

Ukraine and Russia Timeline of Events

The History: Russia and Ukraine Over the Last 30 Years

Source: <https://www.opb.org/article/2022/02/12/understanding-how-ukraine-got-here-a-timeline-of-its-history-through-today/>

Source 2: <https://foreigndesknews.com/top-story/the-history-russia-and-ukraine-over-the-last-30-years/>

Source 3: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/events-leading-up-russias-invasion-ukraine-2022-02-28/>

The 1990s: Independence from the Soviet Union

- **July 16, 1990** The Rada, the new Ukrainian parliament formed out of the previous Soviet legislature, votes to declare independence from the Soviet Union. Authorities recall Ukrainian soldiers from other parts of the USSR and vote to shut down *the Chernobyl nuclear power plant* in northern Ukraine.
- **August 25, 1991:** After an attempted coup in Moscow, Ukraine declares its independence.
- **1990s:** Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, about 250,000 Crimean Tatars and their descendants return to Crimea after deportation to Siberia and Central Asia by Stalin in 1944.
- **1992** As NATO allies contemplate adding central and Eastern European members for the first time, Ukraine formally establishes relations with the alliance although it does not join. NATO's secretary general visits Kyiv, and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk visits NATO headquarters in Brussels.
- **December 1994** After the Soviet Union's collapse, Ukraine is left with the world's third-largest nuclear stockpile. In a treaty called the *Budapest Memorandum*, Ukraine agrees to trade away its *intercontinental ballistic* missiles, warheads and other nuclear infrastructure in exchange for guarantees that the three treaty signatories — the U.S., the U.K. and Russia — would "respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine."
- **1994 to 2004** In 10 years as president, Leonid Kuchma helps transition Ukraine from a Soviet republic to a capitalist society, privatizing businesses and working

to improve international economic opportunities. But in 2000 his presidency is rocked by scandal over audio recordings that reveal he ordered the death of a journalist. He remains in power four more years.

- **1996:** Ukraine adopts a new, democratic constitution.

The 2000s: Wavering between the West and Russia

- **May 2002:** The Ukrainian government announces their decision to launch a formal bid to join NATO.
- **November 2004:** The leader of the Ukrainian opposition, Viktor Yushchenko, launches a mass protest, dubbed the Orange Revolution, over **rigged elections** that resulted in the victory of Viktor Yanukovych, a pro-Russian candidate. The Ukrainian Supreme Court later annulled the polls result.
- **2004** The presidential election pits Kuchma's incumbent party — led by his hand-picked successor Viktor Yanukovych and supported by Russian President Vladimir Putin — against a popular, pro-democracy opposition leader, Viktor Yushchenko.
 - In the final months of the campaign, Yushchenko falls mysteriously ill, is disfigured and is **confirmed by doctors** to have been poisoned.
 - Yanukovych wins the election amid accusations of rigging. **Massive protests follow**, and public outcry becomes known as the Orange Revolution. After a third vote, Yushchenko prevails.
- **January 2005** Yushchenko takes office as president, with Yulia Tymoshenko as prime minister.
- **December 2005:** After winning the December election re-run, Viktor Yushchenko wins the presidency. As a result, relations between Ukraine and Russia worsen, which leads to routine disputes over pipeline transit fees and gas supplies.
- **2008** Following efforts by Yushchenko and Tymoshenko to bring Ukraine into NATO, the two formally request in January that Ukraine be granted a "membership action plan," the first step in the process of joining the alliance.
 - President George W. Bush supports Ukraine's membership, but France and Germany oppose it after Russia voices displeasure.
 - In April, **NATO responds with a compromise:** It promises that Ukraine will one day be a member of the alliance, but does not put it on a specific path

for how to do so.

- **January 2009** On Jan. 1, Gazprom, the state-owned Russian gas company, suddenly stops pumping gas to Ukraine, following months of politically fraught negotiations over gas prices. Because Eastern and central European countries rely on pipelines through Ukraine to receive gas imports from Russia, *the gas crisis quickly spreads beyond Ukraine's borders*.
 - Under international pressure to resolve the crisis, Tymoshenko negotiates a new deal with Putin, and gas flows resume on Jan. 20. *Much of Europe still relies on Russian gas today*.
- **February 2010:** In the second round of the presidential election, Viktor Yanukovich is declared the winner of the presidential election. He says Ukraine should be a "neutral state," cooperating with both Russia and Western alliances like NATO.
- **June 2010:** The Ukrainian parliament votes to abandon their aspirations for NATO membership.
- **2011** Ukrainian prosecutors open criminal investigations into Tymoshenko, alleging corruption and misuse of government resources. In October, a court finds her guilty of "abuse of power" during the 2009 negotiations with Russia over the gas crisis and sentences her to seven years in prison, prompting concerns in the West that Ukrainian leaders are persecuting political opponents.
- **November 2013:** Thousands of protestors take to the streets in Kyiv in the "Euromaiden" protests to protest Viktor Yanukovich's and the Ukrainian government's decision to abandon plans to sign an association agreement with the EU in favor of creating closer ties to Russia. Protestors blame this decision on Russian pressure.

2014: The Maidan revolution and Crimea's annexation

- **November 2013 through February 2014** Just days before it is to be signed, Yanukovich announces that he will refuse to sign an association agreement with the European Union to bring Ukraine into a free trade agreement. He cites pressure from Russia as a reason for his decision.
 - The announcement sparks huge protests across Ukraine – the largest since the Orange Revolution – calling for Yanukovich to resign. Protesters begin

camping out in Kyiv's Maidan Square and occupy government buildings, including Kyiv's city hall and the justice ministry.

- In late February, violence between police and protesters leaves more than 100 dead in the single bloodiest week in Ukraine's post-Soviet history.
 - Ahead of a scheduled impeachment vote on Feb. 22, Yanukovych flees, eventually arriving in Russia. Ukraine's parliament votes *unanimously to remove Yanukovych* and install an interim government, which announces it will sign the EU agreement and votes to free Tymoshenko from prison.
 - The new government *charges Yanukovych with mass murder* of the Maidan protesters and issues a warrant for his arrest.
 - Russia declares that the change in Ukraine's government is an illegal coup. Almost immediately, armed men appear at checkpoints and facilities in the Crimea peninsula. *Putin at first denies they are Russian soldiers*, but later admits it.
 - Protests continue to spread across Ukraine, and security forces kill at least 77 protestors in Kyiv. President Viktor Yanukovych is impeached through a vote by the Ukrainian parliament, but Yanukovych flees to Russia upon the the government's issuance of a warrant for his arrest. He decries his removal as a "coup."
 - Russian forces annex Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and seize the regional and government buildings. This prompts the biggest East-West showdown since the Cold War. The United States and the EU impose harsher sanctions on Russia in response to the annexation.
- **March 2014:** After two weeks of Russian occupation, the regional parliament holds a referendum on the status of Crimea. Over 95% vote in favor of joining the Russian Federation, prompting Russia to sign a treaty with Crimean leaders to annex the Crimean peninsula formally. In response, leaders of the G8 remove Russia from the bloc, which is now known as the G7. In a non-binding resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly, the annexation of Crimea is declared illegal.
 - With Russian troops in control of the peninsula, the Crimean parliament votes to secede from Ukraine and join Russia. A public referendum follows, with 97% of residents voting in favor of secession, although the results are disputed.

- *Putin finalizes the Russian annexation of Crimea* in a March 18 announcement to Russia's parliament. In response, the U.S. and allies in Europe impose sanctions on Russia. They have never recognized Russia's annexation. It remains the only time that a European nation's borders have been changed by military force since World War II.
- **April 2014:** Pro-Russian armed separatist militants seize the Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine, near the Russian border. The militants are believed to be supported by the Russian government, though Moscow denies any involvement. The Ukrainian government launches a military operation in response.
 - With some 40,000 Russian troops gathered on Ukraine's eastern border, violence breaks out in the eastern Ukraine region of Donbas – violence that continues to this day. Russian-supported separatist forces storm government buildings in cities in the east. Russia denies that its troops are on Ukrainian soil, but Ukrainian officials insist otherwise.
- **March 2014- December 2014:** Throughout the year, Stephen Harper, the then-Canadian prime minister, announces numerous sanctions that affect Russian and Ukrainian companies and individuals that were involved in the annexation of Crimea and the armed separatist movement in the Donetsk region. Russia imposes entry bans on 13 Canadian lawmakers and officials in response.
- **May 2014:** Petro Poroshenko wins the Ukrainian presidential election using a pro-Western platform.
 - The pro-West politician Petro Poroshenko, a former government minister and head of the Council of Ukraine's National Bank, is elected Ukraine's president. He promotes reform, including measures to address corruption and lessen Ukraine's dependence on Russia for energy and financial support.
- **July 2014:** Pro-Russian forces shoot down a Malaysian airliner over the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine, resulting in the deaths of all 298 people on board the aircraft.
- **September 2014:** NATO confirms that Russian troops and heavy military equipment are entering eastern Ukraine.
- **October 2014:** Ukrainian parliamentary elections result in a majority of pro-Western parties

2015 through 2020: Russia looms

- **February 2015:** As a result of Germany and France brokering a new Donbas deal during talks at Belarus, a tenuous ceasefire is reached.
 - The Minsk group meets again in Belarus to find a more successful agreement to end the fighting, *resulting in the Minsk II agreement*. It too has been unsuccessful at ending the violence. From 2014 through today, more than 14,000 people have been killed, tens of thousands wounded and more than a million displaced.
 - Together, the annexation of Crimea and the Russian-backed violence in the east have pushed Ukrainian public sentiment toward the West, strengthening interest in joining NATO and the EU.
- **September 2015:** Canada begins Operation UNIFER, sending around 200 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to Ukraine every six months to assist the Security Forces of Ukraine with military training. The CAF members are expected to remain in Ukraine until March 2022.
 - **Sept. 5** Representatives from Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany meet in Belarus to attempt to negotiate an end to the violence in Donbas. They sign the first Minsk agreement, *a deal between Ukraine and Russia* to quiet the violence under a fragile ceasefire. *The ceasefire soon breaks*, and fighting continues into the new year.
- **June 2016- March 2021:** More Russian and Ukrainian companies and individuals are added to Canada's sanctions list, resulting in 440 individuals and entities being affected so far.
- **July 2016:** The Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement is signed, which begins in August 2017.
- **July 2017:** All signatories ratify Ukraine's association agreement with the EU, which comes into force on September 1, 2017.
 - **2016 and 2017** As fighting in the Donbas continues, Russia repeatedly strikes at Ukraine in a series of cyberattacks, including a 2016 attack on Kyiv's power grid that causes a major blackout. In 2017, *a large-scale assault affected key Ukrainian infrastructure*, including its national bank and electrical grid. (Cyberattacks from Russia have continued through the present; *the latest major attack targeted government websites in January 2022*.)

- **May 2018:** President Vladimir Putin of Russia officially opens a bridge that links southern Russia to the Crimean peninsula. Ukraine calls this action illegal.
- **October 2018:** The Ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople allows Ukraine to set up its own Orthodox Church that is independent of Russian ecclesiastical supervision.
- **July 2019:** Volodymyr Zelensky, a television actor and comedian, is elected as the President of Ukraine in a landslide vote over the incumbent, Petro Poroshenko. His party, the Servant of the People Party, wins early parliamentary elections.
- **September 2019:** Whistleblowers allege that then-U.S. president Donald Trump froze US\$400 million in security aid for Ukraine in an attempt to coerce of Ukrainian president Zelensky to investigate Trump's political rival Joseph Biden and his family for damaging information, embroiling Ukraine in a U.S. impeachment row.
- **September 2019:** Ukraine and Russia swap prisoners captured in the wake of Moscow's seizure of Crimea and intervention in the Donbas.
 - **2019 Summary** In April, *comedian and actor Volodymyr Zelenskyy is elected president* in a landslide rebuke of the Poroshenko and the status quo, which includes a stagnating economy and the ongoing conflict with Russia.
 - During his campaign, Zelenskyy vowed to make peace with Russia and end the war in the Donbas.
 - His early efforts to reach a solution to the violence are slowed by President Trump, who *briefly blocks U.S. military aid to Ukraine* and suggests to Zelenskyy that *he should instead work with Putin to resolve the crisis*.
 - In a phone call with President Trump in July 2019, Zelenskyy requests a visit to the White House to meet with Trump about U.S. backing of Ukraine's efforts to push off Russia. *Trump asks Zelenskyy for "a favor":* an investigation into energy company Burisma and the Bidens. A White House whistleblower complains, leading to President Trump's first impeachment in Dec. 2019.
 - Several U.S. officials later testify that Zelenskyy was close to announcing such an investigation, though he ultimately demurs, *saying Ukrainians are "tired" of Burisma*.

2021: The crisis escalates

- **February 2021:** The United States accuses Russia of blocking a solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and U.S. President Joseph Biden states that the United States will “never” accept Russia’s annexation of Crimea.
- **March 2021:** EU President Charles Michel announces that the EU will maintain its sanctions on Russia.
- **April 2021:** Ukraine denounces an upsurge of violence in the country, and Russia claims that it fears a “full-fledged war” in the region.
 - Russia sends about 100,000 troops to Ukraine's borders, ostensibly for military exercises. Although few analysts believe an invasion is imminent, Zelenskyy urges NATO leadership to put Ukraine on a timeline for membership. Later that month, *Russia says it will withdraw the troops*, but tens of thousands remain.
- **August** Two years after his entanglement with former President Trump, *Zelenskyy visits the White House to meet with President Biden*. Biden emphasizes the U.S. is committed "to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russian aggression" but repeats that Ukraine has not yet met the conditions necessary to join NATO.
- **October 2021- December 2021:** Satellite imagery shows Russia begins moving troops and military equipment near the Russia-Ukraine border, reigniting concerns of a potential Russia invasion. Further satellite imagery and social media posts show armor, missiles, and other heavy weaponry moving towards Ukraine with no official explanation from Moscow.
- **November** *Russia renews its troop presence near the Ukrainian border*, alarming American intelligence officials, who travel to Brussels to brief NATO allies on the situation. "We're not sure exactly what Mr. Putin is up to, but these movements certainly have our attention," says Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.
- **December 2021:** More than 100,000 Russian troops were placed near the Ukrainian border. U.S. intelligence officials warn of a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine planned for early 2022
- **December 7, 2021:** U.S. President Biden speaks with Russian President Putin in a video call, warning of economic sanctions should Russia invade Ukraine.
- **December 2021:** The Russian foreign ministry issues a set of demands, which include a ban on Ukraine joining NATO and a reduction of NATO troops and

military equipment in eastern Europe, in order for Russian military forces to be withdrawn from the Ukrainian border. The United States and other NATO allies reject these demands and warn Russia of retaliation in the form of further economic sanctions if Ukraine is invaded. Other assistance is deployed to Ukraine, including defensive weaponry and small arms.

- **December** President Biden, speaking with Putin on a phone call, *urges Russia not to invade Ukraine*, warning of "real costs" of doing so.
- Putin issues *a contentious set of security demands*. Among them, he asks NATO to permanently bar Ukraine from membership and to withdraw forces stationed in countries that joined the alliance after 1997, including the Balkans and Romania. Putin also demands a written response from the U.S. and NATO.

2022: Fears of war

- **January 2, 2022:** U.S. President Biden promises, in a call with Ukrainian president Zelensky, that the United States and U.S. allies will act "decisively if Russia further invades Ukraine."
- **January 7, 2022:** The foreign ministers of countries in NATO meet to discuss the Russian buildup on Ukraine's border and their upcoming meeting with Russia.
- **January 10, 2022:** U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman begins negotiation with Russian counterpart Sergei Ryabkov over the military buildup on the Ukrainian border and on Russia's security demands from Western countries. Both sides dismissed expectations of a breakthrough before the meeting began.
 - Leaders and diplomats from the U.S., Russia and European countries meet repeatedly to avert a crisis. *In early January*, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov tells U.S. officials that Russia has no plans to invade Ukraine.
- **January 12, 2022:** Delegates from NATO countries and Russia meet in Brussels over Russia's military buildup of the Ukrainian border
- **January 13, 2022:** OSCE meets for the third time that week to discuss diffusion tensions between Russia and Western countries.

- **January 13, 2022:** A *cyberattack* bringing down several Ukrainian government websites and displaying a message stating that Ukrainians should “be afraid and expect the worst” occurs in the night and is believed to have been executed by Russia.
- **January 14, 2022:** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov states that Russia wants a written response to its security demands from the U.S. and NATO
- **January 18, 2022:** A bipartisan group of U.S. senators met with Ukrainian President Zelensky to show solidarity with Ukraine and warn against Russian aggression.
- **January 19, 2022:** U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Ukrainian President Zelensky in Kyiv and called on Russia to maintain “a diplomatic and peaceful path” amid mounting fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- **January 19, 2022:** U.S. President Biden claims that Russian President *Putin will likely “move in” on Ukraine*. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki says that any kind of Russian invasion will be met by a “swift, severe, and united response” from the U.S. and its allies.
- **January 20, 2022:** A State Department official claims that Washington D.C. greenlit a *transfer of U.S. weaponry* from the Baltic countries to Ukraine.
- **January 21, 2022:** *Talks occur in Geneva* between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that weigh possible negotiated outcomes to security tensions in Eastern Europe.
- **January 21, 2022:** Ukraine’s military intelligence states that Russia is increasing arms shipments to the separatist-controlled areas in eastern Ukraine as Russian foreign minister Lavrov told reporters that Russia has “no plans” to attack Ukraine. U.S. President Joe Biden states that “if any Russian units move across the Ukraine border,” it will trigger a severe economic response.
- **January 22, 2022:** Canada offers Ukraine a \$120 million loan aimed at bolstering Ukraine’s economy. PM Trudeau of Canada also claims that Canada is looking into expanding its UNIFER mission to provide “defensive weapons and equipment” and imposing more sanctions on Russia.
- **January 23, 2022:** U.S. President *Biden considers deploying* several thousand US troops, warships, and aircrafts, to NATO allies in the Baltics and Eastern Europe after senior Pentagon officials presented Biden with military options to shift military assets closer to Russia

- **January 23, 2022:** The British government has claimed in a public statement, backed by U.S. officials, that Russia appears to be developing plans to install a pro-Moscow leader in Ukraine.
- **January 23, 2022:** The State Department orders family members of U.S. Embassy personnel in Kyiv to leave Ukraine.
- **January 26, 2022:** Representatives from the U.S. and NATO *deliver their written responses to Putin's demands* on Jan. 26. In the responses, officials say they cannot bar Ukraine from joining NATO, but signal a willingness to negotiate over smaller issues like arms control.

February 2022

- **February** Diplomatic efforts pick up the pace across Europe. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz both travel between Moscow and Kyiv. *President Biden orders* the movement of 1,000 U.S. troops from Germany to Romania and the deployment of 2,000 additional U.S. troops to Poland and Germany.
- *Russia and Belarus begin joint military exercises on Feb. 10*, with some 30,000 Russian troops stationed in the country along Ukraine's northern border.
- The U.S. and the U.K. *urge their citizens to leave Ukraine* on Feb. 11. President Biden announces the deployment of another 2,000 troops from the U.S. to Poland. Amid growing Western fears Russia could attack Ukraine, the United States says it will send 3,000 extra troops to NATO members Poland and Romania. Washington and allies say they will not send troops to Ukraine, but warn of severe economic sanctions if Russian President Vladimir Putin takes military action.
- February 21: In a TV address, Putin says Ukraine is an integral part of Russian history and has a puppet regime managed by foreign powers. Putin orders what he called peacekeeping forces into two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine, after recognising them as independent.
- February 22: The U.S., Britain and their allies sanction Russian parliament members, banks and other assets in response to Putin's troop order. Germany halts the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project.
- February 23: Russian-backed separatist leaders ask Russia for help repelling aggression from the Ukrainian army.

- February 24: Putin authorizes "special military operations" in Ukraine. Russian forces begin missile and artillery attacks, striking major Ukrainian cities including Kiev.
- February 26: Western allies announce new sanctions, including restrictions on Russia's central bank and expelling key banks off the main global payments system.