Big Idea/Topic

Conflict between Ukraine and Russia in 2022

Connecting Theme/Enduring Understanding:

Beliefs and Ideals: The student will understand that the beliefs and ideals of a society influence the social, political, and economic decisions of that society.
Conflict and Change: The student will understand that when there is conflict between or within societies, change is the result.
Culture: The student will understand that the culture of a society is the product of the religion, history, beliefs, customs, traditions, and government of that society.
Location: The student will understand that location affects a society’s economy, culture, and development.

Essential and Supporting Questions:

EQ: What is worth fighting for?

Supporting Questions:
1. Why is there conflict between Russia and Ukraine?
2. How could the conflict impact the United States?

Standard Alignment

SSUSH16 Investigate how political, economic, and cultural developments after WW I led to a shared national identity.
a. Explain how fears of rising communism and socialism in the United States led to the Red Scare and immigrant restriction

SSUSH23 – Assess the political, economic, and technological changes during the Reagan, Bush, Sr., Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations.
a. Analyze challenges by recent presidents including the collapse of the Soviet Union, Clinton’s impeachment, the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the war against terrorism.

SSWH18 Examine the major political and economic factors that shaped world societies between World War I and World War II.
a. Determine the causes and results of the Russian Revolution from the rise of the Bolsheviks under Lenin to Stalin’s first Five Year Plan.
c. Describe the nature of totalitarianism and the police state that existed in the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy and how they differ from authoritarian governments.

SSWH19 – Demonstrate an understanding of the global political, economic, and social impact of World War II
c. Analyze the impact of the military and diplomatic negotiations between leaders of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

SSWH20 Demonstrate an understanding of the global social, economic, and political impact of the Cold War and decolonization from 1945 to 1989.
a. Explain the arms race, include: development of nuclear weapons, and efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons.

SSWH21 Examine change and continuity in the world since the 1960s.
b. Describe the reforms of Khrushchev and Gorbachev and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 that produced independent countries.

SSWH22 Analyze globalization in the contemporary world.
a. Describe the cultural and intellectual integration of countries into the world economy through the development of television, satellites, and computers.
b. Analyze global economic and political connections; include multinational corporations, the United Nations, OPEC, and the World Trade Organization.
c. Explain how governments cooperate through treaties and organizations to minimize the negative effects of human actions on the environment.

SSWG3 Evaluate how cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of the earth’s surface.
a. Explain why political boundaries are created and why they change (e.g., nation, state vs. nation-state; political vs. ethnic sovereignty; the unrecognized states of Palestine, Kosovo, and Taiwan).
b. Explain how geography (size, shape, and relative location) can be an advantage or disadvantage to participation in global exchange (e.g., Chile, Indonesia, Russia, Canada, South Africa/Lesotho, Turkey, and Switzerland).
c. Explain the causes of external and internal conflicts among cultural groups, including but not limited to ongoing border disputes and separatist movements (e.g., partition of India, post-colonial Africa, and independence movements of the Scots, Kurds, and Basques).

Connection to Literacy Standards for Social Studies and Social Studies Matrices

Map and Globe skills –
6. use map key/legend to acquire information from historical, physical, political, resource, product, and economic maps
7. use map to explain impact of geography on historical and current events
10. compare maps of the same place at different points in time and from different perspectives to determine changes, identify trends, and generalize about human activities.

Information Processing Skills –
4. distinguish between fact and opinion
5. identify main idea, detail, sequence of events, and cause and effect in a social studies context
7. interpret timelines, charts, and tables
Instructional Design

*This lesson has a flexible timeline and will cross over several days. It is designed to be adaptable to a high school United States History, World History, or World Geography course.*

This lesson is intended to reach students in a virtual or face to face setting whether they are plugged or unplugged. See the lesson checklist for the unplugged variation.

**Overview:** Given our reliance on technology and the availability of information 24-hours a day, your students have likely heard, read, or watched something regarding the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is likely that the information students have received has included sensationalized terms and possibly images that are graphic in nature. This has likely impacted your students’ understanding of the recent events. This lesson is designed to allow students to explore the historical background of the conflict and potential U.S. impact.

*Of note, some students may be anxious if they have family members that have fought in war, been near conflict, or who have family in the region and may naturally assume that the Russia-Ukraine conflict would elicit the same response by the U.S. as the Global War on Terrorism. This lesson plan provides the historical content for students to understand the current conflict.*

**Points to consider for the teacher:**

"The Ukraine" is incorrect both grammatically and politically, says Oksana Kyzyma of the Embassy of Ukraine in London. "Ukraine is both the conventional short and long name of the country," she says. "This name is stated in the Ukrainian Declaration of Independence and Constitution."

The use of the article relates to the time before independence in 1991, when Ukraine was a republic of the Soviet Union known as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, she says. Since then, it should be merely Ukraine. [Ukraine or the Ukraine: Why do some country names have 'the'?](#) June 7, 2012

**Part 1: Opening Activity: “What is worth fighting for?”**

The first step is to clarify the question. This activity is designed for students to unpack and make connections to the vocabulary of the question. Display the question to the whole class and ask what words they need to know in order to answer the question. As they identify each word, have the class share definitions, synonyms, and examples and write those on the board. The ideas they share don’t have to be rooted in the course work; it’s better if they share from their own knowledge and experience. The idea is for students to explore the meaning of the word in multiple contexts together so they hear other students’ thoughts which informs their own thinking and the lens they use to explore the information in the lesson. For example, if students identified the word fighting, they might share things like:

- fighting a traffic ticket in court, conflicting ideas like picketing or marching
- war, arguments in the hallway where students hit each other
- propaganda posters or commercials that take shots at competitors
- etc.

They key words in this question the class needs to explore are: fighting (this could mean physical or non-physical, ideologies, etc.), worth (value, something you prize), and what (person, place, thing, idea, ability, freedom). If they don’t identify all of the key words, you may need to pull those out yourself or with additional questions.
Finally, have students rewrite the question in their own words without using any of the underlined words. Have a few students share their question with the class; their questions are a good indicator for lesson readiness.

The next step is to show a brief overview video that gives students some context for the lesson. To understand the invasion, one must first understand the history of Russia and Ukraine. “The Russia-Ukraine Conflict Explained” by Nightly News: Kids Edition provides a four-minute explanation, the geographic location of Ukraine (and a size comparison to Texas), as well as the significance of its neighbor to the east, Russia.

Ask students to put on their geographer and political scientist hat and write down what they wonder as they watch the video. After they watch the video, ask students to share some of their questions.

(Note: Start at 1min, 33 secs; It is important to stop the video at 5min, 16 secs because the next section goes into unrelated information about COVID). “The Russia-Ukraine Conflict Explained” Video.

Note: If your students follow the news and already have some knowledge of what is going on, you could skip the video and give them time to write down and share their questions.

Part 2: Think-Collaborate-Share

Think: Provide students with the See-Think-Wonder Graphic Organizer (or have students create a similar format in their visual/interactive journal) and the NATO map. Ask them to take 5 minutes to consider the artifact and complete the first column of the graphic organizer using the map provided.

Map Game Note: Map Game Note: The link included with the NATO map for the map game no longer works. While the map game was not necessary for the lesson, as an alternative students could explore the interactive NATO ON THE MAP (https://www.nato.int/nato-on-the-map/) to learn more about NATO, how the Alliance works and how it responds to today’s security challenges.

Collaborate: Put students in small groups. Instruct students to share their answers within their group while completing the second column of the graphic organizer. While sharing, students should compare and contrast their answers. They should add new information to the second column, and place a tally make in the first column when they hear a thought similar to one they wrote in the first column. Give students 5-7 minutes to share answers.

After everyone shares their information, ask students to look at all the responses and rank them based on how important they are to answering the essential question, “What is worth fighting for?” Each group will then select a group spokesperson who will share out their top 3 responses. Give groups 3-4 minutes for this task.

Share: Each spokesperson will share their group’s top 3 responses with the class. The teacher will collect class responses on the board as students fill in in their graphic organizer.

After every group has shared, ask students to individually write 4 sentences in their journal that connect 2 or more of the terms below. This could be done at home or as an exit ticket.

• Soviet Union
• diplomacy
• Russia
• Ukraine
• impact to the United States
• member nation
• NATO
• invaded / invasion

Georgia Department of Education
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3.4.2022 ☺ Page 4 of 26
Examples:

1. **Russia** is upset that **Ukraine** wants to join **NATO**.
2. **Ukraine** used to be part of the **Soviet Union**.

Students can use words more than one time as long as they are using them for different reasons.

**Part 3: Transition into Exploring History**

As a hook, ask students to take their sentences and walk to a person they did not work with during the previous lesson. Give them 2 minutes to share sentences with each other and listen for similarities and differences. Then lead a class discussion asking students to reflect on what they have learned about the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

**Simulation:** In this section of the lesson, students are asked to play the role of an Intelligence Analyst. Each team of analysts will receive an information packet and will be asked to prepare a report in PowerPoint for the Director of National Intelligence who will include this in the President’s daily briefing.

**Note to the Teacher:** Though the instructions do not explicitly ask students to answer the questions below, they will explore the ideas as they research the sources and complete the graphic organizer. They could be used as follow up questions for a whole group discussion.

- What was the Soviet Union and why did it **collapse**?
- What is **NATO** and how does it function?
- What is diplomacy?
- What is the history of conflict between Russia and Ukraine?
- Why did **Russia annex Crimea** (previously part of Ukraine) in 2014?
- Why did **Russia invade Ukraine** in 2022?

Give each student the attached “Russia & Ukraine: Conflict & Impact” graphic organizer (or have students create a similar format in their visual/interactive journal) and give each group a packet with the sources below. Allow students to divide the sources among group members. Then each student will analyze their share of the documents individually and share information in jigsaw fashion within the group.

**Part 4: Closing**

**The Briefing:** Instruct students to prioritize the information they learned from the day’s lesson into a maximum of 4 slides as the President does not have much time to consider their information in his briefing. The briefing they prepare should:

- Include the MOST important information about the conflict between Ukraine and Russia
- Provide relevant visuals to support the information they share
- Prepare to defend the information they select as the MOST important

If there is time, students can present their information and arguments to the class (or record through video or written form) to submit to the teacher.
Alternate Closing/Opportunity for Extension:

**Viewpoints Discussion:** In their Analyst groups, have students facilitate a discussion on viewpoints. Students will discuss answers to the question, “What is worth fighting for?” from the perspective of each of the groups identified below:

1. Ukraine
2. Russia
3. NATO
4. The United States

As they examine the question from each perspective, they should also generate a question from the perspective of one group listed above that they would ask of another group.

Included below are additional sources that can be used to extend the learning.

1. In-depth review of the expansive history of the Soviet Union & modern-day Russia: [https://www.history.com/topics/russia/history-of-the-soviet-union](https://www.history.com/topics/russia/history-of-the-soviet-union)

2. Ukraine was also trying to position itself as a world leader in clean energy by mining/selling its vast supplies of lithium. “Before Invasion, Ukraine’s Lithium Wealth Was Drawing Global Attention.” [https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/climate/ukraine-lithium.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/climate/ukraine-lithium.html)

Ideas for Differentiation:

Our goal is for all students to be actively engaged using speaking, writing, illustrating, reading, and listening. Below are changes to the lesson to help achieve that goal for students who need additional support. Note: Be careful using these lessons for all students. If students are able to complete the activities on their own, it would be best to let them do this independently.

- In the simulation, consider assigning sources to specific students to ensure the work is challenging and achievable instead of letting the group divide the source material among themselves.
- Consider including appropriate images and additional maps of the region to facilitate access to the content using the “Visual Support Source Set.”
- Consider using the graphic below to increase accessibility for your English Learners.

Evidence of Student Success

Information for diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments are described within the Instructional Design.

Engaging Families

Materials included to support unplugged learners: Lesson Checklist, NATO Map, Sources 1-5, Russia-Ukraine Graphic Organizer, Russia-Ukraine Conflict & Impact Worksheet, Visual Support Source Set.

Optional materials to support learning not included: blank paper/journal, writing utensils, highlighter, colored pencils
Ukraine-Russia Conflict 2022 Lesson Checklist

Part 1: Clarifying the Question

☐ The goal of this lesson is to answer the question, “What is worth fighting for?”

- Write the question in your journal/interactive notebook. Underline the words in the question you need to know in order to answer the question.
- Write down what you think those words mean, give some examples. For instance, if you underlined fighting you might write: people punching each other in boxing, marching with a group of people for a cause, or going to court to argue against a traffic ticket.
- Rewrite the question in your own words, but don’t use any of the words you underlined.

☐ The topic of this lesson is the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Think about what you know or have heard about this conflict. In your notebook, create 2 sections, one for geographer hat questions and one for political scientist hat questions—these are questions a geographer or political scientist might ask about the conflict. Write down some questions you have in your interactive notebook or journal in the appropriate section.

Part 2: Think-Collaborate-Share

☐ Using the NATO map of Member Nations, take 5 minutes to consider the artifact and complete the first column of the Russia-Ukraine graphic organizer. Here are some questions that might help guide your thinking:

  - What does the legend in each map tell the viewer as an historian, geographer, economist, or political scientist?
  - Is each part of the world represented in the same way? What could that mean to specific countries?
  - How does “geography” play a role in where the countries are located, the political beliefs of a country, and who their allies are?
  - Would the size of a country matter? Why or why not?

☐ Show the map to a friend or an adult, and ask them what they see, what they think, and what they wonder. Follow the instructions in the second column and record their responses.

Part 3: Transition into Exploring History

☐ Pretend that you are an Intelligence Analyst. You’ve been tasked with preparing a brief for the President on the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Complete the Conflict and Impact Worksheet by researching the source material provided.

☐ Use your research to prepare a brief for the President that includes only the 4 ideas that you think are the MOST important information to share. Write those ideas in your journal and explain to your teacher why you chose to include each idea.
Part 4: Closing

☐ Knowledge checkpoint: Write 4 sentences in your journal that connect 2 or more of the terms below. You can use words more than one time as long as they are used for different reasons.

- Soviet Union
- diplomacy
- Russia
- Ukraine
- member nation
- NATO
- invaded
- impact to the United States

Sentence examples:

1. Russia is upset that Ukraine wants to join NATO.
2. Ukraine used to be part of the Soviet Union.

☐ Let’s close out the lesson by answering the essential question, “What is worth fighting for?” In your journal, create a section for each of the groups identified below. In each section, write the answer to the essential question from the perspective of that group AND write one question that group might want to ask another group.

- Ukraine
- Russia
- NATO
- The United States

☐ How would you answer the question What is worth fighting for?
Step 1: Work independently using the artifact (map, images, text, etc.) to fill in the first column.
Step 2: In your small group, as each person shares, complete the second column.
Step 3: With the whole class, as each group shares, complete the third column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you see, think, wonder about the artifact?</th>
<th>What are you hearing about what others in your group see, think, wonder about the artifact?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See</td>
<td>As you hear other people share, put a tally mark in your column every time someone shares a thought you had already written there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonder</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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<td>As you hear other people share, put a tally mark in your column every time someone shares a thought you had already written there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Russia & Ukraine: Conflict & Impact

Collapse of Soviet Union

WHO?
WHAT/HOW?
WHERE?
WHEN?
WHY (does it matter)?

Connection between events

Ukraine Gains Independence

WHO?
WHAT/HOW?
WHERE?
WHEN?
WHY (does it matter)?

Connection between events

NATO Expands

WHO?
WHAT/HOW?
WHERE?
WHEN?
WHY (does it matter)?

Connection between events (see next page)
WHO?
WHAT/HOW?
WHERE?
WHEN?
WHY (does it matter)?

Connection between events

WHO?
WHAT/HOW?
WHERE?
WHEN?
WHY (does it matter)?

Connection between events

WHO?
WHAT/HOW?
WHERE?
WHEN?
WHY (does it matter)?
What was the Soviet Union?

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), often referred to as the Soviet Union, was a state that formed in December 1922 and collapsed in December 1991. It stretched from the Baltic and Black seas to the Pacific Ocean. Ultimately, it consisted of 15 Soviet Socialist Republics (hence the name USSR): Armenia, Azerbaijan, current day Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, current day Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, current day Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan (see Figure 1). Of note, the capital of the USSR was Moscow – now the capital of Russia. This partially explains why current day Russia is often perceived as trying to bring former Soviet Socialist Republics “back to Russia.”

During the period of its existence, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was, by area, the world’s largest country. It was also one of the most diverse, with more than 100 distinct nationalities living within its borders. * Most of the population, however, was made up of East Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians); these groups together made up more than two-thirds of the total population in the late 1980s. Source: “Soviet Union,” Britannica: https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union

Why Did it Collapse?

Ultimately, the collapse stemmed from internal unrest, a sea change in government, and the increase of foreign influence, investment, and interaction. In the 1980s (as part of the Cold War efforts), the United States isolated the Soviet economy from the rest of the world and when its oil and gas revenue dropped dramatically, it exacerbated the increased tensions between the USSR elites (who consumed much of the republic’s wealth) and the common citizen (most of whom did not have the basic necessities). Although, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985 and attempted to make changes to open up the USSR, increase wealth throughout the SSRs, and improve relations with the West to “thaw the Cold War,” many historians assess that Gorbachev’s efforts were slow to take hold and given the already contentious relationship between the USSR and other republics, likely emboldened moves towards independence. Source: “The Soviet Union” https://www.history.com/topics/russia/history-of-the-soviet-union

From 1989, conflicts developed between representatives of the USSR parliament and some of the aforementioned Soviet Socialist Republics. Many of the contentious issues involved the power of the USSR over the republics, the resurgence of ethnic nationalism within the republics, and the increasing demand for autonomy (in some cases full independence) from the USSR. By December 1991, several of the republics were demanding independence and three of the republics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) had achieved independence and were internationally recognized as sovereign states. On December 8, 1991, the USSR was officially dissolved when the newly elected leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus signed an agreement to create the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to replace the USSR. Realistically, the CIS has not been very successful in remaining a coordinating body among many of the former Soviet Socialist Republics.

*As noted in the World Geography Teacher Notes, physical boundaries of countries are often influenced by commonalities (e.g., cultures, religions, ethnicities), geography, and natural resources. Likewise, the long-term success of a country can be impacted by internal civil unrest, conflict, and/or a change in alliances. Many of these points are apparent in the history of the Soviet Union as well as the history of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
Figure 1 Map of the former USSR, Source: https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union
Source 2-Sequence of Events 1990-2014

What is the History of Conflict between Ukraine and Russia?

Ukraine Gains Independence:

In January 1990, Ukrainians express their intent to gain independence. Through a series of events in July, the new Ukrainian parliament (The Rada) vote to declare independence from the Soviet Union. In August, they declare independence a second time and officially vote and declare independence in December, making it official. In 1992, Ukraine formally establishes relations with NATO, but does not join.

December 1994: After the Soviet Union’s collapse in late 1991, Ukraine was in possession of the world’s third-largest nuclear stockpile. In a treaty called the Budapest Memorandum, Ukraine agreed to trade away its intercontinental ballistic missiles, warheads and other nuclear infrastructure in exchange for guarantees that the three other treaty signatories — the U.S., the U.K. and Russia — would "respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine."

Figure 2 Signing of the Budapest Memorandum, Source: https://www.npr.org/2022/02/12/1080205477/history-ukraine-russia

President Bill Clinton (from left), Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk join hands in 1994 after signing a nuclear disarmament agreement. Under the agreement, Ukraine, the world's third-largest nuclear power at the time, said it would turn all its strategic nuclear arms over to Russia for destruction.

Sergei Supinsky/AFP via Getty Images
2008: Talks of Joining NATO Sow Discontent
In January 2008, Ukrainian President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Tymoshenko formally requested that Ukraine be granted a "membership action plan," the first step in the process of joining the alliance. Former U.S. President George W. Bush supported Ukraine's membership, but France and Germany opposed it after Russia voiced displeasure. In April 2008, NATO responded by promising that Ukraine will one day be a member of the alliance, but does not begin the membership action plan. In 2009, Russia flexed its muscles by stopping the flow of natural gas to Ukraine (after the two countries could not resolve negotiations over prices). It is important to note that other Eastern and Central European countries rely on pipelines that flow through Ukraine to receive gas imports from Russia.

2014: Russia Annexes Crimea (A timeline of Major Events)
The events leading to the Russia annexation of Crimea began with protests in the capital city of Kyiv in November 2013 against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych’s decision to reject a deal for greater economic integration with the European Union. After a violent crackdown by state security forces unintentionally drew an even greater number of protesters and escalated the conflict, President Yanukovych fled the country in February 2014.

In late February 2014, during a secret meeting with his officials, Russia President Vladimir Putin, cited the need to bring Crimea back into the fold of Russia and to protect the rights of Russian citizens living in Crimea and southeast Ukraine. On February 24, 2014, “little green men” (Soldiers believed to be Russian wearing unmarked green uniforms and carrying modern Russian military weapons and equipment) deployed to Crimea. *Note: A year later (March 2015), Russian President Vladimir Putin admitted that the soldiers were Russian.*

In March 2014, Russian troops entered Crimea and took control of strategic locations. On March 18, 2014, Russia formally annexed Crimea as two Russian federal subjects (the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol) after a local referendum (the validity of the referendum remains disputed) suggested a large majority of Crimeans voted to join the Russian Federation.
On **May 11, 2014**, two pro-Russian regions of Ukraine (Donetsk and Luhansk) held referendums to declare independence from Ukraine.
Figure 5 Areas in red have broken off from Ukraine. Source: https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/24/europe/ukraine-visual-explainer-maps/index.html
What is NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in April 1949. Originally formed in response to the Cold War and perceived Soviet aggression, NATO’s current purpose is to “guarantee the freedom and security of its members” usually through political and military means. There are 30 member countries and the organization attempts to use diplomatic means to solve problems, build trust, and prevent conflict. However, if diplomacy fails, then NATO has the military power to conduct what it calls crisis-management operations. Such operations can be carried out by Article 5 (an attack against one is an attack against all), under a United Nations mandate, or through cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

Source: “NATO” https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html

What does NATO have to do with Russia and Ukraine?

As noted on NATO’s page, part of NATO’s charter is to be open to the membership of any other European state in a position to further the principles of NATO and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. For countries seeking membership, NATO has a “Membership Action Plan” to help aspiring members prepare for membership and meet all requirements. The expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been a concern for Russia because former Soviet Socialist Republics have joined NATO (as opposed to coming back to the Russia fold). Additionally, Ukraine is interested in joining NATO. In 2008 at NATO’s Bucharest Summit, NATO welcomed Ukraine’s aspiration for membership and agree that it would become members of NATO (while stopping short of developing a Membership Action Plan). Nevertheless, Russian President Vladimir Putin was clear in his warning that “No Russian leader could stand idly by in the face of steps toward NATO membership for Ukraine.” As depicted in this map, Russian officials have stated the perceived threat of NATO expansion and President Putin publicly called NATO’s 2008 invitation to Ukraine a red line. In the past, Russia has responded to talks between Ukraine and the US or Ukraine and NATO by moving Russian troops close to the Ukrainian border and/or using cyber attacks to target Ukraine’s infrastructure. Note: Although the U.S. and Canada are not shown on this map, they are members of NATO.
Figure 6 Map of NATO Members. Source: https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/24/europe/ukraine-visual-explainer-maps/index.html
Source 4-Conflict Timeline 2021-2022

April 2021: Russia sends about 100,000 troops to Ukraine's borders, ostensibly for military exercises. Later that month, Russia says it will withdraw the troops, but tens of thousands remain.

November 2021: Russia renews its troop presence near the Ukraine-Russia border, alarming U.S. intelligence officials, who travel to Brussels to brief NATO allies on the situation.

December 2021: In a phone conversation with Russian President Putin, U.S. President Biden urges Russia not to invade Ukraine, warning of "real costs" if Russia does so. In response, Putin issued a contentious set of security demands. Among them, he asks NATO to permanently bar Ukraine from membership and withdraw forces stationed in countries that joined the alliance after 1997, including Romania and Balkan countries. Putin also demands a written response from the U.S. and NATO.

January 2022: 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.

February 2022:

Early February: Diplomatic efforts pick up pace across Europe. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz traveled between Moscow and Kyiv. 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.

February 10: Russia's Defense Ministry said the joint operation in Belarus, which includes warplanes, missile launchers and live-fire exercises, will focus on "suppressing and repelling external aggression during a defensive operation" and last until February 20th.

February 15th: By mid-February, the fighting escalated between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces in the two eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Separatist leaders called for evacuations. "In our view, what is happening in Donbas today is, in fact, genocide," says Putin on Feb. 15 — a false claim that Western officials say Putin is using to create a pretext for an invasion.

February 21st: Russian President Putin officially recognized the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR) (these are the same areas that declared a referendum in 2014). Putin then ordered the deployment of Russian troops to the area on the pretext of protecting the local population.

February 24th: Russian forces enter Ukraine and launch a ground, air, and sea assault on strategic locations within Ukraine.
During his Oval Office meeting with Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, on Wednesday, President Biden said Ukraine and the United States had “a similar value system.” *NY Times September 2021*

Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, left, and President Xi Jinping of China meeting last month on the day of the Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing. *New York Times March 2022*
How Does this Conflict Impact the U.S.

**As a World Leader:** As noted in the NightlyNews video, as a world leader and a member of NATO and the UN, the United States (like other member nations) seeks to vehemently condemn acts of aggression by one nation on another. In this case, the historical relationship between Russia and the US as well as Russia and Ukraine (in which Russia is often the perceived aggressor) highlights the importance of condemnation.

**Strategic Interests:** Furthermore, the U.S. has service members stationed in various parts of the world (and Europe) as part of enduring relationships, missions, training events, and partnerships. Some of those partnerships are with NATO members – some of which are neighbors to Ukraine and are concerned that Russian aggression towards Ukraine could be a warning of future aggression against them and it could also signal Russia’s intent to reassert itself as the leader of former Soviet Socialist Republics.

**A Significant Difference from Iraq & Afghanistan:** It is important to distinguish the U.S. role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict from the acts of terror against the United States in 2001 that led to nearly two decades of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Russia-Ukraine conflict will likely remain a mostly diplomatic effort (provided the conflict remains contained in Ukraine). Given the Russian President’s “justification” of protecting Russians in the separatist areas of Ukraine, and the international outcry, it is unlikely Russia would expand efforts (using military force).

**Economic Impact on the US:** As noted in the February 27, 2022, Meet The Press episode, the invasion of Ukraine is driving up oil and wheat prices worldwide. Conflict typically has an impact on stocks as well (although the stocks will ebb and flow throughout a crisis).

**Watch Meet the Press video (1min, 27 secs):**

While most economists will note that the US is “insulated” from direct economic impacts, it is important to note that globalization connects countries at various levels. Likewise, despite experts’ best analysis, an unknown is how Russia will respond to the latest round of sanctions. Additionally, while most news outlets focus primarily on the price of gas and energy, Russia and Ukraine also export wheat, rye, barley and other grains (primarily to Central Asia and the Middle East).

**Note:** See the figure 10 infographic. Moreover, the implications to the tech and motor vehicle sectors are also noteworthy because Russia produces one-third of the world’s supply of palladium. Palladium is a silvery-white precious metal that is used in gasoline-powered vehicles to control pollution and reduce emissions. Russia also produces platinum and nickel that are used in developing microchips necessary for many products from jewelry to electrical meters to key components within vehicles.

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