# Ukraine invasion provokes discussion amongst students

## Students discuss war, share worries, make predictions

*by Sarah Lin and Grace Yoon*

Despite being thousands of miles away from the conflict, students have recently felt compelled to discuss the war between Russia and Ukraine in classes, through social media, or in conversations with friends or family. For those with family and friends in the two countries, the war has affected them more than most.

Junior Vicky Voytovych's mom's side of the family lived in Ukrainian cities Kyiv and Kharkiv before relocating during Russian bombings.

"My grandma called me sometime last week and she was crying, talking fast. She started screaming, 'There's bombings, there's bombings," and I even heard those bombings over the phone. I was so scared, I didn't know what to do or what to say."

Junior Henrik Weidemanis has followed the news of the war since the beginning. He says that the United States should feel obligated to send aid to Ukraine, but avoid military intervention.

"It would be really difficult to convince the American public to get fully involved because there are a lot of people who'd think 'What's my stake in this?' or 'Why should I care about this at all?'" he said.

Cyber has also played a large role in the conflict. Global hacker group 'Anonymous' declared a cyber war on Russia on Feb. 24, with a statement posted on their official Twitter account. Since then, Anonymous says it has taken



*A woman carries her child as she arrives at the Medyka border crossing after fleeing from the Ukraine* | AP

down Russian state TV channels, broadcasting Ukrainian music and national symbols instead on air, and invalidated Russian propaganda websites and videos.

Beyond ground war, information warfare

Junior Daria Volkova said she had a family member that had to leave Kyiv for Poland. She said it's hard for her because she doesn't know exactly what's going on, and no one is ever sure of what exactly is going on.

"My mom works for an immigration law firm and they started a petition to get Ukrainians in the states under Temporary Protective Status which ensures that once people get here with visas, they can't be deported back because Ukraine has been declared as a zone that someone cannot return. That piece of [policy] was recently passed," said Volkova.

On March 3, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued an 18-month Temporary Protected Status program for Ukrainians, allowing them to apply for work permits and deportation protections. The Department cited the Russian attack and Ukrainian war zone as causes, and the Biden administration has shown willingness to further extend amity to Ukrainian migrants.

"Russia's premeditated and unprovoked attack on Ukraine has resulted in an ongoing war, senseless violence, and Ukrainians forced to seek refuge in other countries," said Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas. "In these extraordinary times, we will continue to offer our support and protection to Ukrainian nationals in the United States."

Ukraine and Russia both have utilized social media propaganda throughout the war. Ukraine's official Twitter account has posted memes and pushed hashtags such as #BoycottRussia and #StandWithUkraine.

Two examples of Ukrainian propaganda that have been widely disputed are the Ghost of Kyiv and Snake Island. The Ghost of Kyiv is the nickname given to a disputed engine fighter credited with shooting down six Russian planes in the Kyiv offensive on 24 February 2022. Snake Island, which was captured by Russian forces in the first few days of war, rose to fame after Ukrainian guards on the island chose to curse at Russian forces instead of surrendering.

"There's things like the ghost of Kyiv and Snake Island. In my opinion, it doesn't matter if it's true or not because Ukraine needs something to look up to because they are being invaded by a country that is many times larger than them. They need something to unite them and rally them to the foreign aggressor," said Weidemanis.

In Russia, many have protested the war, which has led to thousands of citizens arrested at anti-war protests. Part of the reason behind protests may be the declining economic capabilities of Russia due to sanctions from prominent trading partners across the world.

Voklova says being active and keeping an eye out for things is important, but it's also important to understand that you shouldn't feel guilty about not being able to be directly involved.

"Sometimes when you hear about conflicts, it seems so far away. But hearing about how it directly affects people, it's hard. There has been so much support for people so all we can do is hope and pray that it will get better soon," she said.

Volkova said no one knows how things will turn out, but she can only hope for the best since most people are helpless in this situation.

"It feels really lonely. The day that I found out about the news, it felt like a normal day for everyone else. When I told some of my friends about my family's danger, their response was really insensitive," said Voytovich.

The neighboring countries of Ukraine–Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania–have taken in hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees in the past week. Voytovich hopes that her family can get to Romania and the U.S.

"As far as what people can do, pray if you're that kind of person, hope regardless of who you are, and put good energy out into the world to hope for peace," said Volkova.

# Donate to organizations that support Ukrainian refugees

## Millions of people will be affected by invasion of Ukraine

*by Lucas Eisen and Lula Fox*

Across Ukraine, people are being displaced, forced to flee their homes, ravaged by the brutal violence perpetrated by Putin and his army. An estimated 1.5 million Ukranians have already left the country, seeking asylum in neighboring nations such as Poland, according to the U.N. Refugee Commissioner.

Various organizations, domestic and international, have dedicated their efforts towards supporting the displaced Ukrainian people by providing them with the resources to improve their safety and wellbeing. We've compiled a list of organizations we recommend donating to, as they provide essential resources and aid.

**Save the Children**

Save the Children was formed in 1919 by Eglantyne Jen under the conviction that all children deserve to lead a safe, educated, and healthy life with a future. They've helped 2.3 billion children, and in 2020 alone, according to their website, over 197 million children were reached by Save the Children. They've focused their dedication to supporting children in hard-to-reach locations. A $100 donation will supply a month's



*Protesters in Boston unite against Russia's invasion of Ukraine* | Fox

worth of food for a Ukrainian family amidst the escalating conflict.

**International Rescue Committee**

Created in 1933, the International Rescue Committee aids those affected by humanitarian crises. They are currently working in over 40 affected nations as well as locations in Europe and the Americas to provide healthcare, education, and empowerment. In 2020, 31 million people were provided access to healthcare, 2.6 million people with clean water, and 819,500 children with educational opportunities according to their website.

The International Rescue Committee is soliciting donations in order to supply vital resources to help the 1 million displaced Ukrainians. Specifically, it is working with Poland and Ukraine to mobilize supplies in preparation to receive Ukrainian refugees.

**Ukrainian Red Cross**

The Ukrainian Red Cross, established in 1918 as an independent national society, began their efforts to support victims of the Russia-Ukraine conflict when it began. The organization has provided first aid and psychological aid, collected clothes, food, linens, and blood, and mobilized volunteers and resources; they monitor the population in order to determine what is needed and where. They are coordinating their efforts across the country with public services and members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

**CARE**

The CARE organization is collecting donations to provide support for volunteers and partners on the ground. They are offering water, food, and other essential items. CARE has been helping vulnerable people around the world for over 70 years, and in 2020, CARE helped over 100 countries, according to their website. Their commitment is based on building a world that focuses on social justice and equal rights for all people, in order to eradicate poverty.

**Disasters Emergency Committee**

Disasters Emergency Committee, or the DEC, seeks to provide Ukrainian citizens with necessities such as blankets, hygiene supplies, and emergency food through donations.

They project that over 18 million people will be affected by the Russian invasion, and four million will be displaced. In only three days, the organization has raised over £85 million for Ukraine, according to the chief executive, Saleh Saeed. Saeed urges citizens around the world to donate money rather than goods, because "trying to transport goods from here, the UK, thousands of miles to Ukraine will take a long time and may not be necessarily what people need when it arrives."

The DEC, which was created in 1963, is composed of 15 leading UK aid charities that help people in life-or-death situations. The organization has raised over £1.7 billion that has protected people across the world and rebuilt communities.

**International Medical Corps**

International Medical Corps is collecting donations in order to fund mobile medical teams which will provide emergency health services for Ukrainians. The organization has been helping both the mental and physical health of Ukrainians since 2014, as well as other countries across the globe. In 2021, they conducted more than 6.3 million health consultations, as well as specialized support in nutrition, disease, and refugee crises.

**Nova Ukraine**

Specializing in humanitarian relief and organizing protests, Nova Ukraine is a non-profit dedicated to collecting donations and spreading awareness of what is happening to Ukrainian citizens.

Since 2013, they have amassed over $3.5 million in donations. Their money will go towards clothes, shoes, household supplies, diapers, medicine, wheelchairs, and any other items Ukrainians are in need of amidst the refugee crisis.

# Russia and Ukraine: a storied history

The past behind the two countries in conflict told by New Trier social studies teachers

*by Ana Torresarpi*

The question as to why there is a conflict between Russia and Ukraine has been plaguing the minds of many since Feb. 24, when Russia officially invaded Ukraine territory.

What Vlademir Putin called a "military operation" involved tanks and troops rolling in from russia, along with multiple air attacks targeting the cities of Kharkiv and Kyiv. The United Nations reported 364 Ukrainian fatalities and 759 casualties as of Feb 24.

Putin has stated many reasons for the attack on Ukraine, one of which being the recent efforts made by Ukraine to join NATO.

"If Ukraine was to join NATO it would serve as a direct threat to the security of Russia," said Putin in a televised speech on Feb. 21.

U.S History teacher Colby Vargas agrees with the sentiment that NATO is an intimidating force for Russia.

"NATO, in his mind, has always created a Russia that's an enemy. He feels like he's been maligned by that group, or misrepresented. If you look at it in strict political terms, Russia is scared of a NATO country popping up next to them."

The history between NATO and Russia stems from it's very founding, according to history teacher Carolyn Gerhardt.

"The NATO alliance was created to deter Soviet expansion. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, Putin thinks NATO should have disbanded. Instead, it increased membership to nations that used to be in the Soviet sphere of influence. He sees NATO as stopping Russian growth and prosperity," she said.

Ukraine has been making strides to enter NATO since 2013. Russia was not concerned 9 years ago because at the time, it was not Volodymyr Zelenskyy who was the president, but Viktor Yanukovych.

Yanukovych was a staunch supporter of Russia during his time as Ukrainian president. He was in office until 2014 when he was removed after a series of protests demanding his resignation.

"Ever since then, Russia has been mad about that. They've been very resentful that Yanukovych was displaced. And that's the very next year, what did they take? Crimea," said history teacher Spiro Bolos.

2022 is not the first year to see Russia invade a part of Ukraine. Crimea was a small part of Ukraine until it was violently annexed by Russia in 2014.

"What I feel totally befuddled on is why Russia was allowed to inhabit Crimea in 2014. The world kind of stood back and wrote angry letters," said Vargas.

Putin has also been making claims stating that the countries have always been unified, and that Ukraine should not be a separate country. .

"From the very first steps they began to build their statehood on the denial of everything that unites us," said Putin in his speech.

According to Bolos, the two countries have a deeply intertwined and complex relationship dating back centuries .

"We have to go all the way back to 987 AD. Putin is saying that Ukraine used to be part of Russia. I mean, that's actually true. The Russian Empire was founded in Kiev. And it was called Kievan Rus'," said Bolos.

During the mid 1800s, Russia was divided into three parts. These branches were called Great Russia, White Russia, and Little Russia. In the modern day, many territories have become their own independent countries, but the history they share with Russia remains.

What was once referred to as 'White Russia' is now known as the countries of Belarus and Lithuania, among other neighboring countries. Modern day Russia was known as 'Great Russia'.

"The Little Russians are now called Ukrainians," said Bolos.

Putin has also been pushing another reason for his invasion, claiming it as an attempt to "denazify" Ukraine.

There was a short period of time during World War II in which Ukraine collaborated with Nazi Germany in an attempt to harm Russia. However, this was a brief period of time in Ukraine's history and not reflective of its current ideologies.

"There were Ukrainians, who hated the Soviets so much that when the Nazis invadeded [part of] Ukraine, some allied themselves with the Nazis. And not everybody knew about what was happening with the Holocaust. It's the expression, 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend,'" said Bolos.

The "denazification" argument has been deeply scrutinized by many, including Bolos.

"It's just a pretext. It's fake. He's using it as an excuse to start taking over… My guess would be that he wants to take out Zelenskyy and put in another Yanukovych."

# Russia is not the USSR

*by Erik Jaman*

**Governor Glenn Youngkin** ✔
@GovernorVA

The invasion of Ukraine by Soviet dictator Vladimir Putin cannot stand, and the people of the Commonwealth are ready to rally in opposition to this senseless attack on a sovereign nation and western ideals.

4:36 PM · Feb 26, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

393 **Retweets**   702 **Quote Tweets**   2,834 **Likes**

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many Americans, media outlets and politicians have traveled 30 years back in time to blame the Soviet Union.

Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin of Virginia tweeted out on Feb. 26 that the invasion was "by the Soviet Dictator Vladamir Putin".

This is just plain wrong. In a concerning poll conducted by Newsweek, 56% of Trump voters claim that the country and Putin are Communists. So let's clear the air.

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Since then, the Soviet Union split into 15 separate republics—Russia the largest. Russia has since been dominated by capitalist policies under the largely dominant "United Russia" party. Natural gas and oil industries in Russia have all been denationalized. The increase of market forces has transitioned Russia to a mixed economy.

Their party has rejected socialist economics in favor of conservatism and nationalism. A former KGB officer, Vladamir Putin rose through the ranks of the party making deals with billionaire oligarchs and destroying those opposing him. Putin has been in power since 2000.

**Twitter**

Putin has ruled Russia as an ultranationalist. His rhetoric of expansion that has been found in his recent speeches is rooted in his belief that the 14 other ex-Soviet-Republics are rightfully Russian. He insists that they share a common nationality that should not be separated as it is.

Although Putin has interest in conquering old soviet satellite states, he has no intention of bringing Russia back to a socialist economy under the Communist banner. He has historically arrested many communist discenters and said that he wished the 1917 revolution never happened. A champion of the billionaire class in Russia, Putin has driven inequality more in the vein of old Russian Tsars rather than Soviet Premier.

So to call Russia the Soviet Union is wrong on several levels. The current economy is organized completely differently, favoring the billionaire class. The political climate is the polar opposite and anti-communistic. And factually they are different countries with vastly different sizes of land.

# Ukraine unveils the hypocrisy of the West

As long as you are White, Western, and non-Muslim, help is on the way

*by Said Aydin*

"Anyone can tell the difference between them [Ukranian refugees] and the invasion of young military-aged men of Muslim origin who have launched themselves against European borders in an attempt to destabilize and colonize it."

These are the words of Santiago Abascal, Spanish congressman and leader of the far-right party Vox, regarding the Ukrainian invasion by Russia that started on Feb. 24. The offensive words of Abascal are not unique, either. Moreover, they reveal an alarming rhetoric on how Europeans perceive Western migrants versus non-Western ones.

Ever since the conflict, the world has consistently supported Ukrainian people, be it through donating to charities, supporting Ukrainian small businesses, or, most significantly, seeking out Ukrainian migrants in Europe.

According to the United Nations, more than 1.7 million Ukrainians fled the country as refugees to neighboring countries where most were met with welcoming arms, being given sandwiches by guards, baby strollers by locals, and homes for them to reside in.

At the same time, non-Western refugees are seen as invaders and terrorists, hell-bent on instituting Sharia law on the European populous. They are verbally and physically attacked—just like how a Hungarian camerawoman kicked a Syrian child running from police in a refugee camp.

In fact, a Danish law passed in 2016 called the "jewellry law," which attempted to rob migrants and asylum seekers of any cash and valuables they brought to Denmark worth over 10,000 kroner, will "likely" not apply to Ukrainian migrants. This change in precedent is demonstrating its purpose in scaring away Middle Eastern refugees from coming to Denmark and stripping them of their financial assets.

So why the change of heart? Why is it that when Ukrainians need help, Europeans gladly sacrifice all they have to help their neighbors, but will ignore the struggles of other people who need help in the face of the same types of imperialism and aggression?

Well, Bulgarian prime minister Kiril Petkov described it perfectly: "These people are Europeans," Petkov said. "These people are intelligent, they are educated people… This is not the refugee wave we have been used to, people we were not sure about their identity, people with unclear pasts, who could have been even terrorists."

Some might argue that the reason why Europeans try to help Ukraine and not other Middle Eastern countries is because their vicinity to Europe is relatively different. Yet, the Bosnian Genocide of 1995, in which over 8,300 Bosniak Muslims were killed by the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska, yielded identical results of nonintervention as "their Muslim identity negated that [status as white Europeans]; and rendered them 'unfit for rescue,'" according to law professor and author Khaled Beydoun.

It's also notable that all cases of Russian aggression have been forgotten except for Ukraine. Russia's invasions of Chechnya, annexations of Crimea, bombings of Syria, and the sending of mercenaries to Libya, all produced radio silence from the West. It's only when Westerners are the victims that the Western world pledges to stand up against Russian imperialism.

Time and time again, Europeans have shown their determination to keep Middle Eastern refugees out of Europe, going as far as paying billions of recurring payments to countries like Turkey to keep refugees crossing from there to the rest of Europe.

The Orientalistic belief that those from Asia and the Middle East are inhumane and radically different in their beliefs, struggles, and treatment of others, plagues our Western societies. Why is it that the Palestinian, who protests and rallies in the streets to stop Israeli imperialists from bulldozing their rightful homes and encroaching on their land, is seen as a terrorist? Why is it that the Yemeni, who seeks refuge from poverty, starvation, and American-funded bombs being dropped on innocent people, is seen as a terrorist? However, the Ukrainian, who fights against the same oppression from Russian aggressors, is seen as a freedom fighter. All these people are fighting for similar causes, against similar enemies, and therefore should be all seen as heroic in their own ways.

Yet, this aspect of heroism in non-Western movements isn't exposed in Western media. The Middle East is depicted as a war-torn place devoid of liberty and happiness; a place with radical terrorist groups and Western "liberators" trying to fight back against terrorism with no in between. The individual citizens of these countries are dehumanized to seem like they are the terrorists, when in reality they are also the victims of conflict, caught in the crossfire between two sides, often left with no choice but to seek a better life outside the country.

The Ukrainian conflict is not the first of its kind. We've seen powerful imperialist countries exploit populations for power countless times throughout history, but some claim that the use of social media in documenting the war has been unique in that the world is provided with practically live updates. Yet, we're blind to the posts and videos of countless conflicts in the Middle East because it doesn't fit our Western narrative of not helping those affected by war.

The hypocrisy doesn't apply only to European leaders, though. Here in America, we pride ourselves on being outspoken on war crimes and injustices around the world. In contrast, our own war crimes are forgotten and painted over in a smoke screen of liberation. When the UN General Assembly voted against Russia for their justification of war and Russia continued to invade, people were horrified. Yet, this same situation happened not even 20 years ago where the US tried to justify an invasion of Iraq because of their alleged weapons of mass destruction.

In fact, New Trier alum and Alumni Hall of Honor recipient Donald Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense at the time, was instrumental in the war crimes committed during the war. Knowing that he knew very little about the Iraqi weapons program, he and Colin Powell lied and exaggerated the certainty of WMDs in Iraq. The decision to invade Iraq by the UN was rejected. One month after Powell's UN appearance, the US invaded Iraq, going against the UN Charter, meaning, "from the charter point of view, it [the invasion] was illegal," according to then Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan. The eight year war claimed the lives of more than 110,000 innocent Iraqi citizens.

Although the international community is showing solidarity with Ukraine, this solidarity falls through with non-Western populations. This conflict also highlights that refugee status can befall anyone, so we have to consistently look out for everyone seeking help. This is perfectly summed in the words of "The Daily Show" host Trevor Noah: "I think rather than this being a moment to turn on each other, the Ukraine refugee crisis should be a reminder that 'refugee' is not a synonym for 'brown person.' Anyone could be a refugee. It's a thing that happens to you. It's not who you are."