

# Crimean crisis

December 6, 2018

## Manifest pedagogy

Cold war as a phenomenon can be either asked in World history or International Relations. When asked in IR, its impact on India should be known. Tangential aspects in this area are what will be the impact on global politics and the necessity of co-operation of U.S and Russia in areas like Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea and Denuclearization issues, which aspirants generally tend to miss

## In news

*Declaration of Martial law by Ukraine in its border areas*

## Placing it in syllabus

Paper 1: Cold war

Paper 2: International issues (Not mentioned in syllabus explicitly)

## Static dimensions

1. Cold War
2. Crimean War
3. Russia as regional and global power

## Current dimensions

1. Geopolitics of major powers
2. Post Trump global dynamics
3. Cold war in recent times

# Content

## What is it?

Crimea became bone of contention between Russia and Ukraine. The Crimean peninsula was annexed from Ukraine by the Russian Federation in February–March 2014 and since then it has been administered as two Russian federal subjects—the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol. The annexation was accompanied by a military intervention by Russia in Crimea that took place in the aftermath of the 2014 Ukrainian revolution and was part of wider unrest across southern and eastern Ukraine. It lies on a peninsula stretching out from the south of Ukraine between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. It is separated from Russia to the east by the narrow Kerch Strait.



## Key Highlights of the crisis:

**Crimea was annexed by the Russian Empire** during the reign of Catherine the Great in 1783 and remained part of Russia until 1954, when it was transferred to Ukraine under the then Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

**The port of Sevastopol is a major naval base** and has been home to the Black Sea Fleet since 1783. Following the collapse of the USSR, the fleet was divided up between Russia and Ukraine.

**The continuing presence of the Russian fleet in Sevastopol** has been a focus of tension between Russia and Ukraine. In 2008, Ukraine – then under the pro-Western President Viktor Yushchenko – demanded that Moscow not to use the Black Sea Fleet during its conflict with Georgia.

**Both countries had agreed to allow the Russian fleet to stay until 2017**, but after the election of the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich as president in 2010, Ukraine agreed to extend the

lease by 25 years beyond 2017, in return for cheaper Russian gas.

**In early 2014 Crimea became the focus of the worst East-West crisis since the Cold War**, after Ukraine's pro-Moscow president Viktor Yanukovich was driven from power by pro-Western protesters in Kiev.

**Kremlin-backed forces** seized control of the Crimean peninsula, and the territory, which has a Russian-speaking majority, voted to join Russia in a referendum that Ukraine and the West deem illegal.

**Present scenario:**

**Ukraine imposes martial law** after Russia seizes ships near Crimea.

The move came barely 24 hours after Russian forces opened fire on the three Ukrainian ships near the Kerch Strait, a narrow sea passage that divides Crimea from mainland Russia, wounding six servicemen and escalating a months-old naval confrontation that threatens to reignite Europe's hottest armed conflict.

**Crimean crisis: a new phase of cold war?**

**The referendum in Crimea on 16th March** gave a 97 percent support in favour of joining Russia. The Western countries have held the referendum to be illegal. Undeterred, on 19th March, Russia signed a treaty with Crimea formalizing the incorporation thus reversing the 1954 transfer of Crimea to Ukraine.

These developments have escalated tensions between Russia and the West to a level not seen since 1991. Russia has been suspended from the G8.

**The US and EU have also imposed sanctions** against a dozen or so Russian and Crimean officials banning their travel to Europe and the US freezing their assets. This is a symbolic

reaction but a chill has descended over Russia-West relations.

**Russia-West relations have been tense since the Georgian crisis in 2008.** President Obama's effort to "reset" the US-Russia relations in 2010 has not succeeded. The Crimean crisis is far more serious than the Georgia issue. The Russian-West fault line runs through Ukraine. Russia has made it clear that it will not accept Western meddling in Ukraine.

**There is a talk of deeper sanctions.** Given the substantial trade and economic cooperation between Russia and the members of the EU, sanctions will hurt both ways. But Russia, due to its economic weakness, is more vulnerable than Europe.

**Crimean crisis and present Ukraine and Russian conflict is one the many areas of manifestation of cold war,** some others being -N.S decision to withdraw from INF treaty, from Joint Comprehensive plan of Action with Iran, allegations of Russia meddling with Presidential elections, expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe etc. The actions of the two countries do not just impact the region but the entire global politics. Their co-operation is important for both regional and global stability.

## **Test yourself: Mould your thoughts**

Cold war between U.S and U.S.S.R never saw an end after 1991 and the recent Ukraine-Russian conflict is one such example. Analyzing the statement discuss the impact of the great powers rivalry on global stability.