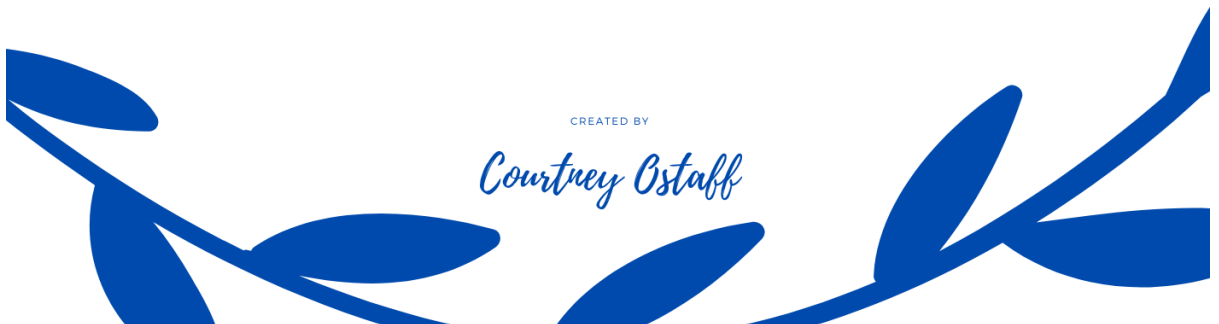




# INVASION OF --- UKRAINE ---

*Geography, History, Politics*



CREATED BY

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# Part 1 – Geography

## The World

Physical Map of the World, February 2021



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

The surface of the Earth is about 70% water and 29% land. Most countries claim the part of the ocean that borders their country. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea extends a country's claim 200 **nautical miles** from the coastline. A nautical mile is equal to 1.1508 regular miles and 1.852 kilometers.

In the USA, we use the labels Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Southern Ocean, and Arctic Ocean. Because of their size, the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans are often divided at the equator into the North and South Pacific Oceans and the North and South Atlantic Oceans. This division creates seven major water bodies - the so-called "**Seven Seas**."

Earth's land portion is divided into big landmasses called **continents**. In the USA, we recognize Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe, and Australia. The United States is in North America. North America includes Greenland, the Caribbean, and all the way south to Isthmus of Panama.

Other parts of the world see the world in different ways and count and label oceans and continents differently.

How long is a nautical mile? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the Seven Seas?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What are the seven continents?

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## Europe



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

**Europe** extends west from the North Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains and the Ural River in the east to the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus Mountains, and the Black Sea in the southeast, and the Mediterranean in the south.

**Climate** is the average weather conditions in a place over a long period of time—30 years or more. The northern European climate has summer temperatures around 50° F (10° C) and average winter temperatures in Norway reaching 20° F (-7° C), similar to Anchorage, Alaska. Large mainland countries like France and Germany have winters about 36° F (3° C) and summers about 68° F (20° C)—this is about the same as Chicago, Illinois. Further south is a warm climate. Rome, Italy and Houston, Texas have similar high and low temperatures.

Two peninsulas make up most of Northern Europe. A **peninsula** is an area of land surrounded on 3 sides by water. The Scandinavian Peninsula contains a spine of rugged mountains.



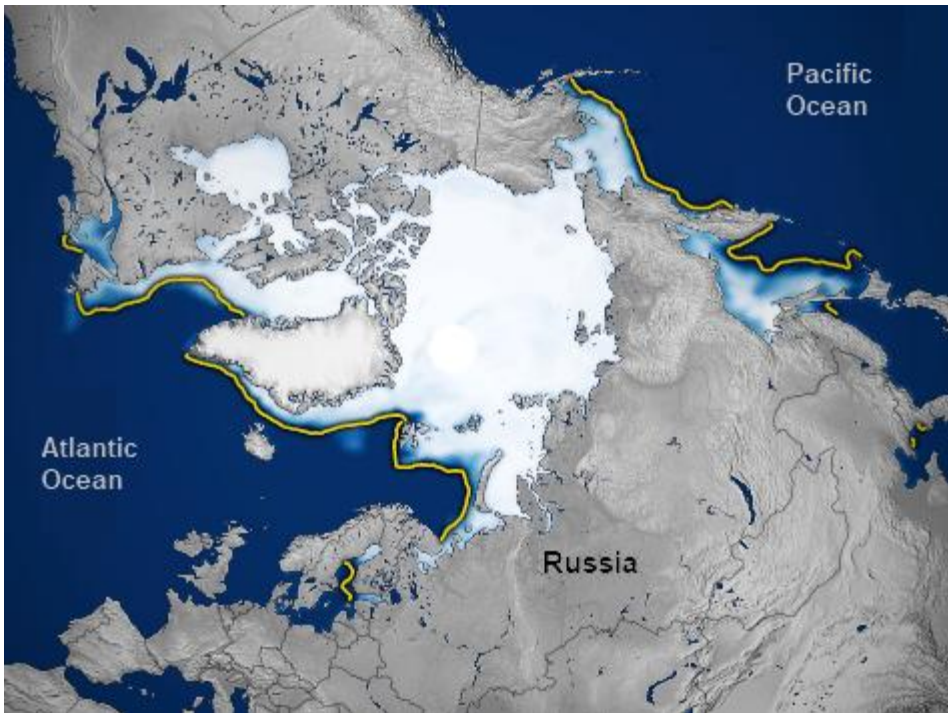


Image Credit: NASA

Northern Europe and Russia are often surrounded by Arctic sea ice for many months every winter. Many **ports**, or place where ships load and unload cargo and passengers, that are located on the Arctic Ocean freeze for several months each year.

The **landscape** is what you see when you look out across the land. Northern Europe's landscape is mostly rugged mountains, rocky soils, and jagged coasts. The coast of southern Europe is dominated by the Mediterranean Sea. In Western Europe, the landscape is mostly plains, with mountains in some places. Much of Western Europe lies in the **Northern European Plain**. This flat, grassy area extends from the Bay of Biscay in the West to the Ural Mountains in the East—from Paris to Moscow.



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

As you can see on the map, many rivers cross the plain, but there are no mountain ranges or seas to interrupt it. Rivers determined the location of important cities, such as London, Paris, and Hamburg. Rivers provide water for farming and produce electrical power. They also form political borders.

The Hungarian Plain includes part of many countries, including Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia, Serbia, and Romania. The Transylvanian Basin is in Romania. A **basin** is an area of land that slopes downward from the land around it. The Carpathian Mountains extend eastward from the Alps. The Vienna Basin separates the two ranges. There are many rivers, canals, lakes, and reservoirs in Eastern Europe and western Russia. Most are used for transportation and to create electricity. The Danube is very important—there are four capital cities on the Danube River.

The moderate climate and abundant rainfall in most of Europe supports a variety of plant and animal life. Europe has a lot of cropland. The Netherlands is small—roughly the size of West Virginia, and much more densely populated—but is the second-largest exporter of food by value globally, in part because of the high yield inside greenhouses. Germany and France also export large amounts of food. Ukraine is one of the world's largest exporters of wheat, corn, barley, and rapeseed (used to make vegetable oil).

Where is Europe located? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a port? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a basin? \_\_\_\_\_

What is climate? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a peninsula? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a landscape? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the Northern European Plains? \_\_\_\_\_

Russia is a huge country, extending through 11 time zones in Europe and Asia. However, only about 1/6th of its land is suitable for agriculture. Most agricultural land is in a fertile triangle between the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

Western Russia lies within Europe, resting mostly on a group of plains. The largest is the Russian Plain, which begins in Belarus and Ukraine and stretches east about 1,000 miles (1600 km). To the east are the Ural Mountains, which form the traditional boundary between Europe and Asia. The red line down the middle of Russia shows the Urals.

South of the Russian Plain are the Great and Lesser Caucasus mountains, which run between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, with a valley between them. The Caspian Sea is Europe's southernmost point and is the world's largest inland body of water.

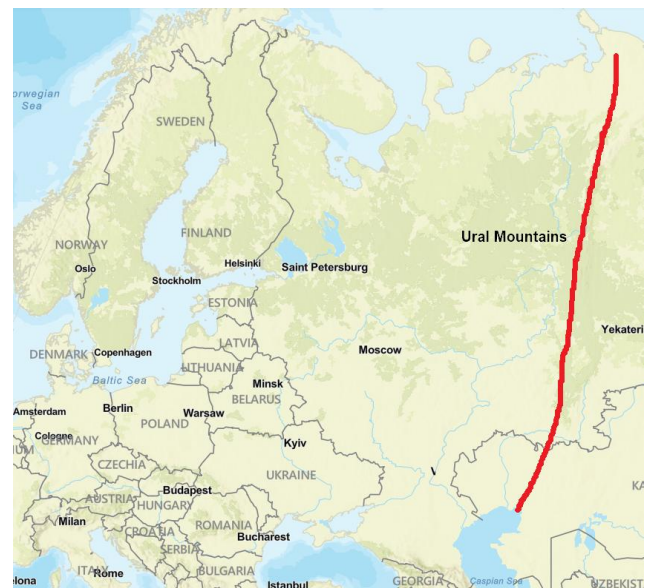


Image Credit: US State Dept.



## Political Divisions

There are many ways to think about Europe, but one common way is to divide it into four parts:

- **western Europe:** Ireland, the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Switzerland, Monaco, Lichtenstein. Many, but by no means all, people in western Europe practice Christianity, usually Catholicism or Protestantism. Ireland is predominantly Catholic, for example, while significant populations elsewhere practice Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, other religions, and no religion.
- **eastern Europe:** Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro (formerly Yugoslavia), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine. Many, but by no means all, people in eastern Europe practice Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Significant populations in this area practice Judaism, Islam, other religions, and no religion.
- **northern Europe:** Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland. Many, but by no means all, people in northern Europe are Protestants.
- **southern Europe:** Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Malta, Andorra, San Marino, Vatican City, Cyprus, western Turkey, Gibraltar. Many, but by no means all, people in southern Europe practice Roman Catholicism. Other common religions include the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece and Islam in Turkey. Significant populations of Jews and Muslims also practice their religion in this area.



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

What are the four common divisions of Europe?

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Population distribution in Europe changes from country to country, but tends to follow a pattern of coastal and river settlement, with urban places leading to housing, industry, and commerce. The area in and around the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg (known as *Benelux*), is the most densely populated area in the EU. London and Paris are the two megacities in western Europe.

## Part 2 – History

## History before World War II

From 1300 to 1917, an empire called the Ottoman Empire ruled the area we now call the Middle East. Towards the end, they lost control of the Balkan Peninsula. The Balkan Peninsula is the peninsula that contains Greece, and extends upwards towards Hungary and Romania. The Austro-Hungarian Empire and rebellious, newly independent states took control of the Balkan Peninsula after World War I.



Image Credit: US Library of Congress

Before 1918, a tsar, or king, ruled Russia. His name was Nicholas II. This is a picture of the tsar, his wife, and his children. The tsar of Russia also controlled the Russian Orthodox Church, the official church of the Russian Empire. After World War I, the tsar **abdicated** (stopped ruling), and Russia was ruled by several competing groups. One of those groups was the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin. Eventually, the **Bolsheviks** took control of Russia, executed the royal family, and formed the Communist Party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The Communists made it illegal to practice any religion.

For over 100 years, Ukraine had been divided into parts. The Russian empire under the tsars ruled one part and the Austrian empire under the Hapsburg *dynasty* (hereditary rulers) ruled another part. In 1919, the Bolsheviks invaded Ukraine, led in part by Joseph Stalin. After two years of war, most of the territories of Ukraine were incorporated into the puppet country, *Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic*, under the rule of the USSR.

The USSR's Communist Party was based on the views of the economist Karl Marx blended with Lenin's ideas, called Marxism-Leninism. **Communism** is a political view that capitalism is bad, so the working people of the world should come together to create a society in which nobody owns things for themselves, and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs. *Marxism-Leninism* says that this revolution has not happened and therefore a communist political party should seize power and rule for the **proletariat** (the workers). In the USSR and other countries that follow this ideology, the state controls the economy and promotes collectivism. Joseph Stalin instituted this political organization in 1922.

In 1928, Stalin began seizing grain in the USSR. Rich farmers called *kulaks* were to be arrested and their grain confiscated for the good of the state. In 1930, the USSR rounded up kulaks and sent them to concentration camps. Many died on the trip there or in the camps. Private farmland was abolished in favor of collective farms, which were not as productive as private farms.



Image Credit: US Library of Congress



What is *abdication*? \_\_\_\_\_

Who were the Bolsheviks? \_\_\_\_\_

What is communism? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was Joseph Stalin? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are the proletariat? \_\_\_\_\_

### **The *Holodomor***

From 1932-1933, 4 million Ukrainians, about a third of the population, died in a famine as a direct result of Stalin's policies. The 1932 harvest was poor. That year, the harvest was about half the previous year's harvest. The USSR took almost all of the Ukrainian harvest. No outside aid was permitted, and government agents seized all the food in households. Those who tried to collect individual grains of wheat from the ground (*gleaning*) were also killed. Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, Kharkiv, Odessa, and other Ukrainian cities all had widespread starvation. Those who tried to leave were caught without an internal passport and sentenced to prison camps. In some areas, up to 40% of the population died. This mass death because of Stalin's policies is known as the ***Holodomor***.

Ukrainians outside Ukraine were also subject to the *Holodomor*.

The USSR forbade anyone to speak of the **genocide** (deliberate killing of people from a nation or ethnic group) and "replaced" the dead Ukrainians with Russian colonists. At the same time, the USSR deliberately targeted anyone who could pass on the history of Ukraine—teachers, writers, bureaucrats, museum curators, artists, and priests were all jailed, sent to prison camps, or executed.

What was the *Holodomor*? \_\_\_\_\_

What is genocide? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did the USSR target people who could pass on the history of Ukraine? \_\_\_\_\_

## **World War II**

When World War II (WWII) started, Germany and the USSR were allies. During World War II, local authorities in Kharkiv, Ukraine collaborated with German Nazis to kill many thousands of Jews. The USSR fought against Finland in the 1939-1940 *Winter War*. The Finns fought back against overwhelming Russian forces and propaganda, and held the line for months during the winter. Eventually, the Finns lost the war and had to give nearly 10% of the country to the USSR.

A ***Molotov cocktail*** is a glass bottle filled with a liquid that will burn and a cloth to set on fire. When the cloth is ignited, the liquid ignites, and the bottle is thrown towards the opposition. These are named after Soviet foreign minister Molotov, who claimed that the bombing runs during the Winter War were humanitarian missions.

In 1940, the USSR occupied Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and what is now Moldova. In 1941, Germany attacked the USSR at least partly to gain control of the fertile fields of Ukraine. At first, many Ukrainians thought the German soldiers might liberate them from the USSR. Other Ukrainians formed an army to fight both the USSR and the Germans. Some of the worst fighting in WWII took place in Ukraine.

The USSR then became an ally of Britain and the USA. Over 20 million citizens of the USSR died in World War II, as well as almost 9 million soldiers. The USA was the only country with nuclear bombs and bombed Japan during the war. The Holocaust nearly wiped out Europe's Jewish population.

At the end of (WWII), the USSR claimed much of eastern Europe, including half of Germany. The USSR also claimed northern Korea. The USA and the British did not want the Soviets in eastern Europe and feared communist political parties in democratic countries. To prevent communism from growing in Europe, the USA came up with the **Marshall Plan**, economic aid that integrated the North American and western European economies.



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

The two largest cities in western Russia are Moscow and St. Petersburg. Moscow is the political, cultural, educational, scientific, and religious capital of Russia. Peter the Great founded St. Petersburg in 1703, partly because Russia needed a port. Many of the country's ports on the Arctic freeze for several months each year. After World War II, the Allies gave Königsberg to the USSR, which renamed the city Kaliningrad. It is the only Russian ice-free port on the Baltic Sea. The German population was removed and replaced with Soviet citizens.

The Soviets did not trust Germany and wanted to protect the USSR from the wide-open front of the Northern European Plain. In the past 500 years, Russia has been invaded several times from the west. The European plain offers a flat route straight to Moscow. The narrow passage on Russia's side, between the mountains and the ocean, is Poland. This is why Russia has repeatedly attempted to occupy Poland throughout history; the country represents a relatively narrow corridor into which Russia could drive its armed forces to block an enemy advance toward its own border.

By the time an army approaches Moscow, it already has unsustainably long supply lines, which become increasingly difficult to protect as they extend across Russian territory. Napoleon made this mistake in 1812, and Hitler repeated it in 1941. Do not invade Russia in the winter.

### The Deportation of the Crimean Tatars



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

The **Crimean Tatars** were the inhabitants of the Crimean Peninsula, previously ruled by the Ottoman Empire. The Crimean Tatars had practiced Islam prior to being ruled by the USSR. In 1944, Stalin ordered the deportation of nearly 200,000 Crimean Tatars to what is now Uzbekistan. Many died on the way, and further discrimination and deaths followed. Officially, this was collective punishment for supporting Nazi Germany. The Crimean Tatars were not allowed to return home until the 1980s. In the meantime, Russian colonists replaced the missing population. The Crimean Peninsula was given to Ukraine. Sevastopol was a high-security city in the USSR because it was a port for the USSR that was open all year round.

When the **United Nations** (UN) was founded in 1945, the goal was to prevent any more world wars. Fifty-one countries joined at first, including Ukraine. The UN has six main parts: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. As a member of the UN, Ukraine served on the Security Council twice, once in 1948-49 and again in 1984-85. Russia has a permanent seat on the Security Council.

When WWII started, were Germany and the USSR allies? \_\_\_\_\_

When WWII ended, were Germany and the USSR allies? \_\_\_\_\_

When WWII ended, were the USSR and the USA friendly? \_\_\_\_\_

What are Molotov cocktails? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the Marshall Plan? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened to the Crimean Tatars? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the purpose of the United Nations? \_\_\_\_\_



flag of the USSR



# The Cold War

The **Cold War** was a rivalry between the USA and the USSR from 1947 to 1991. The Cold War was not fought by soldiers, but by politicians, economies, spies, and propaganda.

In 1948, the Allies decided to reunite Germany. The USSR disagreed, and began a **blockade**, or an act of war when one party blocks an enemy from entering or leaving territory, usually along a coast. The USSR took Berlin and forbid the other Allies from the rail traffic, roads, or water lines that connected Berlin to the rest of Germany. The USA and Britain countered the blockade with an 11-month airlift of supplies in and out of Berlin.

In addition, the Allies sanctioned the USSR by refusing to buy exports from behind the Iron Curtain, which eventually led the USSR to stop the blockade. Instead, the USSR built a wall through Berlin, Germany known as the **Berlin Wall**.



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

After the blockade ended in 1949, the USA and its allies formed the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, a unified military command to resist the Soviet presence in Europe. That same year, the USSR exploded a nuclear bomb, ending the USA's status as the only power with a nuclear bomb. The next year, the USSR supported North Korea in an invasion of South Korea. In response, the USA supported South Korea in a three-year war.

During the Cold War, Ukraine became a center for high-tech research and Soviet weapons. Many USSR military bases with high-tech weapons were located in Ukraine. This was part of the *Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)* policy, or the idea that the USSR and NATO would not attack each other because they both had enough nuclear weapons to destroy the planet. In 1962, the USSR began secretly installing intercontinental nuclear missiles in Cuba. Nuclear war almost broke out, but the USSR agreed to withdraw the missiles. This is was the **Cuban missile crisis**.

In 1986, the **Chernobyl** nuclear power plant exploded near the town of Pripjat in Ukraine. It was the worst nuclear disaster in history, both in cost and casualties. At Chernobyl, an uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction led to a core melt down, followed by a core fire that released airborne radioactive contamination for over a week. Eventually, the USSR built a giant steel and concrete cover over the power plant. Over 100,000 people had to be evacuated, and over 1,000 square miles (2,600 square kilometers) are permanently contaminated.

What was the Cold War? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is a blockade? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the Berlin Wall? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the purpose of NATO? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the Cuban Missile Crisis? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened at Chernobyl? \_\_\_\_\_



The USA and the USSR avoided fighting with each other directly. Instead, they each supported other countries in fighting, sending troops, weapons, and other supplies. These are known as **proxy wars**. The USSR and the USA also invaded some countries. For example, the USA invaded Vietnam in 1964 to try to prevent Vietnam from becoming communist. The USA was unsuccessful. The USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979, but was unsuccessful in that war.

Throughout the 1980s, the USSR weakened. Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the USSR, tried to improve daily life in the USSR. Towards the end of the 1980s, the countries behind the Iron Curtain began to rebel. Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia all became democratic countries.

## After the Cold War

In 1989, the people from East and West Berlin united to tear down the Berlin Wall. Two years later, the USSR collapsed, and fifteen independent countries were created, including Ukraine and Russia. All Russian men were still required to serve in the military for at least one year, except for those who have a PhD.

In 1991, about 84% of eligible voters in the Ukraine turned out to vote on declaring independence from the USSR. (For comparison, the 2020 US presidential election had the highest voter turnout of the 21st century, with 66.8% of eligible voters.) When the Ukrainian votes were counted, 90% of the voters had chosen independence. Citizenship was given to residents, whether they were ethnically Russian or Ukrainian.

Unlike the rest of Ukraine, the majority of the population of Crimea is ethnically Russian. After independence, the Crimean Peninsula became the *Republic of Crimea* within Ukraine. Then, about 250,000 Crimean Tatars returned to Crimea. A Crimean separatist movement arose. In 1995, Ukraine took back the status of republic, reducing Crimea to another part of Ukraine. On the peninsula, **Sevastopol** was technically Ukrainian. After independence, Ukraine had claimed the navy based at Sevastopol. In 1995, Ukraine gave up the fleet in exchange for Russia forgiving Ukrainian debt. In 1997, Russia signed a 20-year lease for Sevastopol.

When Ukraine left the USSR, it became the third largest nuclear power in the world. Ukraine joined the Partnership for Peace Program run by (NATO). In 1996, under pressure from both the USA and Russia, Ukraine gave up nuclear warheads left over from the USSR and sent them to Russia. In exchange, the USA, Russia, Ukraine, and the UK signed the **Budapest Memorandum**, agreeing not to threaten or use force to invade Ukraine or keep it from being independent. Belarus and Kazakhstan did the same with their nuclear warheads.

Russia and Ukraine faced big challenges after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The central planning committees that decided on the economy had focused on military hardware and heavy industrial machinery. There were not enough things for regular people to buy. **Inflation** or the rise in prices for goods and services, increased while production slowed.

The transfer of public industries to private ownership did not benefit most Russians. The new owners were wealthy people with government connections called oligarchs. An **oligarch** is a member of a small group of people who control the government and use it to further their own goals. The 1999 election in Ukraine showed that oligarchs had interfered with voting.

## Balkanization

After World War I ended in 1917 and the Austro-Hungarian Empire fell, the people who lived there created their own state of Yugoslavia. That is the green outline on the map.

Yugoslavia was absorbed in the Soviet Union after World War II. In the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, each of the ethnic groups in the Balkan Peninsula wanted to be independent again. Disputes among ethnic groups tore Yugoslavia apart. Seven countries were formed: Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

Kosovo, which was part of Serbia, has a mostly Albanian Muslim population. Many people in Kosovo wanted to be free of Serbian control. When armed rebellion broke out in 1998, Serbs responded with military force. NATO intervened to end the bloodshed, and the United Nations began governing Kosovo.



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

Kosovo declared independence in 2008, but Serbia and its allies refused to recognize this. Historically, there has been so much conflict among ethnic groups in this area that it became a noun. When a region dissolves into fighting between ethnic groups, we call it **Balkanization**. Other areas of the former Soviet Union were Balkanized, as well. For example, oil rich Chechnya, in southern Russia, has seen heavy fighting as Chechens try to declare independence from Russia.

What is a proxy war? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the Budapest Memorandum? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To whom does Sevastopol belong? \_\_\_\_\_

What is inflation? \_\_\_\_\_

What is an oligarch? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Balkanization? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Eastern Europe* may also refer to the countries in Europe that were ruled by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from 1922 to 1991. In some countries in eastern Europe, a large percentage of the population does not practice any religion. In most of the region, however, Soviet repression strengthened religious faith. The dominant religion in most eastern European countries is the Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox



church are theologically similar but not the same church. In several countries, the majority of the people are Roman Catholics. The majority of Albanians are Muslim. Most countries have minority populations of Muslims, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Protestants, and Jews.

## European Union

Political events in the 1900s threatened all of Europe. In order to survive and compete in a changing world, the nations of Western Europe needed to learn to work together. After WWII, they made efforts to do this. In April of 1951, the Treaty of Paris created an international agency to supervise the coal and steel industries—France, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Italy signed this. These original countries created the European Economic Commission in 1958 to make trade easier. In 1967, they created the European Commission, and in 1971, they added the UK and Ireland. In the late 1980s, they added Denmark, Greece, Spain, and Portugal. These twelve countries formed the **European Union (€)** in 1993 with the Maastricht Treaty. The goal of the EU was to ensure the free movement of goods, services, people, and money. Many Muslims have immigrated to Europe, particularly to France and Spain.

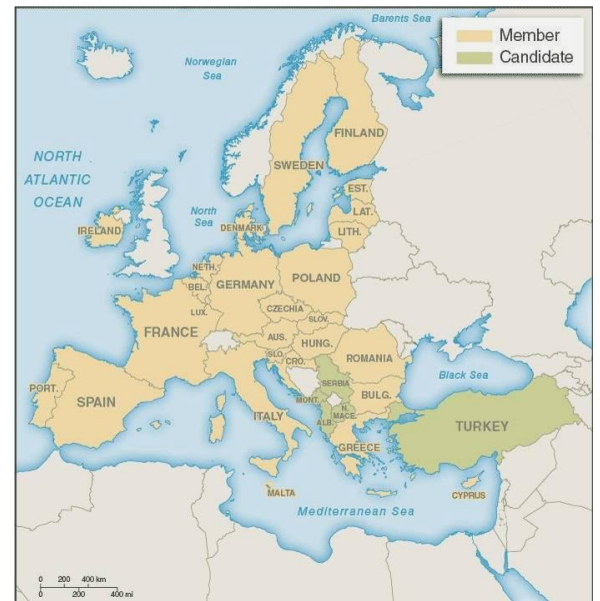


Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

The EU now has 27 members. East and West Germany reunited when the Soviet Union fell in 1989. Germany is now a strong voice in the EU. Ukraine is not a member of the EU, but did join the Council of Europe in 1995.



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

The European Union is not a country, but it does have its own flag, currency, and law-making abilities, as well as diplomatic representation and a common foreign and security policy in its dealings with external partners. Nineteen of the countries use the euro as their official currency. The EU is a large agent in the world economy, with a gross domestic product (GDP) about 3/4 of the USA's. *Gross domestic product* is the total value of goods and services from a country during one year.

Northern Europeans practice a form of *social democracy*. In this system, the government uses tax money to provide a variety of services, such as healthcare and education, for all citizens.

In 2016, the UK voted to leave the EU. Russian disinformation agents were influential in that decision. This is called **Brexit**. At the end of January 2020, the UK left the EU.

## The G-7 (formerly 8)

The Group of Seven (G-7) is an organization of the countries of world's largest developed economies: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Leaders of these countries meet to address international economic and monetary issues. The G-7 was the Group of Eight (G-8), until Russia was removed in 2014 for

invading Crimea and keeping it. The European Union (EU) is sometimes thought of as an eighth member of the G-7 since it holds many of the rights and responsibilities of full members.

What is the European Union? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was Brexit? \_\_\_\_\_

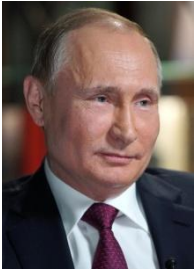
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What is the G-7? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Part 3 – Current Events

### Putin and Yanukovych



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**Vladimir Putin** was elected president of Russia in 2000. He had been an officer in the KGB, Russia's **secret police**. Secret police spy on their own people to find and punish people who criticize the government. Putin dealt harshly with those who opposed him, and was reelected in 2004.

In Ukraine, Putin endorsed the oligarch **Yanukovych** for Prime Minister in 2004. Strong support for Yanukovych came from the pro-Russian city Donetsk. That winter, protestors demonstrated against Yanukovych's election win, accusing him of cheating. The protests were known as the *Orange Revolution* and succeeded in forcing another round of voting. Yanukovych lost that election to the opposition candidate. But in 2010, Yanukovych won an election with strong support from the eastern part of Ukraine. His opponent was jailed the next year.

The same year, Ukraine agreed to renew Russia's lease of Sevastopol until 2042. Russia paid for the lease with cheap natural gas for Ukraine. In another sign of a better relationship with Russia, Ukraine abandoned the idea of joining NATO.

After a term as Prime Minister, Putin was reelected as president of Russia in 2012. He passed laws restricting public demonstrations, Internet access, and free speech.

In December 2012, the U.S. Congress passed of the **Magnitsky Act**, a law that denied visas to and froze the assets of Russian officials suspected of involvement with human rights abuses. Putin responded by approving a measure that banned the adoption of Russian children by U.S. citizens.

In 2013, under pressure from Russia, Yanukovych abandoned the idea of joining the EU. Protestors took to the streets in November, in the capital, Kyiv. The protestors rejected corrupt oligarchs. This became known as the **Maidan Revolution**. Police clashed with protestors in Kyiv's Maidan square, but protests continued. Yanukovych passed a series of increasingly strict laws against free speech. In response, protests spread across the country, including in the eastern half that had supported Yanukovych. Meanwhile, Russia offered to bribe Ukraine to stay away from the EU by cutting the price of natural gas and buying \$15 billion in bonds.



By Ilya - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29961678>

Yanukovych's regime became increasingly brutal with protestors, leading the EU to threaten sanctions against Ukraine unless Yanukovych backed off. 25,000 protestors camped in Kyiv's Maidan square resisted government forces. The EU sanctioned Ukraine. Protestors in Lviv and other cities took control of government buildings.



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Putin responded to the situation in Ukraine partly by launching a widely successful propaganda campaign that used anti-Western rhetoric to create Russian patriotism. **Propaganda** is spreading information, usually lies, rumors, half-truths, and arguments, to manipulate public opinion. Russia employed many "professional internet trolls" who create thousands of fake profiles on Facebook, Twitter, and news websites to bombard the comment sections of Russia-related news stories with pro-Kremlin propaganda. At the same time, Russian operatives also moved to



affect the upcoming US election. Companies like Cambridge Analytica ran social media operations that Russia thought would benefit it, filling Facebook, Twitter, and news websites with pro-Russian propaganda, and creating arguments among Americans.

On February 21, 2014, EU diplomats brought Yanukovych and opposition leaders together for an agreement. Protestors were granted full **amnesty**, or an official pardon. Yanukovych fled Kyiv ahead of a possible **impeachment**, or an official charge of misconduct. Three days later, Yanukovych was charged with mass murder for the deaths of Maidan square protestors. At the end of the month, Yanukovych appeared in Russia, insisting that he was still the rightful president of Ukraine.

Who is Vladimir Putin? \_\_\_\_\_

What are secret police? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is Yanukovych? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the Magnitsky Act? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the Maidan Revolution? \_\_\_\_\_

What is propaganda? \_\_\_\_\_

What is amnesty? \_\_\_\_\_

What is impeachment? \_\_\_\_\_

## Annexation of Crimea



Image Credit: CIA World Factbook

A pro-western European government in Ukraine threatened Russia's hold on the port at Sevastopol in Crimea. At the same time as the Maidan protests, Russian soldiers without their insignias occupied Simferopol and Sevastopol in Crimea, raising a Russian flag on the Crimean parliament building. Russia admitted that they had moved troops into Crimea. Putin installed Aksyonov as prime minister of Crimea. In March, a fake election was held to justify joining Russia. The USA and the EU imposed sanctions on Russian officials and members of the Crimean parliament. Many people left, especially Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

By annexing Crimea, Russia tried to discourage Ukraine from seeking membership in the EU or NATO. Russia hoped this would keep NATO from moving closer to its border. However, Ukraine signed part of an EU association pact, and in response, Russia broke the lease on Sevastopol and raised the price of natural gas by about

80%.

Arguably, a pro-western European Ukraine also threatened the buffer space between Moscow and a possible invasion along the northern European plain. Russia placed tens of thousands of troops on Ukraine's border. Anonymous Russian soldiers stormed government buildings in the **Donbas**, the southeastern part of the country with Donetsk and other eastern Ukrainian cities. Ukraine appealed to the UN, and talks between the US, the EU, Ukraine, and Russia began in Geneva. Fighting broke out in several Ukrainian cities. The masked Russian soldiers kidnapped journalists and others. The US and the EU sanctioned Russia.

A fake election was held in Luhansk and Donetsk to vote for annexation by Russia. Ukrainian police seized hundreds of thousands of pre-completed ballots. At the same time, the oligarch Poroshenko won the general Ukrainian election for president. Poroshenko stopped trying to retake Luhansk and Donetsk. Putin agreed to stop authorization for Russian troops on Ukrainian soil. Despite immense pressure from Russia, Poroshenko signed the full EU association treaty. Fighting against masked soldiers continued throughout Ukraine as it prepared to apply for full EU membership. Fourteen thousand people died in that conflict, and almost two million people are refugees.

In August 2014, Russian rules began that made posters with more than 3,000 daily readers to register as media outlets. In addition, anonymous posting was outlawed, and Internet service providers were required to maintain a record of user data that could be accessed by government authorities.

What happened in 2014 to anger Putin? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did Putin do in response? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the Donbas? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened to Crimea in the end? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Zelensky



Image Credit: Ukrainian Presidential Press Office

In 2018, the Ukrainian Orthodox church withdrew from the Moscow Orthodox church. In protest, the Russian Orthodox Church broke away with the rest of the Orthodox churches. The next year, Poroshenko lost the Ukrainian presidential election to a Jewish celebrity, **Zelensky**, who ran on an anti-corruption campaign. Zelensky was very popular.

The next year, US president Trump withheld \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine, and then asked Zelensky to investigate the son of a political opponent, Democratic U.S. presidential candidate *Joe Biden*. Biden's son

had served on the board of a Ukrainian natural gas company. Zelensky refused and the money was released to Ukraine a month later. Trump's action led to an impeachment investigation against Trump. Trump was not convicted, based on a party line vote. In response, Trump fired senior government officials, including the top Ukraine expert on the US National Security Council and refused to appoint an ambassador to Ukraine.

In Russia, Putin had his greatest rival, *Alexei Navalny*, poisoned in 2020, and then put him in jail in 2021. In the Ukraine, Zelensky lost popularity during COVID lockdowns. His anti-corruption policies had not made much progress, and there was still fighting in the Donbas, a contested region in southeastern Ukraine. Unlike in past military conflicts, this fighting is for unity, not separation into smaller republics.

Towards the end of 2021, Putin began another massive movement of troops and military equipment along the Ukrainian border. The US and EU warned of another Russian invasion. Ukraine responded by creating citizen militias and training its military to work with NATO.

Putin demanded veto power over NATO expansion, and reducing NATO back to 1997 membership. The international community rejected these demands. On February 21, 2022, Putin recognized Donetsk and Luhansk as independent countries and invaded the Donbas.

Who is Zelensky? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Putin want? \_\_\_\_\_

## Invasion

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022 with 190,000 soldiers. Russia is using everything but nuclear weapons, including **thermobaric bombs**. Thermobaric bombs are also known as vacuum bombs, creating a sustained, deadly blast wave. A thermobaric bomb is outlawed under the Geneva Convention.

Most experts expected the outgunned, outnumbered Ukrainian forces to be easily swept aside by the Russian forces. So far, this has not happened. Russia is starting sieges of key cities. **Kharkiv**, a city the size of Pittsburgh, is holding up the Russians in the eastern front of the invasion. **Kyiv** is an important military target and the capital of Ukraine, with a population about the size of Chicago. It is the seventh largest city in Europe and it is almost surrounded by Russian troops.

Because the Ukrainians are fighting so hard, Russia has begun bombing civilian targets like apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, and churches. The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial, a memorial to the thousands of Jews murdered by the Nazis in WWII, was damaged.

All over the country, normal Ukrainians volunteered to fight. Over 130,000 joined the citizen militias. They use hunting rifles, government issued weapons, and homemade Molotov cocktails to stop tanks in the streets. The Pravda brewery in Lviv, Ukraine began making Molotov cocktails instead of beer. The Ukrainian Orthodox church is supplying food for Ukrainian fighters. Crimean Tatars are fighting alongside Ukrainians. Other Muslim volunteers have been fighting as well.



Image Credit: Ukrainian Presidential Press Office

President Zelensky has inspired his people. He refused to evacuate from Kyiv, saying, "I need ammunition, not a ride." Almost every day, he posts a video defying Russia. In response, Russia has hired assassins to hunt down and kill Zelensky.

Unlike past military conflicts, Ukraine has received widespread international support, partly because social media has spread stories of the bravery of the outmatched Ukrainian forces. People can also see videos of the hundreds of thousands of refugees. Ukrainian men between the ages of 18 to 60 are not

allowed to leave.



Russia banned its own media from calling Putin's "special military operation" against Ukraine a war, an invasion, or attacks. People who break the ban are prosecuted and jailed. Organizations that break the ban are shut down. Facebook, Google, and YouTube stopped allowing ads from Russian propaganda organizations. In retaliation, Russia has slowed and blocked those companies. Twitter stopped allowing those ads in 2017, after Russia's interference in the 2016 US election. Google also turned off live traffic data on Google Maps in Ukraine and removed propaganda from search results. DirecTV removed a Russian propaganda channel, RT America.

NATO activated a special response force for the first time, but NATO has not agreed to send troops or fighter jets into Ukraine. NATO has not considered a "no fly zone," or telling Russia that Ukraine's sky is off limits, because that would require NATO to shoot first when Russian pilots tested the rules. NATO shooting first would give Putin a reason to declare war on NATO and justify Russian fighting. Kosovo asked the US to establish a base there. Kosovo also wants to join NATO faster. Kosovo declared independence in 2008, but Russia and its allies have refused to recognize it as a country. Belarus is supporting Russia.

Many European countries are sending weapons and ammunition to Ukraine. President Biden has authorized nearly \$1 billion in military assistance. Putin announced that his nuclear weapons are on high alert, but the USA does not want to enter into a nuclear standoff with Russia, and has not responded the same way. Ukraine asked to join the European Union under a special procedure, but that has not yet happened.

After a meeting of the G-7, the USA, Britain, Canada, and the European Union sanctioned Putin and other oligarchs personally. Russian companies and Russian banks are also sanctioned, which is bad for the global economy. The World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund are getting ready to lend Ukraine billions of dollars to pay for the war.

Russian ships are no longer welcome in European ports. Turkey blocked the Russian navy from passing through the opening to the Black Sea from the Mediterranean. The world's three largest shipping companies are blocking cargo to and from Russia except for humanitarian goods, food, and medical supplies. Russian airlines are no longer welcome in the EU.

The USA, the UK, and other European countries, along with Australia, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea, froze Russia's bank accounts and cut Russia off from the international banking system. Switzerland, which was famous for not taking sides in the Cold War, has joined the EU in sanctioning Russia. Japan received much expert advice from Ukraine after the Fukushima nuclear disaster and the Japanese public is supportive of Ukraine.

Russia supplies 10% of the world's oil and over one-third of the EU's natural gas. Despite this, the biggest international oil companies are leaving partnerships with Russian oil companies. Germany stopped a major pipeline to deliver gas from Russia to Europe. Oil and gas prices are expected to rise because no one will buy Russian oil or gas. The countries that belong to the International Energy Agency (IEA), an international organization to coordinate oil policy, have released oil and gas saved for emergencies.

Ukraine supplies much of the world's grain. Food prices are expected to rise because that grain will not be planted, harvested, or shipped.

What are thermobaric bombs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is Kharkiv important in the invasion? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is Kyiv important in the invasion? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How is Russia threatening Zelensky? \_\_\_\_\_

How is social media important to Ukraine in the invasion? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is NATO sending troops to Ukraine? \_\_\_\_\_

How are European countries supporting Ukraine in fighting? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List three sanctions that have been applied to Russia:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Essay questions:

- How does the northern European plain affect Russia's foreign policy? (discuss historical invasions, buffer zones, and ports)
- Why is Ukraine valuable to Russia? (discuss food, ports, and the northern European plain)
- How are events similar to, and different from, the Cold War? (discuss mutual distrust, nuclear weapons, and the legal status of Ukraine)
- How is media important in this invasion? (discuss social media versus news media, disinformation and propaganda, and limiting access to information)
- Should outside parties send troops to support Ukraine? (discuss why Russia would want to escalate the war, the difference between troops and material support, and the possibility of nuclear attack)

Possible areas for investigation (beware of students seeing inappropriate videos or finding inappropriate information):

- Refugees from Ukraine: How are they getting out? Where are they going? How are African and Indian refugees being treated? Why is it primarily women and children? How can average people help?
- Effect of sanctions on the Russian economy: What are the sanctions designed to do? How are the oligarchs affected? How are everyday people affected? What about traffic to and from Kaliningrad?
- Ukrainian President Zelensky versus Russian President Putin: How are their backgrounds different? What do they have in common? Which one is a more effective leader? Why?
- Perceptive media use: How does Putin use his public appearances? How does Zelensky use his public appearances? Note clothing, location, camera angles, speaking style.