



## In Brief: Ukraine crisis

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On Friday, foreign ministers of Germany France and Poland met with Ukrainian leaders and agreed a deal to set up a national unity government, restore the 2004 constitution, hold presidential elections by December, and set up an independent investigation into the violence. The parties undertook not to impose a state of emergency. The deal was [supported by the UK Prime Minister](#).

On Saturday the Ukrainian parliament, which nominally has a majority for the deposed president's Party of the Regions and its allies, abandoned the deal, stripped Viktor Yanukovich of his powers and made former parliamentary Speaker Olexander Turchynov Interim president. It had already voted on Friday to release former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from prison. It also brought forward the date for early presidential elections to May. A new government should be formed by Tuesday.

Ukraine's interim government [has issued a warrant](#) for the arrest of Viktor Yanukovich for the 'mass murder of peaceful citizens' during the recent disturbances, while the Party of the Regions has disowned Yanukovich and moved into opposition. 77 deputies for the Party of the Regions have left it. The whereabouts of Yanokovych is unknown but he is thought still to be in Ukraine.

EU foreign affairs High Representative Baroness Ashton is due to go to Ukraine on Monday 24 February to speak to leaders and try to encourage dialogue. A decision to impose targeted EU sanctions on those responsible for the deaths of more than 60 protesters has been made but no list of names has so far been issued. Angela Merkel of Germany telephoned Vladimir Putin on Sunday. They agreed that Ukraine's stability and territorial integrity must be safeguarded.

G20 finance ministers discussed emergency financial aid for Ukraine in Sydney at the weekend and [Olli Rehn, EU economics commissioner, said](#) "It will have to be measured in billions rather than hundreds of millions." Christine Lagarde of the International Monetary Fund said that Ukraine would at least have to start on economic reforms. The US said that it is willing to supplement any IMF package, dependent on reforms. UK chancellor [George Osborne has said](#) that he is prepared to contribute to the multilateral aid effort: 'We should be there with a chequebook to help the people of Ukraine rebuild their country.'

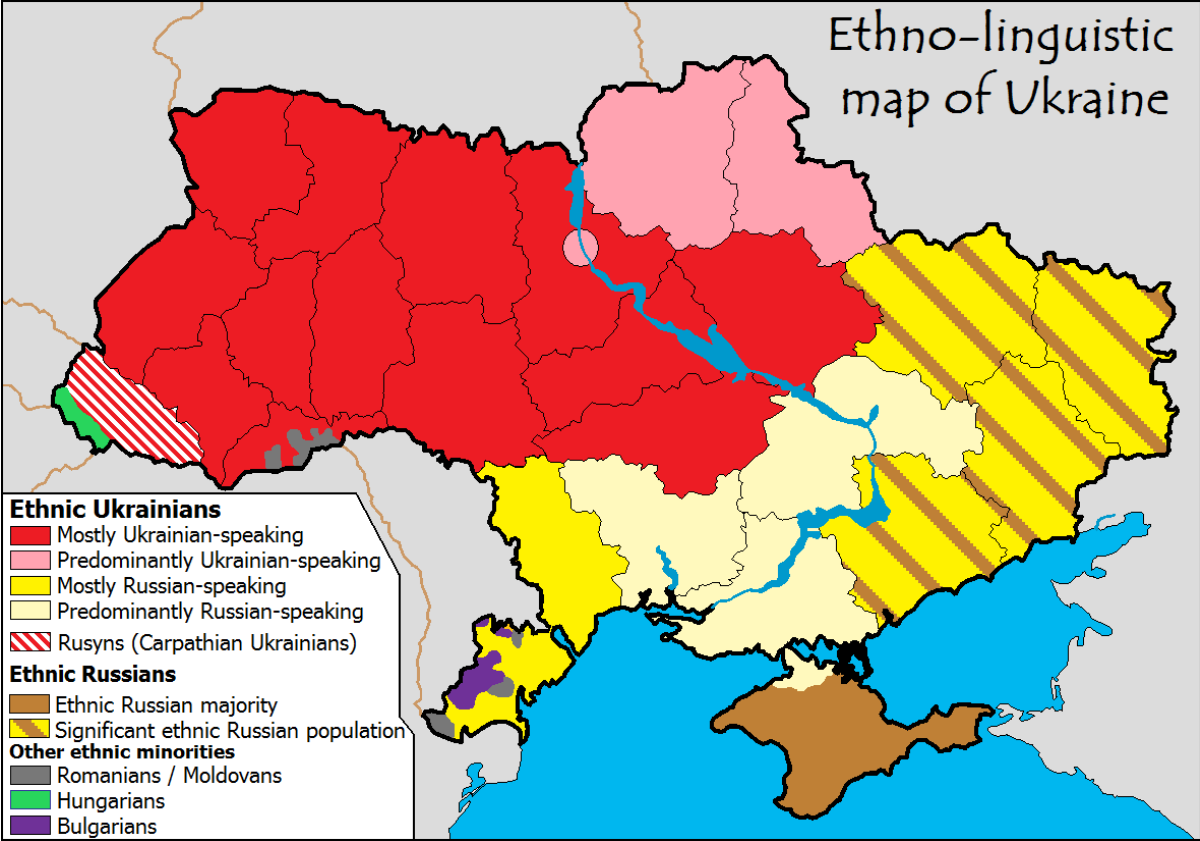
Russia had previously said that it would make available a package of \$15 billion as well as cutting the price that Ukraine pays for Russian gas by 30%. \$3 billion of Russian support had already been supplied in the form of Russian buying Ukrainian government bonds at the end of December. A further purchase of \$2 billion has been put on hold after a bond auction was cancelled last week.

Russia has called on the parties to stick to the terms of the deal agreed on Friday, saying that the opposition keeps presenting new demands, has failed to disarm. Sergei [Lavrov](#),

Russia's Foreign Minister, said that the opposition was being led by 'armed extremists and pogromists whose actions pose a direct threat to Ukraine's sovereignty and constitutional order,' and called on the EU to rein in these 'rampaging hooligans'.

Split?

The fear for now is that the country may start to disintegrate. While this might seem a solution to political disagreement between the east and west of the country, it would be very risky. There is no convenient boundary separating the generally pro-western Ukrainian-speakers, who tended to vote for Tymoshenko/Yushchenko from the more pro-Russian Russian speakers in the east of the country, who tended to vote for Yanukovych.



Map: Wikipedia commons

Any violence involved in the split would run the risk of a Russian military intervention to protect Russians, Russian-speakers, and the Russian military base at Sevastopol in the Crimea, the Russian-populated peninsula in the Black Sea. A Russian official said: 'If Ukraine breaks apart, it will trigger a war. They will lose Crimea first [because] we will go in and protect [it], just as we did in Georgia.' There were reports at the weekend of militias forming in Crimea.

Ukraine's armed forces look to be on the side of the demonstrators for now. Yanukovych had previously dismissed the chief of staff General Zamana for refusing to send the army to disperse the Maidan demonstration; the new government has installed him as interim defence minister and on Sunday an official statement was issued by the military saying it would not intervene in the crisis. However, if it came to a possible break-up of the country or intervention from Russian troops it is not clear how the Ukrainian military would react.