovan, and Lithuanian rule.¹⁴

Figure 1: Political Map of Ukraine 2020¹⁵



However, much of eastern and southern Ukraine has traditionally been under Russian control, with Crimea under direct rule as recently as 1954.¹⁶ These are also the regions which elected and supported the Yanukovich government from 2010 to 2014¹⁷ (See *Figure 2*). It is along these lines where the Ukrainian identity today is drawn: most who come from regions which were once the territories of European kingdoms identified as Ukrainian and wished to join the European Union. However, those from areas that were once under Russian rule, which are over ninety percent Russophone, were opposed to further integrating with Europe.¹⁸

Figure 2: Map of results of the 2010 Ukrainian Presidential election¹⁹



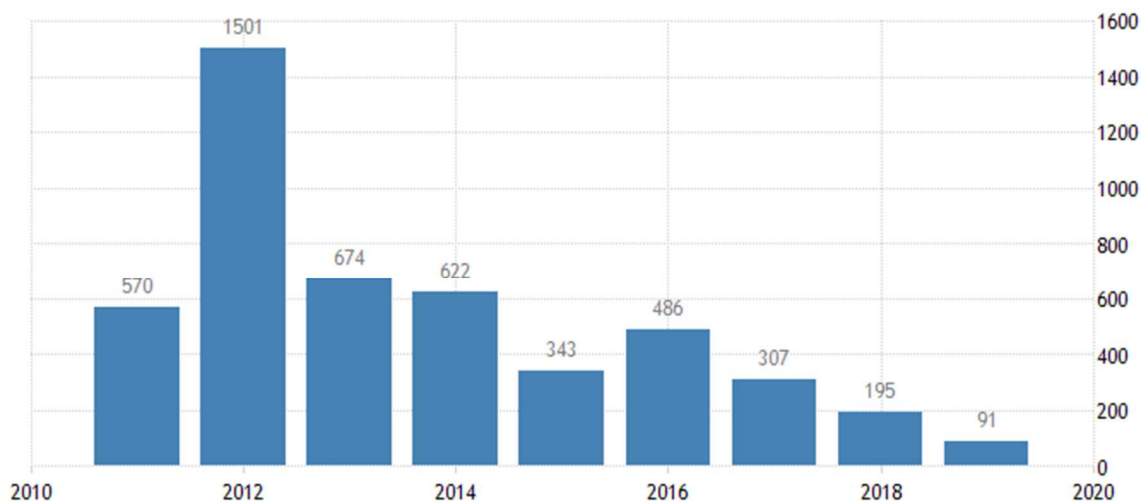
While authority over Ukraine has been experienced differently from region to region in the past thousand years, rule of Ukraine over the past hundred years has been far more consistent. The country had been under Soviet rule for the vast majority of that time, with most of Ukraine in the USSR from 1922 to 1991, and all of the territory in the modern version of the country from 1939 to 1991.²⁰²¹ The first iteration of the modern state began in 1917 with the

creation of the Ukrainian People's Republic. While born from the same political strife as the Soviet Union, this independent republic existed until the Bolsheviks waged war to bring it under Muscovite rule, which was achieved in 1922.²² After Soviet integration, any advocacy for Ukrainian nationalism was met with repression, with some scholars claiming that the Holodomor, a period of famine in Ukraine which claimed 3.9 million lives from 1931 to 1934, was generated by Soviet policies and were a "...part of a systematic assault not just on Ukraine, but on the very *idea* of Ukraine."²³

Since the Soviets used Ukraine for grain production due to its fertile land, the famine was all the more unnecessary and egregious. However, that was not the only industry that the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) housed.²⁴ The republic was critical to the USSR's military apparatus, and contained large stockpiles of weaponry, reserve troops, and a significant portion of the arms production industry.²⁵ The importance of Ukraine as a source of weapons production was not limited to Ukraine's Soviet days as, "[with] the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine inherited 1,810 defense enterprises with a total workforce of 2.7 million employees, which amounted to 30% of the Soviet Union's defense industry."²⁶

With the collapse of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, all of the weaponry in Ukraine was inherited by the independent Ukrainian state, leading to an enormous surplus in arms. There were plans for the Ukrainian arsenal and military to be vastly reduced at independence, since it no longer had to help provide for all the Soviet republics.²⁷ This phenomenon was not unique to Ukraine either: many of the state's post-Soviet neighbors experienced a similar surplus in arms and similar problems in keeping them secured.²⁸ Ukraine's maintenance of the arms production apparatus that it inherited has made it a global arms export powerhouse, although its sales have atrophied significantly since the beginning of the war.²⁹

Figure 3: Ukrainian Arms Sales from 2011 to 2019³⁰



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | SIPRI

Due to Ukraine's long history of citizens taking up arms—whether in World War I or the Ukrainian People's Republic struggle against the Bolsheviks—it is common for Ukrainians to have small arms stored in their homes or buried in local stockpiles.³¹ While members of the population have begun to store newer weaponry, some militiamen have been spotted wielding World War II era weaponry, likely coming from these civilian stockpiles.³²

Current Situation in Ukraine

The War in the Donbas has produced a series of ceasefires in the past several months that have been violated soon after being declared. Most of the conflict is still waged by militias, but each side has found state legitimization for these volunteer battalions. For the pro-government forces, this has meant the adoption of many militias into the Ukrainian military, although without any significant change in how these former militias operate.³³ In practice, this signifies that the Ukrainian state has been propping up right-wing paramilitary organizations, which have access

to the Ukrainian military's arsenal. This has also been the case even those paramilitary organizations which have not been officially integrated.³⁴

For the separatist forces, the Russian government has indirectly intertwined the separatist militias with their military. The Russian government has bestowed Russian citizenship on those living and fighting in occupied areas of eastern Ukraine.³⁵ If the situation is allowed to continue in this way, arms will continue to flow into dangerous, unchecked militias. The conflict could evolve into active attacks onto what Russia has codified as their land and citizens, making the situation not merely a civil conflict, but a more complex international dilemma.

Separatist Control of Eastern Ukraine as of February 2020³⁶



Focus Questions:

- 1) Is it necessary to end the conflict in order to effectively control the number of arms flowing through the region?
- 2) Should action be taken against either the Ukrainian or Russian states to mitigate the conflict and reduce the number of arms in the region?

Endnotes

-
- ¹ United Nations Website. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>
- ² Ibid.
- ³ United Nations Charter. *Chapter IV: The General Assembly*. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-iv/index.html>
- ⁴ “Conflict in Ukraine | Global Conflict Tracker,” Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018), <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>.
- ⁵ Steven Pifer, “Ukraine: Six Years after the Maidan,” Brookings (Brookings, February 21, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/02/21/ukraine-six-years-after-the-maidan/>.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ “Conflict in Ukraine | Global Conflict Tracker,” Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018), <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Francesco Buscemi et al., “Illicit Firearms Proliferation in the EU Periphery: the Case of Ukraine,” Flemish Peace Institute, 2017, https://www.flemishpeaceinstitute.eu/safte/files/project_safte_eu_neighbourhood_ukraine.pdf, Pg. 468.
- ¹³ Ibid 471.
- ¹⁴ John-Paul Himka, “The History behind the Regional Conflict in Ukraine,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (2015): pp. 129-136, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/569805/pdf>.
- ¹⁵ “Ukraine Map and Satellite Image” Geology.com. 2020. <https://geology.com/world/ukraine-satellite-image.shtml>
- ¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Viktor-Yanukovich>

¹⁸ John-Paul Himka, “The History behind the Regional Conflict in Ukraine,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (2015): pp. 129-136, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/569805/pdf>.

¹⁹ “A Divided Ukraine,” CNN (Cable News Network, March 3, 2014), <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2014/02/world/ukraine-divided/>.

²⁰ John-Paul Himka, “The History behind the Regional Conflict in Ukraine,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (2015): pp. 129-136, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/569805/pdf>.

²¹ O. Eliseyovich Zasenka et al., "Ukraine: World War I and the Struggle for Independence." Encyclopedia Britannica, March 5, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/World-War-I-and-the-struggle-for-independence>

²² David Patrikarakos, “Why Stalin Starved Ukraine,” *The New Republic*, November 21, 2017, <https://newrepublic.com/article/145953/stalin-starved-ukraine>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Francesco Buscemi et al., “Illicit Firearms Proliferation in the EU Periphery: the Case of Ukraine,” Flemish Peace Institute, 2017, https://www.flemishpeaceinstitute.eu/safte/files/project_safte_eu_neighbourhood_ukraine.pdf, Pg. 466.

²⁶ Ibid 467.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Weapons Sales in Ukraine decreased to 91 USD Million in 2019 from 195 USD Million in 2018,” *Trading Economics*, 2020. <https://tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/weapons-sales>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Francesco Buscemi et al., “Illicit Firearms Proliferation in the EU Periphery: the Case of Ukraine,” Flemish Peace Institute, 2017, https://www.flemishpeaceinstitute.eu/safte/files/project_safte_eu_neighbourhood_ukraine.pdf, Pg. 466.

³² Ibid 469.

³³ Ibid 468.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Peter Dickinson, “All Roads Lead to Ukraine in Putin's Global Hybrid War,” Atlantic Council, January 5, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/all-roads-lead-to-ukraine-in-putins-global-hybrid-war/>.

³⁶“Ukraine conflict: Deadly flare-up on eastern front line,” BBC News, February 18, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51543463>.