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2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Imperial Russia in the 1500s consisted of a shared bond between Ukrainians and Russians through religion and history. However, Ukraine had its own cultural differences through its customs, language, food, music, and art. When the Soviet Union was created in the 1920s Ukraine made attempts at self-determination but was unsuccessful. It wasn't until August 24th, 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union that Ukraine declared itself independent. Their independence has since then been challenged by their neighbor through annexation, invasion, and war.

Russia found Ukraine to be a possible military threat in 2013 after the European-favoring government replaced former Russian loyalist, president Viktor Yanukovich. As a form of Southern defense and domination of the Black Sea, Russia annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea in 2014. Post annexation, pro-Russian separatists on the eastern border of Ukraine sought to establish republics, and as a result, protracted proxy wars began. Despite Russia's denial of involvement, Russian troops were participating in the undeclared war. An attempt to end the fighting was deferred by Vladimir Putin's refusal to go through with the Minsk peace deal in 2015. In 2021 Russia built a large military presence near their border and on February 24th, Putin announced a "special military operation" and began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

From the western perspective, the invasion on February 24th was an act of Russian Aggression. However, Putin accused NATO and Ukraine of threatening Russia with military build-up and causing proxy wars along the borders. He claimed he needed "to protect people

subjected to eight years of bullying and genocide by Ukraine's government", despite the Ukrainian government expressing their lack of knowledge of such genocides. Putin also insisted that Ukraine is still a part of Russia through its culture and historical link. On November 10th, 2021, an interest in commit Ukraine to full integration with NATO came to Putin's attention. He expressed how this posed a threat to their annexation of Crimea and brought the danger of an enemy military power to Russia's border. Putin explains his reasoning for his attack as the desire to maintain Ukrainian neutrality.

The ongoing war has resulted in the displacement of 7.7 million Ukrainians and hundreds of thousands of military and civilian casualties. Worldwide the global economy has been weakened by disruptions in trade of food and oil. This has brought devastation, famine, and inflation to many countries. In Africa severe famine and economic problems are rampant. Over 40% of its wheat is imported from Ukraine and Russia. Without vital commodities such as these millions have been pushed into malnutrition and poverty.

Both countries are in need of a solution to prevent further death and destruction as well as for the betterment of the global economy. Possible solutions are Ukrainian defenses becoming ineffective and Russia occupying its territory. Then again Ukraine could gain strength and reoccupy their territory and expel the Russian troops. However, this would only be possible with enhanced western support and could result in future military conflicts with Russia.

In my opinion, the best solution is negotiation and resolution between the two countries before winter begins. As of now Ukraine's had an upper hand in the war and plans to take back Crimea. If they do so Russia will be more motivated to fight and war advancements will persist. When temperatures drop to 30°F with up to 10 inches of snow it will be too cold and challenging to fight. This provides Russia with valuable time to grow more organized and theoretically

prevent Ukrainian advancement. After capturing as much territory as they can before winter begins, Ukraine should go to the negotiation table and attempt to keep the territory it's captured. However, Putin will only end the war if he can make it seem like a win for Russia. Ukraine would most likely have to give up some territory, including Crimea.

United States policy in this crisis should be directing Ukraine towards negotiation and quick resolution. The US is largely responsible for Ukraine's victory and once it cuts off the supply of weapons and satellite info it will weaken the attack and defense. This gives the US influence in Ukraine's decisions, which I believe should be used to convince Ukraine to give up the territory of Crimea and create a treaty with Russia. The soonest and most peaceful way to end this war is through US influence. I predict, that if this sort of action does take place, this war would theoretically end Winter of 2023.