

TRUMP'S BETRAYAL

UKRAINE'S RECENT HISTORY A TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS

Ukraine's Tumultuous Modern Political Context

Independence and Liberalization (1991-2004): For the decade following Ukraine's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country – led primarily by its second modern president, Leonid Kuchma – pursued the familiar post-Soviet storyline of “liberalizing” political and economic institutions, resulting in a centralization of power in an oligarch class.

“Orange Revolution” (2004): As Kuchma's political fortunes declined, he backed his then-Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich (a fellow oligarch) over Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine's 2004 presidential election. Russia's President Vladimir Putin also publicly backed Yanukovich, stressing the benefits that deeper Russia-Ukraine integration could yield under a Yanukovich presidency. Two rounds of disputed election results later, the “Orange Revolution” – a series of mass protests in support of Yushchenko, who had narrowly lost the election – led to a Supreme Court ruling invalidating the results and calling for a new election, which Yushchenko won decisively not long after an attempt to poison him that left his face famously scarred.

Yanukovich wins the Presidency (2010): Despite the fervor that brought him into office, Yushchenko's popularity waned, paving the way for Yanukovich to narrowly win the presidency in 2010 over Yulia Tymoshenko, who he later controversially prosecuted and jailed.

Yanukovich opens the door to Russia (2010-2013): Yanukovich's ties to Russia created a glide path for Russian influence in Ukraine through sweetheart business deals, Russian-owned news channels that inflamed tensions through false news, and the Moscow Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. During these years, Yanukovich embezzled as much as \$40 billion in state funds, including paying up to \$60 million to Paul Manafort, who would go on to run Donald Trump's presidential campaign. Yanukovich was ultimately convicted of treason.

“Revolution of Dignity” (2013-2014): Shortly after Yanukovich – at Putin's behest and with his financial assistance – withdrew Ukraine from an association agreement with the European Union designed to bring Kyiv closer to Western Europe, tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in what became known as the Maidan Revolution or the Revolution of Dignity. In February 2014, after two days of severe political violence in which nearly 100 Ukrainians were killed by Yanukovich's forces, the government fell and Yanukovich fled to Russia. The opposition quickly moved to form a new government and Tymoshenko was freed from prison.

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Annexation of Crimea (March 2014): Days after Yanukovich fled to Russia, pro-Russian militias seized government buildings in Crimea. Shortly thereafter, Russian forces administered an illegal referendum that declared that Crimeans favored becoming a part of Russia.

War in eastern Ukraine begins (April 2014): Russian and pro-Russian forces invaded eastern Ukraine's Donbas region and seized government buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk, igniting a war that continues until today and that has taken over 10,000 lives while displacing many hundreds of thousands more. Over the remainder of the year, Russia continued to support militias in eastern Ukraine despite vehemently denying any involvement in the crisis.

Petro Poroshenko assumes the Presidency (June 2014): Poroshenko won and later assumed the Presidency on the promise of turning Ukraine back to the West. Shortly thereafter, and to reverse his predecessor's decision, he signed an association agreement with the European Union which ultimately came to force (after being signed by all signatories) in 2017.

MH-17 Shot Down (July 2014): Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine by Russian-backed rebels using a Buk surface-to-air launcher provided by, and imported from, Russia. All 298 passengers were killed.

Major Events in Ukraine Post-Russian Invasion

Anti-Corruption Reform (2014-present): In October 2014, Ukraine's Parliament established the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, the most prominent (alongside the High Anti-Corruption Court, a new independent court to try high-profile corruption cases) in a suite of anti-corruption and judicial reforms demanded by protestors and by the international community. Poroshenko and his allies slow-rolled the efforts, leading the IMF at multiple points to make its financial assistance to Ukraine contingent on progress overcoming and deterring corruption.

The Kerch Strait attack by Russia (November 2018): The Russian Coast Guard illegally attacked and seized three Ukrainian naval vessels, wounding several soldiers, in an unprovoked attack in the Kerch Strait – the vital passage point for both Russian and Ukrainian vessels between the Black and Azov seas. It is the first time that armed forces of the two countries have officially come into direct confrontation in years, though Ukraine continues to fight Russian and Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine despite Russia's claims of non-involvement.

Poroshenko declares martial law (November 2018): Following the Kerch Strait crisis, Poroshenko asks Parliament to declare martial law, which it does for thirty days, to heighten Ukraine's defenses on the fear of a potential imminent Russian escalation by land or sea.

Independence for the Ukraine Orthodox Church (January 2019): Ukraine's Orthodox Church formally split from the Russian Orthodox Church after hundreds of years of association -- and after many years of Russian efforts to influence Ukrainian affairs through its Church. The move had been approved in October of the previous year and officially formalized in early 2019. Poroshenko hailed the move as another symbol of Ukraine's independence and sovereignty.

Volodymyr Zelensky wins the Presidency (April 2019): Former television comedian and star Volodymyr Zelensky overwhelmingly defeated Poroshenko and assumes the presidency in May, in large part on a promise to champion Ukraine's long-running, but halting, anti-corruption reform effort. His new "Servant of the People" party also won parliamentary elections in July.

U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Recalled (May 2019): President Trump recalled U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch. The episode began when Ukraine's Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko, who had been previously accused of corruption, falsely alleged that Yovanovitch had provided him a list of individuals not to prosecute -- a move likely made in retaliation for Yovanovitch's speech earlier in March pushing Ukraine to do more to address corruption. Despite the State Department vehemently disavowing the accusation as an "outright fabrication," President Trump and his personal lawyer, Rudolph Giuliani, promoted the story in a tweet, contributing to a wave of conservative news stories attacking the Ambassador and pushing, without evidence, a story that officials in Ukraine (with Yovanovitch's support, in Giuliani's telling) released details of Manafort's dealings in Ukraine -- which ultimately led to his firing as then-candidate Trump's campaign manager -- to help the Clinton campaign.