

Vestigia

Events That Led To The War in Ukraine - A Timeline

A 1.000 Years Struggle For An Autonomous National Identity

History repeats itself. Does it?

This section is part of the Broad Horizon Timeline.

It does not aim to explain everything — but to anchor the present in a sequence.

A war like this doesn't begin with missiles. It begins with memory.

From the founding of Kievan Rus to the collapse of the USSR, from famines and treaties to quiet betrayals and unspoken fears — this timeline traces the long arc of imperial rise, collapse, resistance, and reassertion. It is not a neutral list. It is a set of moments, loaded with meaning, contested in interpretation, and crucial to understanding why the war in Ukraine — and the shape of Europe itself — takes the form it does.

Some events stand alone. Others echo through current articles. Together, they form the underlay to this journal — the story beneath the stories.

This is not the past.

This is what the present stands on.

A timeline is not just a series of happenings. History as a class at school. Or annals to spright our inner patriot. Why independence is important - and cooperation at the same time. The difference between oppression and freedom. It helps us understand - why events occur, what endurance mean, why people fight.

Timeline

Time Goes On:



Kievan Rus

The Founding of Kievan Rus marks the establishment of the first East Slavic state centered around Kyiv, which laid the foundations for modern Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.



Cities of the Hanse

Beginning in the 14th century, a group of northern European cities formed a commercial and legal alliance that would dominate Baltic trade for centuries. Known as the Hanseatic League, this urban confederation connected ports from Flanders to Novgorod, enabling secure trade, mutual defense, and legal cooperation without central rule.



Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth

Before Moscow, there was Lublin. The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth laid the groundwork for Western Ukrainian identity — and for centuries of contested rule.

historical empire






Pereyaslav Agreement with Tsarist Russia






The Pereyaslav Agreement between the Cossack Hetmanate and Tsarist Russia marked the beginning of Ukraine's alignment with Russia, which would evolve into centuries of political, military, and cultural influence.

Narratives & Interpretation




880-1240

-  Viewed as the beginning of Ukrainian statehood and independence.
-  Seen as the origin of Russian statehood and civilization.
-  A key moment in Christianizing Eastern Europe. Foundational to both Russian and Ukrainian national identities.




1356-1669

-  A proud civic legacy — decentralized, commercial, and culturally formative.
-  A forgotten example of peaceful urban order built on shared interest, not force.
-  A useful trade partner through Novgorod — later expelled as a foreign threat to imperial centralization.
-  An economic asset with cultural distance — integrated into cities like Gdańsk and Kaunas, but never fully national.
-  The League brought urban structure and long-distance trade — but also foreign rule and German domination in cities like Riga and Tallinn.

1565

-  A legacy of tolerance and domination. The Commonwealth offered pluralism and protection to many — but also imposed power unevenly across its lands.
-  Seen as a fading rival once rich in tolerance and ambition, yet doomed by internal discord and Western entanglements.
-  A bold experiment in pluralism and federation — admired for its tolerance, yet weakened by elite fragmentation and foreign ambition.

1654

-  A moment of lost autonomy, as the agreement gradually led to Russian dominance over Ukraine.
-  Seen as the unification of Ukraine with Russia, marking the beginning of Ukrainian ties to the Russian state.
-  Reflects the complex relationships in Eastern Europe, where powers sought strategic alliances to balance regional conflicts.



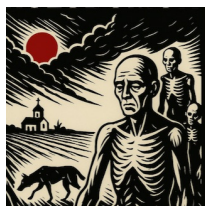
Act of Unification

In the chaos after World War I and the collapse of empires, Ukrainian leaders declared the Act of Unification — joining the Ukrainian People's Republic with the West Ukrainian People's Republic. It was a symbolic moment of national hope — but it came too late, and would not last.



Soviet absorption of Ukraine

In the wake of civil war and foreign invasions, Ukraine's brief independence collapsed under military defeat and political exhaustion. By late 1922, Bolshevik forces had crushed the Ukrainian People's Republic. With the Treaty on the Creation of the USSR, Ukraine was absorbed into the new Soviet Union.



Holodomor Famine

The Holodomor Famine was a man-made catastrophe under Stalin's regime that devastated Ukraine, killing millions of Ukrainians and leaving a permanent scar on the national consciousness.

historical event



Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact





On the eve of World War II, two ideological enemies struck a secret deal to divide Europe — condemning millions before the first shot was fired.






Operation Barbarossa

In June 1941, Nazi Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, the largest military invasion in history. Its aim: the conquest of the Soviet Union. Its result: the beginning of a long, brutal war of annihilation on the Eastern Front.




1919

-  A moment of clarity in chaos — short-lived, but foundational.
-  A nationalist experiment threatening proletarian unity — quickly suppressed.
-  A competing territorial claim over Galicia and Lviv, fueling later war.
-  An ignored opportunity — overshadowed by Versailles and postwar exhaustion.




1922

-  A forced union masked as equality. Independence lost, not surrendered.
-  A triumph of proletarian internationalism — building unity after civil war.
-  A postwar redrawing of space — one many failed to fully understand or resist.




1932-'33

-  A deliberate act of repression and a key moment in the fight for Ukrainian independence
-  Part of the broader Soviet effort to enforce unity within the empire, though controversial
-  A tragic consequence of totalitarian policies within the Soviet Union

1939

-  Ukraine was one of the lands carved up. Western regions, including Lviv, were absorbed into Soviet Ukraine — with long-term consequences for borders, identity, and memory.
-  A strategic masterstroke. It delayed war, regained lost lands, and protected the Motherland.
-  A moral catastrophe. Hitler and Stalin divided Europe in secret while pretending to be guardians of peace.

1941

-  A brutal occupation that exposed Ukraine to genocide, famine, and forced collaboration choices. Neither invader treated Ukrainian lives as sovereign.
-  A treacherous betrayal — and the beginning of a great patriotic struggle for survival.
-  The ultimate turning point in the European war — leading to catastrophic loss and long-term East-West division.

1942-'43



Battle of Stalingrad

Blood in the snow, fire in the streets. The Battle of Stalingrad marked a brutal turning point — not only for the Eastern Front, but for the fate of Europe.



Battle of Kursk

The largest tank battle in history — and the final gamble of Nazi Germany in the East. At Kursk, Soviet armor held the line and changed the war.



Yalta Conference

In February 1945, as World War II neared its end, the Allied leaders met in the Crimean city of Yalta. Their goal: to determine the shape of the postwar world. Their decisions would define Europe for decades.



Potsdam Conference

The final Allied summit of World War II revealed not just a changing cast of leaders — but a changing world. At Potsdam, unity cracked, and the Cold War crept in.



The Institution of NATO

Emerging from the ashes of World War II and the early chill of the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was born in 1949. More than a military alliance, it became a strategic foundation for Western unity — balancing deterrence with diplomacy.

🇺🇦 We fought to stop the Germans — and to survive. Some believed in the Red Army. Others had no choice. All bled.

🇷🇺 A heroic and sacred victory. The city's name — and its survival — symbolized Soviet resolve and sacrifice.

🇪🇺 A defining battle of the 20th century, demonstrating the cost of authoritarian ambition and the scale of industrialized warfare.

1943

🇺🇦 A Soviet victory — won also by Ukrainians. Many returned to ruins, repression, or silence.

🇷🇺 A triumph of engineering, planning, and sacrifice. Kursk was proof that the Red Army could defeat the Nazi war machine on its own terms.

🇪🇺 Kursk is remembered as the moment where Hitler's Eastern ambitions finally broke under steel, strategy, and Soviet resolve.

1945

🇺🇦 Yalta is a symbol of decisions made over our heads. While the Ukrainian SSR was a UN founding member, its sovereignty remained fiction under Moscow's grip.

🇷🇺 A justified security buffer and recognition of Soviet sacrifices and power.

🇺🇸 A difficult compromise made in good faith — but later viewed as naïve.

🇬🇧 An uneasy balance between principle and power — Churchill feared appeasement by necessity.

🇪🇺 Necessary compromise or historical mistake? Yalta remains a cautionary tale of how peace conferences can entrench spheres of power more than they solve them.

1945

🇺🇦 The conference confirmed Ukraine's place within the Soviet sphere, despite its status as a UN founding member. No voice, no veto — only quiet submission.

🇷🇺 We cemented our victories and rebuilt our influence. Our presence in Berlin and beyond was the rightful outcome of our sacrifice.

🇪🇺 Potsdam formalized a divided continent. From cooperation to confrontation, the world split before our eyes — and we were at the fault line.

1949

🇺🇸 A strategic anchor and moral commitment to defend the free world.

🇪🇺 A necessary shield for rebuilding democracies — with some tension over autonomy.

🇷🇺 A hostile encirclement — the first institutional front of Cold War opposition.

🇺🇦 Excluded from its founding, Ukraine would later see NATO as a protective promise — one that came too late.

1955



Warsaw Pact

The Soviet Union and seven Eastern European states signed a mutual defense treaty in Warsaw, creating the Warsaw Pact. It solidified the division of Europe and institutionalized the Soviet bloc in direct opposition to NATO.



Collapse of the Soviet Union

A red flag lowered, a new world born. The collapse of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War and reshaped the global order. It marked the end of an Empire.



Ukraine Declares Independence

After decades as a Soviet republic, Ukraine asserted its sovereignty on 24 August 1991. This act of independence emerged from the ashes of empire — a democratic rebirth with fragile roots and far-reaching consequences.



Budapest Memorandum

Ukraine surrendered the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal in exchange for security assurances. The Budapest Memorandum was a milestone in post-Soviet diplomacy — and later, a haunting example of broken promises.



Putin Speech at Munich Security Conference

Vladimir Putin publicly denounces the post-Cold War order, accuses the West of broken promises, and warns against NATO expansion.



A forced alliance that prioritized Soviet interests above national autonomy.



A defensive bulwark against NATO encroachment and imperialism.



An oppressive tool for Soviet hegemony and internal suppression.

1991



Russian Perspective

A moment of loss and humiliation for some; a chance for renewal and freedom for others. Russia inherited the Soviet seat at the UN but entered a period of chaos.



Western Perspective

Seen as a geopolitical victory — the peaceful end to a decades-long standoff. A moment of unipolar triumph.



Ukrainian Perspective

Independence, long suppressed, finally realized. The 1991 referendum showed overwhelming support for a sovereign Ukrainian state.

1991



A long-awaited rebirth. The moment Ukraine ceased to be a province — and became a nation.



A painful fracture in shared history. A loss of cultural and geopolitical depth.



A hopeful step toward democracy — though few grasped the scale of the challenge ahead.

1994



A promise betrayed. Ukraine traded power for peace and received war.



Not a legally binding treaty; not violated by Crimea or Donbas actions.



A political commitment with moral weight — but not a defense treaty.

2007



Though not named — already seen. The speech signaled a future where choice of Ukraine would not be tolerated



A public rejection of Western control. NATO broke its word. Russia will restore balance.



A warning — delivered clearly, but underestimated. Few imagined it would lead to war.

2013



The Maidan Revolution

Revolution of Dignity — erupted when President Yanukovich abandoned an EU agreement under Kremlin pressure. What began as a protest for European integration became a national revolt against corruption, repression, and foreign domination.

🇺🇦 Not just a revolution — a reckoning. Dignity reclaimed from decades of deception.

🇷🇺 A Western-orchestrated coup undermining Ukraine's constitutional order.

🇪🇺 A people's revolt against corruption and repression — and a warning about hybrid threats.



Occupation of Crimea

In the shadow of Ukraine's Maidan uprising, Russian forces seized control of Crimea. What followed was a swift, illegal annexation — a violation of international norms that shattered post-Cold War assumptions and launched a new era of geopolitical confrontation.

🇺🇦 A national wound and international betrayal — Crimea was taken while Ukraine mourned its dead.

🇷🇺 A historic homecoming, correcting a “mistake” of Soviet borders. Strategic and cultural restoration.

🇪🇺 An outright violation of sovereignty, international law, and the European order.



Minsk I&II Agreements

After a year of brutal fighting in eastern Ukraine, world leaders convened in Minsk to forge a ceasefire. The resulting deal — Minsk II — was meant to freeze the conflict. In reality, it became a symbol of unkept promises, geopolitical stalemate, and strategic miscalculation.

🇺🇦 An imposed deal under pressure — survival, not sovereignty.

🇷🇺 A diplomatic tool to paralyze Ukraine and delay NATO integration.

🇪🇺 An imperfect but necessary pause to prevent escalation.



Full Scale Invasion

At dawn on February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine from all directions. The illusion of limited conflict vanished. This was not a special operation — but war. From airstrikes to tank columns, the scale stunned the world. But Ukraine did not collapse.

🇺🇦 An existential war for survival, identity, and home.

🇷🇺 A “necessary intervention” against NATO expansion and Ukrainian defiance.

🇪🇺 A turning point: the return of war to Europe — and a test of resolve.

Eurasian Peace Talks

A Summer-offense is at hand - though strategic talks are still possible.



2014

2015

2022

2025?

This is not just a history.

It is a fault line.

Each event left its mark — not only on borders, but on memory, dignity, and belonging.

What Ukraine faces now is not new.

It is the unfinished consequence of what was never truly resolved.