

Ukraine – Russia Tensions 2022

Tensions between Ukraine and Russia are at their highest in years, with a Russian troop buildup near the two nations borders spurring fears of a Russian invasion.

Ukraine has warned that Russia is trying to destabilize the country ahead of a planned invasion of Ukraine.

Russia denies it is planning an attack, and argues that NATO support for Ukraine – including increased weapons supplies and military training – constitutes a growing threat on Russia's western border

Vladimir Putin
Leader of Russia →





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Modern (post-Soviet collapse) Background

Ukraine was “sort of” part of the Soviet Union, When the USSR collapsed, unguarded nuclear weapons were scattered, including in Ukraine

➤ US (and west) promised to safeguard Ukrainian sovereignty in return for nuclear weapons being returned to Russia.

↳ Every country has two poles in their political spectrum.

❖ For the US it is Federalist/anti-Federalism

❖ For UK it is liberal/conservative

❖ For Ukraine it is pro-Russia/independence.

↳ Russia tried regularly to influence Ukrainian elections

Russian felt threatened by the Orange Revolution (2004-2005) potential

Russia tried to poison Ukrainian leaders

↳ Viktor Yushchenko, most notably



Recent Background

Tensions between Ukraine and Russia escalated in late-2013

- Over a landmark political and trade deal with the European Union
- After Ukrainian President (pro-Russia) suspended talks with Russia (reportedly under pressure from Moscow), weeks of protests in Kyiv erupted into violence.

- ↳ March 2014: Russia annexed Crimea, an autonomous peninsula in southern Ukraine with strong Russia loyalties.

- ↳ The pretext of the invasion was that Russia was defending its interests and those of Russian-speaking citizens

- ↳ First thousands of Russian-speaking troops (only later acknowledged by Moscow to be soldiers) entered the land

- ↳ Within days, Russia completed its annexation in a referendum which was slammed by Ukraine and much of the world as illegitimate.

April 2014: Pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions declared their independence from Kyiv

- ↳ This prompted months of heavy fighting

2015 peace signing between Ukraine and Russia signed in Minsk (brokered by France and Germany); nevertheless, many repeated ceasefire violations.

- According to US figures, there have been more than 3,000 conflict-related civilian deaths in eastern Ukraine since March 2014

Today (early 2022)

Ukraine's eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions bordering Russia have been under the control of Russian-backed separatists since 2014.

- Russian forces are also present in the area, referred to by Ukraine as “temporarily occupied territories”, although Russia denies it.
- The front lines have not moved in five years, although there have been frequent small-scale clashes and sniper attacks.
- Russia was angered when Ukrainian forces deployed a Turkish-made combat drone for the first time in October 2021 to strike a position held by pro-Russian separatists
- Russia also has forces numbering in the tens-of-thousands at its naval base in Crimea, the Ukrainian territory it annexed in 2014.
 - ↳ The Crimean Peninsula is now connected by a road bridge to Russia



LITHUANIA

0 200mi.
0 200km

Smolensk

Moscow

BELARUS

RUSSIA

Minsk

Brest

Voronezh

POLAND

Kursk

Kyiv

Lviv

UKRAINE

Kharkiv

Poltava

Cornet's great-great-grandmother (Nina) born here, 1868

Luhansk

Volgograd

MOLDOVA

Donetsk

Russian-backed separatist-controlled area

ROMANIA

Mariupol

Cornet's wife's Russian family lives here today, 24 miles from the border

Cornet's great-grandmother (Clara) born here, 1889

Odessa

Rostov-on-Don

Sea of Azov

BULGARIA

CRIMEA

Krasnodar

Sevastopol

Annexed by Russia in 2014

Black Sea

What is the situation on the border?

- 127,000+ Russian troops have massed on the border, early-January 2022. That number could double in short time.
- In late 2021, satellite photos reveal Russian hardware on the move at training groups roughly 186 miles from the border. These include self-propelled guns, battle tanks, and infantry figuring vehicles.
- Russia is engaged in “regular” winter military drills in the southwestern part of the country, parts of which border Ukraine
 - Note: most of Russia’s military bases are in the west, for historical reasons.

What is Russian's motivation?

- Russia accuses Ukraine of stirring up tensions in the country's east and of violating the Minsk ceasefire.
- Russia has repeatedly denied that Russia plans on invading Ukraine, insisting Russia does not pose a threat to anyone and that the country moving troops across its own territory should not be cause for alarm.
- Russia has accused Ukraine of boosting its own troop numbers in preparation for an attempt to retake the occupied regions (Ukraine denies this)
- Russia sees growing support for Ukraine from NATO – in terms of weaponry, training and personnel – as a threat to its own security.
- Putin has called for specific legal agreements that would rule out any further NATO expansion eastwards toward Russia's borders (claiming the West has not lived up to its previous verbal assurances)
- Russia fears NATO deploying sophisticated missile systems in Ukraine
- Russia accuses US and NATO of already embedding military advisors and weapons in Ukraine.
- Putin is trying to regain territory lost when the Soviet Union collapsed.
- Recent unrest in Kazakhstan in January 2022 was unpleasant news for Putin. Being forceful in Ukraine sends a message.
- Russia wants ocean access in the west

Russian military presence by the Ukrainian border and equipment (where known)

■ Permanent bases with combat units ■ New units | ○ Tanks ◇ Armored vehicles △ Artillery



Notes: *New units* are those established since March 2021. Map based on reporting as of Jan. 28, 2022.

What is Ukraine perspective?

- Wants to be viewed equal as west, as a functioning democracy
- Kyiv insists that Moscow cannot prevent Ukraine from building closer ties with NATO if it chooses.
- Ukraine insists Russia is trying to destabilize the current government
- a coup plot, involving Russians was uncovered in December 2021.
- Ukraine has an energy crisis, which they believe Russia has provoked
- Ukraine views the controversial ‘Nord Stream 2’ Pipeline – connecting Russian gas supplies directly to Germany – as a threat to its own security.
- this is one of two underwater pipelines; the others are overland through Ukraine. The more reliance on the pipelines in their land, the more security there is. (any invasion might disrupt the energy flow to Europe)

Other's countries concerns

- Russia is trying to become a global influencer again, through military might.
- The Nord Steams 2 pipeline will increase European dependance on Russian gas and could allow Moscow to selectively target countries (like Ukraine) with energy cut-offs, without disrupting other countries.
- also, bypassing overland pipelines would deprive those countries of lucrative transit fees Russia would otherwise pay.
- Memorandum (not treaty) commitments – the US and UK have a legal duty to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity, per an agreement.Why? in 1994 the countries agreed in response to Ukraine surrendering the nuclear weapons is inherited when the Soviet Union collapsed. (Interesting: the other signatory to this was Russia!)
- Many countries oppose redrawing national borders by act of force. This preference for “self-determination’ is a legacy of World War II. Many policymakers regret not opposing Russia's annexation in 2014, and want to stand up now, even if belatedly.
- Concern a war over Ukraine could potentially spillover into other European countries.
- Russia might sue the crisis to launch cyber- or other hybrid-attacks on NATO and NATO-leaning countries.
- A war could lead to a huge migration and humanitarian crisis, larger than Syria.
- C.2020 (10th year of Syrian conflict), there are 13.5 displaced Syrians, representing over half of the country's population. 6.7 million Syrian refugees are hosted in 128 countries;80% are located in neighboring countries.

What are other entities doing - already?

- Three rounds of talks between the West and Russia have failed to deescalate
- The European Union and United States have imposed a series of measures on Russia, including economic sanctions targeting individuals, entities and specific sectors of the Russian economy.
- in 2014, cancelled the EU-Russia Summit (addressed visa matters)
- by October 2021, they have put restrictive measures on 185 persons and 48 entities.
- asset freeze (prohibited deposit/withdrawal/transfer), a travel ban (applies to EU countries)
- import/export ban from goods produced in the Russian-occupied-territories of Ukraine
- Applied to Russia, export/import ban on weapons
- Applied to Russia, curtail Russian access to certain sensitive technologies and services related to oil production and exploration
- After the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, NATO increased its defenses “with combat-ready battlegroups in the eastern part of the alliance” (Note Ukraine is not a NATO member)
- United Kingdom sent 2,000 anti-tank devices to Ukraine in 2021
- United States has delivered \$450 million in security assistance to Ukraine in 2021, including small arms and ammunition in December 2021

What are other entities doing – January 2022?

- Germany is non-committal...they rejected Ukraine request for defensive weapons (in line with its policy of not sending lethal weapons to conflict zones), and instead sent medical aid and 5,000 helmets.
- President Biden has warned of “consequences” should Russia invade Ukraine. Biden and Putin have spoken by phone on at least two occasions.
- one measure would be to exclude Russian from SWIFT, a global financial messaging service use by thousands of banks in more than 200 countries (Russian banks could not do business overseas without access)
 - ↳ this sanction was used against Iran in 2012 and it lost significant oil revenue and foreign trade.
- The European Union has also warned of consequences if Russia invades
- US could ban Russia from financial transactions involving US dollars. (basically, any western firm that allowed a Russian institution to deal in dollars would be penalized). This would limit what Russia can buy or sell globally. Note: all of Russia’s oil and gas sales are in dollars.
- Western powers could take action to block Russia’s access to international debt markets (already restricted is the ability to buy Russian bonds; this could tighten). this would deprive the country of access to finance that it needs to grow the economy; Russia’s borrowing might rise, and the value of the Ruble might fall. Note: Russia has prepared for this by reducing the amount of debt held by foreign investors.
- US could blacklist some Russian banks, making it nearly impossible for the world to do business with them (Moscow would have to bail out those banks, and do what it can to prevent inflating from rising and incomes from falling)
- US could use targeted export controls.
- England: confiscate all Russian oligarch property in London.
 - ↳ This would put pressure on the wealth in Russia, many of whom are buddies of Putin

Presidents Response to Russian Aggression

Obama response (2009-2017) –

- Completely surprised by Russian incursions into Crimea c.2014. Was wary of providing Ukraine with lethal aid, for fear of provoking Russia. Consequentially, he did little to deter Russia effectively.

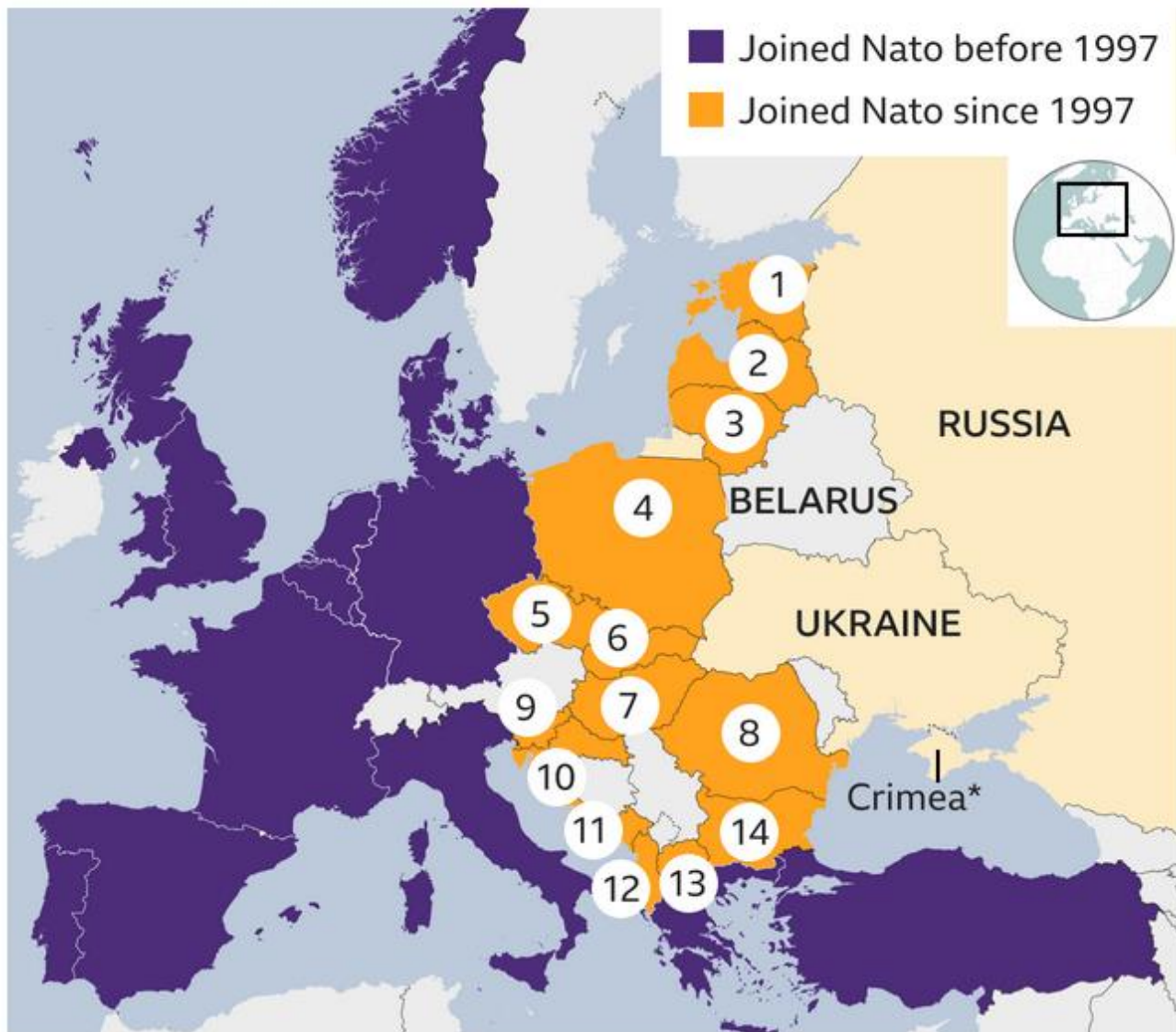
Trump response (2017-2021) –

- Did nothing in 2018 when Russia locked Ukraine out of the Sea of Azov.
- Russia knows what is best for their region, he believes, and see's this issue is a “European Problem”
- Is willing to support Russia

Biden response (2021-now) –

- “The severity of the US response may reflect if Russian actions are an incursion or invasion of Ukraine” (the distinction between “invasion” and “incursion” upset Ukraine)
- Biden waved sanctions on the company behind Nord Stream 2, effectively giving it the green light to proceed. This move was in the interest of US national security, as it sought to rebuild frayed relations with Germany from the Trump era. But doing so also emboldens Russia aggression in Ukraine.
- Is considering stronger sanctions as a deterrent.

Nato's expansion since 1997



- | | | | |
|-------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| ① Estonia | ⑤ Czech Republic | ⑨ Slovenia | ⑬ North Macedonia |
| ② Latvia | ⑥ Slovakia | ⑩ Croatia | ⑭ Bulgaria |
| ③ Lithuania | ⑦ Hungary | ⑪ Montenegro | |
| ④ Poland | ⑧ Romania | ⑫ Albania | |

Why does this matter to the US?

- Conflict will lead to increased energy prices globally
- Do we want to encourage Russia aggressiveness?
- Russia as a regional hegemon?
- If Russia is not stopped here, what will their next target/interest be?
- Economic toll on our allies and ourselves (particularly in energy resources)
- Strengthening/weakening of presidential power overseas
- Strengthening/weakening of US leadership on the global stage