

March 11, 2014

Crimea is an autonomous republic in Ukraine that has recently been a hotbed of international tensions. In the wake of the Ukrainian revolution that resulted in the ouster of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich, a language bill was introduced to make Ukrainian the sole official state language. This move resulted in widespread protests in Crimea, a majority Russian-speaking area, although the bill was never passed.

On February 28, 2014, unmarked Russian troops occupied Crimean airports to international censure, and the next day Russian President Vladimir Putin was authorized by the Russian parliament to use force in assisting Ukraine in what he declared an insurrection and unlawful government takeover. Pro-Russian sentiment was high in Crimea, and their Supreme Council voted on March 6 to become part of the Russian Federation, and this will be put to the Crimean population in a March 16 referendum. This is contrary to Ukraine's constitution which does not allow alterations to the state's territory based solely on a single region's referendum.

The Crimean parliament took another step away from the rest of Ukraine on March 11 by approving a declaration of independence, creating the Republic of Crimea from the autonomous republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Russia, in contrast to Ukraine and much of the West, has recognized this as lawful.

Tensions in the region are high, spreading to all parts of the globe as the U.S. and other NATO countries get involved. In the days leading up to the March 16 referendum, the future of Crimea is uncertain.