

SOURCES

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RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

A BRIEF LOOK AT THE WAR IN UKRAINE...

In February of this year, Russia began a brutal military invasion of Ukraine. This was the result of many years of political tensions between Eastern and Western European powers, territorial disputes, and fear. We will try to collect some details to understand how this happened.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT CONTINENT THEY HAPPEN ON, WHO THEY AFFECT, OR WHAT THE ARGUMENT IS TO JUSTIFY IT, WARS ARE ABOMINABLE AND SHOULD BE REPUDIATED BY ALL. LET US ALWAYS CHOOSE PEACE.

ABOUT UKRAINE

- Ukraine has an area of 230,000 square miles and a population of 41,732,779 inhabitants. Kyiv is its capital and most populous city.
- Ukraine is one of the world's largest grain exporters. In 2021, it exported 20 million tons of wheat. Ukraine is also one of the world's top exporters of barley and sunflower seeds.
- Today Ukraine is an independent republic with three separate federal branches of government. It has a single elected legislative body, and has separate judicial and executive branches. Presidents are elected for a five-year term by popular vote. Its current president is Volodymyr Zelensky.

UKRAINE AND RUSSIA- THE CONNECTION

- Many Russians and Ukrainians practice the same customs, traditions and religion and speak the Russian language.
- Ukraine shares borders with Russia both to the east and northeast (see map)
- Russia pumps gas through pipelines that cross Ukraine and other eastern European countries. Europe gets nearly 40% of its natural gas and 25% of its oil from Russia.



THE WAR IN UKRAINE- THE BACKSTORY

- The Cold War (1945-1991) was a period of mistrust and competition between the USA (the West) and the Soviet Union (the East) and clashes and unfriendly relations between these two areas has caused problems for decades.
- Before 1991, Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, which included Russia.
- Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia and many Ukrainian separatists believe that parts of Eastern Ukraine is still part of Russia. The Ukrainian government is fighting to keep Ukraine one country.



The Russo-Ukrainian civil war has been going on in the eastern portion of Ukraine, (the Donbas region), since 2014. Russia has backed pro-Russian separatist forces that live in the region and are fighting against the Ukrainian government.

After the Soviet Union collapsed, several Baltic countries that were once part of the Soviet Union, joined NATO. NATO is a group of western military allies committed to defending each other in case any one of them is attacked. Poland and Romania, Ukrainian neighbors, soon followed and also joined NATO. As a result, NATO forces moved hundreds of miles closer to Moscow and directly to the Russian border.

In 2008, NATO stated it planned to enroll Ukraine in NATO "someday". Russia felt even more threatened by this western military threat.

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea. The region was of particular interest to Russia since it depends on the Black Sea for access to the Mediterranean Sea. This caused more fear among Ukrainians and western countries that Ukraine would be next.

THE WAR- A TIMELINE

- Tensions grew as Russian troops amassed across the Ukrainian border
- Russia invaded Ukraine on February 2022
- Western countries enforced tough economic sanctions against Russia, seizing Russian bank investments and assets around the world and implemented trade embargos (not allowing trade)
- Peace negotiations began but eventually failed
- The US and many western allies agreed to spend billions of dollars on weapons to send to Ukraine
- Accusations that chemical weapons were going to be used were made by both Russia and the US. This increased tensions even more.
- Over 5 million refugees have been forced to escape due to Russia's massive bombing in several cities in Ukraine. About 4,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed. Russia has bombed and left three large Ukrainian cities in rubble.



THE BUSINESS\$ OF WAR

Right now, the world is facing great challenges such as hunger, climate change, a refugee crisis and the Covid pandemic. However, the actions of the US government do not seem to be aimed at addressing these situations. The war in Ukraine has captured the attention of the media and the interest of military corporations. The US congress has approved a \$40 billion dollar military weapons deal.

\$800 billion defense budget, more than the Pentagon requested.

The eagerness of the US to participate in any war can be dangerous and costly. It's time to use resources more wisely and prioritize the problems we face and ask who benefits from the enormous military budget and selling of weapons?

The media attention that the war in Ukraine has received is truly dazzling when compared to the media coverage during the 20+year US involved wars in the Middle East. Over a million innocent civilians died in those wars, mostly women and children, and a countless number of refugees are still suffering today. A good part of the infrastructure and the environment has been permanently destroyed.

As we learn more about the war in Ukraine, we should pay attention to the events that happened that led to this war and not let ourselves be overly influenced by any media that gives such special attention to Ukraine, a European country, but not to other areas of the world that sometimes have greater humanitarian crises.

Mostly, let's raise awareness about the human cost of war and work together and demand an immediate ceasefire and call for stronger diplomatic efforts for peace.