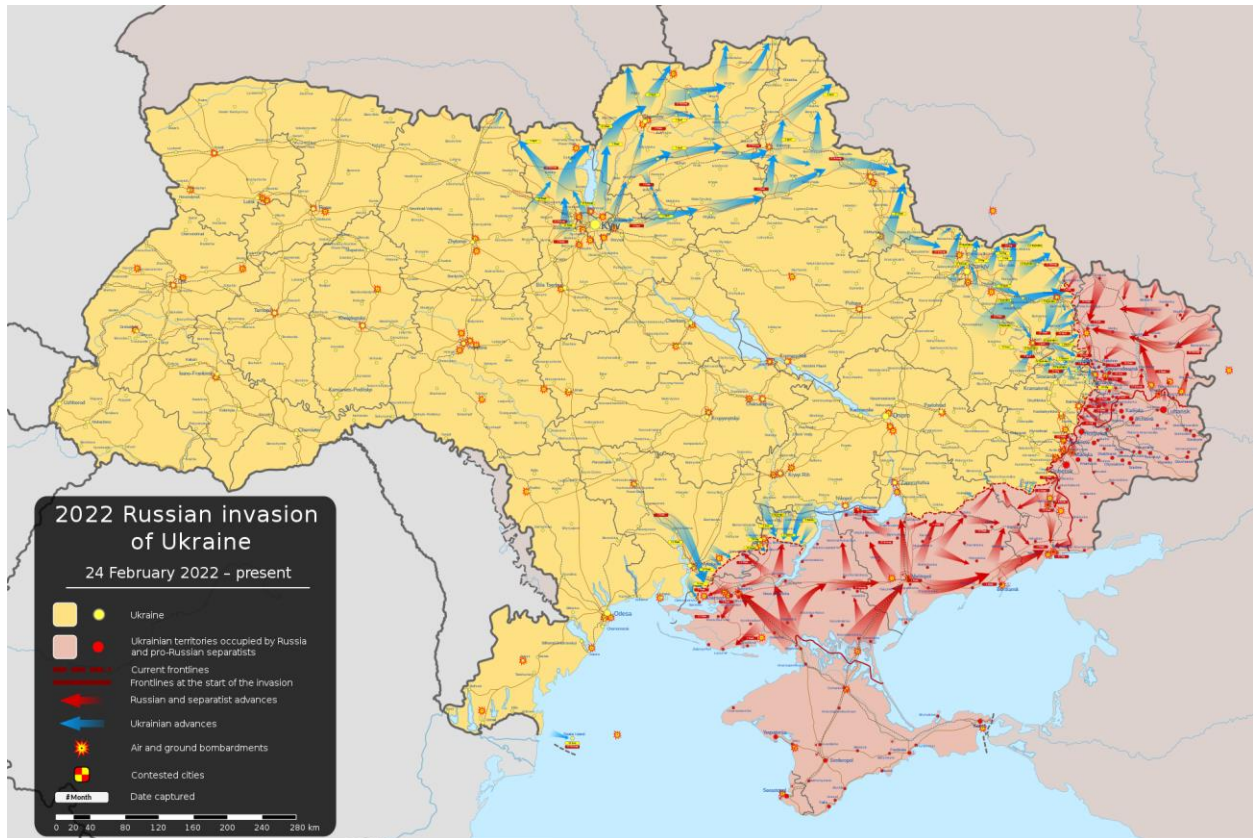


2022 Model Senate on Committee on Foreign Relations
Briefing Paper - Assessing the U.S. Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, December 2022



Source: BNO News (2022)

Ukraine, the U.S., and the USSR

Ukrainians' unique national identity played a major role in the politics of the Soviet Union. During the Russian Civil War, Ukrainians attempted to recreate their own state to no avail. With the use of the military, **Josef Stalin** persecuted Ukrainians en masse in an attempt to prevent further nationalist movements. Ukrainian cliques played a major role in post-Stalinist Soviet administration as well. Still, nationalist movements were heavily suppressed by the Soviet Union.¹

The question of Ukrainian identity during the Cold War also involved another actor: the United States. **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** was forged in 1949 with the explicit purpose of

¹ Myre, Greg. "From Stalin to Putin, Ukraine Is Still Trying to Break Free from Moscow." NPR. NPR, January 31, 2022. <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/31/1076012108/from-stalin-to-putin-ukraine-is-still-trying-to-break-free-from-moscow#:~:text=Ukraine%20was%20the%20breadbasket%20of,famines%20of%20the%2020th%20century.>

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defending the West and other liberal democracies from an attack from Germany but more explicitly the Soviet Union. The treaty was based on a principle of mutual alliance and assistance. If one NATO member country is attacked, every other country in the organization has an obligation to help defend it.



The most powerful and notable member of this organization is the United States, the Soviet Union's greatest rival at the time. Recently removed from the horrors of the second World War and all the casualties the Soviet Union suffered, the creation of such an alliance was viewed as a move of aggression. The USSR's principal security concern was and to this day remains a land invasion of Russian territory. In response, **the Warsaw Pact** was formed in 1955 as their version of a defensive alliance, by creating literal buffer territories between geographic Russia and their closest adversary, the NATO allied west.²

As a physical territory of the USSR, if any discussions of Ukrainian independence weren't firmly on the back burner during the 1930s and 1940s they were entirely out of consideration after NATO. Not until **glasnost** in the 1980s did sentiments of independence expand outside the control of the state apparatus when Mikhail Gorbachev assumed office as the president of the USSR. He would be the last president before the formation of the Russian Federation in 1991. Gorbachev's reforms allowed nationalists to publicly advocate for their agenda while simultaneously putting more power in the hands of the ethnically-organized republics that composed the Union. Nationalism was one of the most potent forces that drove public opinion during the run up to the collapse of the

Soviet Union. Ethnic discrimination, a poor economy, and a decaying Soviet political system meant fertile ground for nationalists. Ukrainians in particular were left traumatized and disgruntled with Soviet rulers after their catastrophic failures at Chernobyl. The turning point was August 1991, when Soviet hardliners unsuccessfully tried to oust Gorbachev and roll back his reforms. Nationalists like soon to be Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk used the political climate to deconstruct the last pillars of the Soviet Union. Ukraine would declare independence on August 24th of 1991 and hold an independence referendum on December 1st. On Christmas day, 1991 the Soviet flag would be lowered for the last time. On December 26th, the Soviet Union would cease to exist.

Post Cold War and Orange Revolution

² "North Atlantic Treaty Organization." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/nato#:~:text=The%20North%20Atlantic%20Treaty%20Organization,security%20against%20the%20Soviet%20Union.&text=NATO%20was%20the%20first%20peacetime,outside%20of%20the%20Western%20Hemisphere.>



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The dissolution of the Soviet Union was a far more complicated procedure than just having Presidents Kravchuk and Yeltsin sign a piece of paper. The future of the Soviet nuclear arsenal loomed large over these shards of this shattered superpower. In 1994, the signing of the Budapest Memorandum saw that Ukraine would give over all of its share of the arsenal over to Russia in exchange for written security guarantees. This security deal would alter the stage of Russo-Ukrainian relations for the next two decades.

3

During its first decade of independence, Ukraine's relations with Russia were cordial. President Kravchuk, an ally of Yeltsin, was replaced by his Prime Minister, Leonid Kuchma. This period of **bilateral relations** was short-lived though. In 2000, Kuchma's administration was implicated in the cassette scandal when audio recordings were released to the press detailing crimes he committed in office. Most notably amongst them were the illegal sale of arms to Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the order to kidnap journalist Georgiy Gongadze, whose corpse was found in the forests of Ukraine that same year.⁴ The scandal tarnished public opinion and western perception of his administration. Growing pro-western sentiment as a result of the scandal culminated in the **Orange Revolution**, which prevented pro-Russian Presidential candidate Victor Yanukovich from taking office. The revolution would result in the election of Yanukovich's rival, pro-Western Victor Yushchenko. Yanukovich ran again in 2010, this time winning after misleading the public into believing he would be a pro-Western President.⁵

Annexation of Crimea

In 2014, President Yanukovich suddenly threw out a major treaty with the **European Union** that sought to deepen trade and other forms of cooperation. Immediately after the decision, mass protests centered around the Maidan Nezalezhnosti ("Independence Square") called for Yanukovich's resignation. After a prolonged and violent attempt to suppress these protests, Yanukovich was eventually forced to flee the country.⁶

Concerned by the removal of a regional political ally, the **Kremlin** moved quickly over fear of losing a strategically important naval base in Sevastopol.⁷ Shortly after the revolution, on the orders of Russian president Vladimir Putin, unmarked soldiers were sent into Crimea to secure the peninsula. Initially denying any association to these troop movements, the territory would be annexed by Russia not long

³ Casert, Raf. 2022. "A historical timeline of post-independence Ukraine." PBS.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/a-historical-timeline-of-post-independence-ukraine>.

⁴ Anders Aslund, Anatol Lieven. "Kuchmagate: Political Crisis in Ukraine?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 14, 2001. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2001/02/14/kuchmagate-political-crisis-in-ukraine-event-274>.

⁵ Albert, Melissa. 2022. "Leonid Kuchma | president of Ukraine | Britannica." Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leonid-Kuchma>.

⁶ The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d. "Ukraine - The Maidan protest movement | Britannica." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed August 18, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Maidan-protest-movement>.

⁷ Treisman, Daniel. 2016. "Why Putin Took Crimea from the Ukraine." Foreign Affairs.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-russian-president-putin-took-crimea-from-ukraine>.

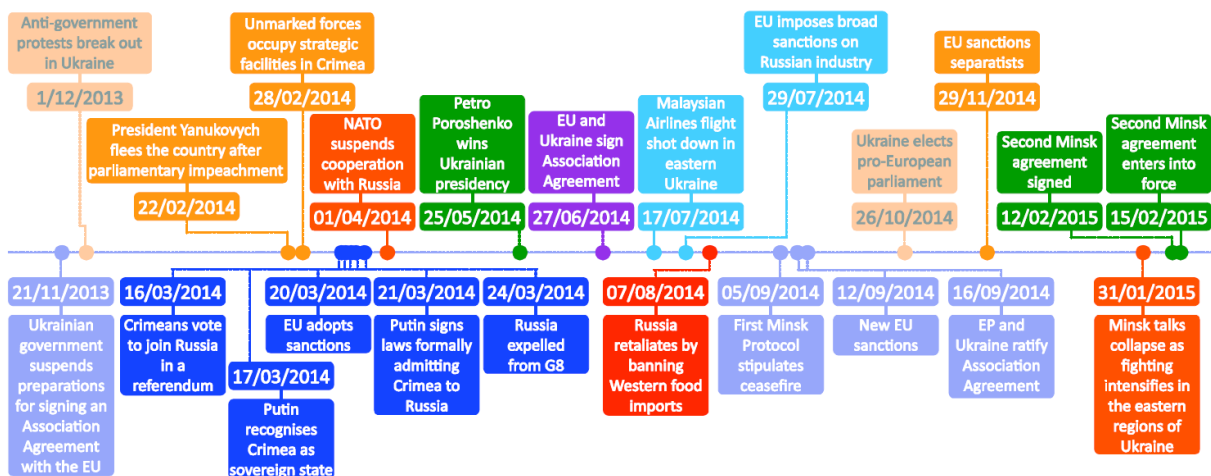


after. Putin justified the annexation by citing Crimea’s disproportionately ethnically Russian population as well as his own independence referendum that was held after the annexation. Pro-Russian separatists along the eastern border then declared their own independence with Putin’s backing, and since then have been stuck in a violent stalemate with Ukrainian forces.⁸

Conflict in Donbas and Minsk Protocol I & II

On April 7th, 2014, shortly after the conclusion of the annexation, Pro-Russian activists occupied the Ukrainian security service offices in Donetsk and Luhansk. The following day, these activists declared the creation of the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk Parliamentary Republic. This would later be renamed Luhansk People’s Republic when both breakaway states held independence votes on May 11th, 2014. These states were almost immediately backed by the Kremlin, evidenced by the on ground support the republics received from the main intelligence directorate (Russia’s foreign intelligence wing), Ukraine would declare an “anti-terror operation” against the republics which resulted in an armed conflict that would largely settle down by September of that year.⁹

Figure 2 – Timeline: November 2013 – February 2015



Source: [Ukrainian crisis](#)

Source: *European Parliamentary Research Service (2015)*

On September 5th, 2014, representatives of both Ukraine and the rebel republic’s they had been fighting met in the city of **Minsk** in Belarus to sign the **first Minsk protocol** which would go into effect later that night. Amongst the signatures of the ceasefire was Lenoid Kumcha, now serving as a representative of Ukraine, and Russian ambassador Mikhail Zurabov. This ceasefire did not last however and both sides resumed fighting for another five months until the signing of **Minsk II** in February. Many of the provisions remained the same as the original Minsk protocol with two key differences. The first of which is the

⁸ “Conflict in Ukraine | Global Conflict Tracker.” 2022. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>.

⁹ “Ukraine Says Donetsk 'Anti-Terror Operation' under Way.” BBC News. BBC, April 15, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27035196>.

presence of Vladimir Putin at the signing of this protocol. The second is the actual de-escalation that occurred as a result of the signing. Ukrainian and rebel forces did scale back military presence in these areas. Donbas was granted “special status” by the Ukrainian government in the sense that they were permitted limited self-rule but many of the parameters agreed upon in the protocol were never observed.¹⁰

Border Buildup and Invasion

In the spring of 2021, after another winter, Russia began to amass military personnel around the Ukrainian border in what was categorized as a “training exercise” believed to be caused by current president Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s requests to join NATO. This sentiment would be echoed later in December when Russia would submit their list of security demands to NATO in two key items. The first of which detailed pulling back affiliated military personnel and weapons from the border. The second of which involved completely and permanently disregarding any Ukrainian attempt to join the alliance. In response the United States would reiterate NATO’s “open-door” policy and say they would evaluate Russia’s demands. This statement was delivered two days after NATO sent reinforcements to eastern Europe in response to a growing Russian military presence. Needing a legitimate basis for escalated military action, Putin found refuge in the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republic and ordered peacekeeping operations in the two regions. Training exercises very quickly transitioned into live fire combat. Not even 24 hours after the regions asked for support against Ukrainian army aggression, Putin executed a country wide military invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022 in a “liberation” campaign for the purposes of security and alleged “denazification” of Ukraine.¹¹

By March 2, Russia would begin to be frozen out of most economic cooperation with the west. They were removed from their association with **SWIFT** and were heavily sanctioned by most western countries and economic communities.¹² Record keeping of the conflict is difficult as the only publicly available data on casualties comes from two wildly varying sources (Ukrainian and Russian governments). **The United Nations** attempted to pass a resolution demanding Russia suspend its military campaign and withdraw all troops. Using their veto power as a **permanent member** on the **security council**, Russia effectively blocked the resolution.

In the last six months, NATO member states have continued to provide resources and weaponry to Ukrainian forces while the United States has supported Ukraine to the tune of \$17.6 billion of security assistance since the start of the Biden administration, much of that money coming since the start of the invasion.¹³ Back in the east, very little dialogue has occurred between the combatant countries as

¹⁰ “Ukraine-Russia Crisis: What Is the Minsk Agreement?” Russia-Ukraine war News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, February 9, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/what-is-the-minsk-agreement-and-why-is-it-relevant-now>.

¹¹ “Timeline: The Events Leading up to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, March 1, 2022.

¹² Brown, Chad. “Russia's War on Ukraine: A Sanctions Timeline.” PIIE, September 2, 2022. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economic-issues-watch/russias-war-ukraine-sanctions-timeline>.

¹³ Baldor, Lolita, and Matthew Lee. “U.S. Announces \$800 Million More Military Aid for Ukraine.” PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, August 19, 2022. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-set-to-announce-800-million-in-military-aid-for-ukraine>.

Zelenskyy almost immediately severed official ties with Russia. What was initially intended to be a 72 hour regime change has developed into a drawn out conflict. While Russia has struggled for any success, nuclear threats have remained a large issue.

Aid approved by Congress

TOTAL \$20.1B



Source: Washington Post (2022)

Global Economic Implications

While money continues to be contributed to the cause and support around the beginning of the invasion remains unified, notable cracks have begun to show in the west’s collective exterior. The soaring cost of commodity prices is almost directly related to resource shortages from Russia especially in terms of energy. As winter approaches for the west, many citizens who are already feeling financial pain are also likely to begin feeling environmental pain as the temperatures drop and heating will remain either too expensive or too scarce. Many politicians and individuals in the west have begun to publicly question if the cost of supporting Ukraine is worth it. While some argue that not enough is being done to resolve the conflict quickly, others debate that the level of economic and diplomatic support the US shows towards Ukraine is not worth the investment and the US should move to resolve the conflict with Russia, and return back to a sense of normalcy.¹⁴ Sacrificing Ukraine would direct the United States and the rest

¹⁴ “Biden World Privately Thinks McCarthy Could Fold on Ukraine Aid.” POLITICO, October 19, 2022. <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/10/19/white-house-gop-ukraine-war-funding-00062624>.



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of the west away from crisis for now, but it would send a dangerous message to Russia that their invasion strategy is one that can be tried again.

Subcommittee Charge

The United States Senate is tasked with the oversight, regulation, appropriations and lawmaking of nearly all aspects of life in the United States. From food safety, to military contracts, and space exploration, the United States Senate is tasked with ensuring that U.S. policy is aligned to their, and their constitutions policy preferences. In order to distribute this massive responsibility, the Senate is split into distinct Committees with broad responsibilities and then subcommittees with more specific jurisdiction. Each of the 100 members of the United States Senate are assigned to one or more committees where the majority of legislative debate, discussion and review occur. For a bill to become a law, it must be approved in its respective committee before being elevated to the Senate floor.

Policy responding to Russia's invasion of Ukraine falls under the jurisdiction of the **Committee on Foreign Relations**, and more specifically, **the Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation**. The subcommittee has a number of policy avenues to explore in the realms of neutrality, diplomacy or aggression. These include analyzing the United States' current approach and determining if reduced, continued, or increased aid packages to Ukraine are most beneficial, if the US should open negotiations with the Kremlin, and if the US follow the approach of other Western allies or if it should create a unique policy response. Some proposals may be of interest to one party, while entirely unpalatable to members of the other party. Bipartisan action is critical to the success of the committee session. In the Model Senate program, time will also be at a premium, and it is vital for Senators to identify areas of bipartisan action, in order to maximize their legislative action.

Questions to Consider

1. What are some examples of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine historically? How can we best interpret how Russia views Ukraine sovereignty today?
2. How has previous political instability in Ukraine's government shaped its government today? (Use examples, Ex: The Orange Revolution)
3. How has the expansion of NATO affected the region and Russia's relationships with the West?



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Additional Research

- Go to the Council's [2022 Model Senate Resource Guide](#) for additional recommended resources to continue your research after you are finished reading this briefing paper and answering the Questions to Consider above.
- *Bonus research task:* Try to find out how this issue affects other countries. A global context of the topic will help you have a more nuanced understanding of the topic and might help you craft recommended policy solutions for the U.S. Senate based on some actions other countries may be taking already to remedy some of the issues outlined in the briefing paper above.

Glossary

| Term | Description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Bilateralism | Bilateralism is the conduct of political, economic, or cultural relations between two states. Bilateral relations seek to advance the interests between two countries. |
| Donbas | A region in eastern Ukraine whose principal cities include Donetsk and Luhansk. |
| European Union | A political and economic community made up of many European Countries that has defined itself on liberalization, community, and their ethical guidelines. |
| Glasnost | A series of liberalizing political reforms that opened the Soviet Union up to being a more democratic and transparent society. |
| NATO | The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance between 28 countries initially created in response to the USSR. The doctrine of NATO outlines that an attack on one is an attack on all and prompts collective military response if one of the member states becomes locked in conflict. |
| Josef Stalin | Josef Stalin was the General Secretary of the USSR from 1922 to his death in 1953. His leadership was characterized by dictatorial rule, fear and persecution of his political enemies, and the transformation of the Soviet Union into a major world power. |
| Kremlin | A kremlin is a fortified central complex found primarily in Russian cities. The Kremlin when capitalized is used to refer to the government of the Russian Federation. |
| Minsk | Minsk is a city in Belarus, a country that neighbors Russia and Ukraine and is the third eastern slavic country in association with the aforementioned two. |



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|--------------------------|--|
| Minsk I | The first Minsk protocol was set to establish a ceasefire between the Donetsk and Luhansk republics and Ukraine. The protocol was largely ignored. |
| Minsk II | The second Minsk protocol was set to establish a ceasefire between the Donetsk and Luhansk republics and Ukraine. The main differences in this protocol include the increased number of Russian officials at the signing including Vladimir Putin and increased success in achieving the objective. |
| NATO | The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance between 28 countries initially created in response to the USSR. The doctrine of NATO outlines that an attack on one is an attack on all and prompts collective military response if one of the member states becomes locked in conflict. |
| Orange Revolution | The Orange Revolution was a series of political protests and events from 2004 to 2005 in response to the 2004 elections and outcry pertaining to former Ukrainian president Lenoid Kuchma’s assassination of a political opponent. |
| Permanent Member | On the United Nations Security Council, five countries have been delegated as permanent members and have the power to veto any resolution. If one member elects to veto, a resolution is blocked. |
| USSR | The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a country that reigned from 1922 to 1991. Both modern day Russia and Ukraine were territories in this country. |
| SWIFT | The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication is a Belgian cooperative society that manages bank transfers for the majority of countries. The ban effectively cut Russia out of international banking. |
| Security Council | Arm of the United Nations committed to “international peace and security” according to Article 24 of the UN charter |
| United Nations | An intergovernmental organization aiming to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations. It is the world's largest and most familiar international organization. |
| Warsaw Pact | A treaty alliance between the USSR and other Eastern European states formed in response to NATO |

Resources

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