THE UKRAINE CRISIS: VIBRATIONS FROM THE COLD WAR

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**The Ukraine Crisis: Vibrations from the Cold War**   
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In diplomatic terms there are three types of war: Hot War which is actual warfare. All talks have failed and the armies are fighting. Warm War that is where talks are still going on and there would always be a chance of a peaceful outcome but armies, navies etc. are being fully mobilized and war plans are being put into operation ready for the command to fight; and Cold War a term used to describe the relationship between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union 1945 to 1980. Neither side ever fought the other directly because the consequences would have been catastrophic. Conversely, they did ‘fight’ for their interest using client states to fight on their behalf. Examples on that are numerous and to mention only few: South Vietnam was anticommunist and was supplied by America during the war while North Vietnam was pro-Communist and fought the south (and the Americans) using weapons from communist Russia or communist China. In Afghanistan, the Americans supplied the rebel Afghans after the Soviet Union invaded in 1979 while they never physically involved themselves thus avoiding a direct clash with the Soviet Union[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn1" \o ").

Regarding the Ukraine crisis that is dragging proxy wars from the Middle East to the border of Russia, there has been much commentary in the United States to the effect that the West and the United States in particular has been letting Vladimir Putin run out of control in using Ukraine communities to fight proxy war against the West. The commentary has been a sub-theme in a larger theme about Washington supposedly lack of insight in the way they are interfering in the political affairs of Ukraine. To the extent such criticism has been linked to specific alternative policy proposals, the proposals usually include some combination of being quicker in imposing more extensive sanctions on Russia, making threatening military deployments, and giving deadly military aid to the Ukrainians[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn2" \o ").

Recently, Putin’s policy on Ukraine has taken shape in two important ways. First, he has not openly embraced the “referendum” organized by dissident leaders in the restive eastern portion of Ukraine though it is well known that he is the master of this exhibit.  Before the vote he called for it to be postponed; after the vote his government did not respond to dissident talk about accession to Russia, said it respects the “will of the population” of the eastern regions but did not recognize the result of the vote, and called for the whole matter to be resolved through negotiations with the government in Kiev[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn3" \o "). However, he recently changed his stand on the matter.

Second, despite threatening military moves near the border and indirect logistical support, he has not used Russian military forces to invade Eastern Ukraine. Both of these developments are significant. Not doing something can represent a decision, and not doing something can be just as important as doing it. Most of the criticism about a supposed U.S. policy of weakness giving free rein to Putin has ignored these two realities. It vastly overstates the ability of the U.S.A. government to shape events, particularly in an area where U.S. interests are less than those of Russian interests. Non-events are the other side of the same coin as events in their impact on U.S. interests. They constitute important data points for academicians to distinguish which policies work well and which ones do not. The tendency to score policy performance only in terms of what has happened, without paying attention to what has not is the focal point in determining the vibrations and echoes of the Cold War on the contemporary crisis in the Middle East and Ukraine.

If one is to zoom back to the beginning of the Cold War one would realize that it was stiff and what we are witnessing now in the current international crisis are only vibrations and echoes. Although Stalin joined with the United States in founding the United Nations, he fought Truman on nearly every other issue. He protested the Marshall Plan as well as the formation of the World Bank and IMF. In non-cooperational attitude, he followed through on his plan to create a buffer between the Soviet Union and Germany by setting up pro-Communist governments in Poland and other Eastern European countries. As a result, the so-called iron curtain soon divided East from West in Europe. Stalin also tried unsuccessfully to drive French, British, and American occupation forces from the German city of Berlin by blocking highway and railway access. Determined not to let the city fall, Truman ordered the Berlin airlift to drop food and medical supplies for starving Berliners.

Containment

The Berlin crisis, as well as the formation of the Eastern bloc of Soviet-dominated countries in Eastern Europe, caused foreign policy officials in Washington to believe that the United States needed to check Soviet influence abroad in order to prevent the further spread of USSR influence. In 1947, Truman incorporated this desire for containment into his Truman Doctrine, which vowed to support free nations fighting Communism. He and Congress then pledged $400 million to fighting Communist revolutionaries in Greece and Turkey. In 1949, Truman also convinced the Western European powers to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), so that they might mutually defend themselves against the danger of Soviet invasion. Being threatened, the USSR sponsored a similar treaty of its own in Eastern Europe, called the Warsaw Pact, in 1955. Thus the Cold War was hard and rigid.

The Korean War

Cold War tensions between the United States and the USSR eventually exploded in Korea when Soviet-backed North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950. Determined not to let the USSR interest spread in East Asia, Truman quadrupled military spending and ordered General MacArthur to retake the southern half of the peninsula. MacArthur succeeded and then pushed the North Koreans almost up to the Chinese border. Over a million soldiers from Communist China poured into Korea, forcing MacArthur to retreat back to the 38th parallel, which had originally divided North Korea from South Korea. When MacArthur began to criticize Truman publicly for his unwillingness to use nuclear weapons in Korea, Truman was forced to fire his top general for insubordination. United States forces remained entrenched at the 38th parallel for two more years, at the cost of more than 50,000 American lives. Both sides declared a cease-fire only after the new U.S. president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, threatened to use nuclear weapons in 1953. The Cold War witnessed threats of the use of nuclear weapons which is not the case at this point in time with the Middle East and Ukraine crisis.

Eisenhower devised a New Look at foreign policy that emphasized the use of nuclear weapons, rather than conventional weapons and troops, to contain Communism. Eisenhower threatened the USSR with “massive retaliation,” or nuclear war, against Soviet aggression or the spread of Communism. Eisenhower also made full use of the newly created CIA to help overthrow unfriendly governments in developing countries. He resolved the Suez crisis peacefully before it led to war and committed American funds to fighting Ho Chi Minh’s pro-Communist forces in Vietnam after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

Flexible Response

Because Eisenhower’s threat of “massive retaliation” had proved too stringent and binding, Kennedy and his foreign policy team devised a new doctrine of “flexible response” designed to give the president more options to fight Communism. Kennedy’s greatest Cold War challenge came in Cuba. Hoping to topple Cuba’s new pro-Communist revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro, Kennedy authorized the CIA to train and arm a force of more than 1,000 Cuban exiles and sent them to invade Cuba in the spring of 1961. When this Bay of Pigs invasion failed embarrassingly, Kennedy authorized several unsuccessful assassination attempts against Castro. Outraged, Castro turned to the USSR for economic aid and protection.

Khrushchev capitalized on the opportunity and placed several nuclear missiles in Cuba. Kennedy consequently blockaded the island of Cuba, pushing the United States and the USSR to the brink of nuclear war. Khrushchev ended the terrifying Cuban missile crisis when he agreed to remove the missiles in exchange for an end to the blockade. Kennedy also removed American missiles from Turkey and agreed to work on reducing Cold War tensions. Kennedy was assassinated in late 1963, just as tensions were rising in Vietnam, which would prove to be the next, and most costly, theater of the Cold War.

The scenario of some of the Cold War vibrations are actually back but not with actual drastic fears. Mark Twain observed that while history never repeats itself, it does sometimes rhyme. In the combination of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the collapse of authority that is destabilizing Ukraine, can we hear echoes from the Cold War.? The thought that what we are now witnessing in Ukraine could trigger a spill of actions and reactions that end in war will strike most academicians as far-fetched. Fortunately, it is. But we should not forget that the proxy wars paralyzed the international order with harmful concomitants. History teaches that reoccurrences of such events do happen[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn4" \o ").

If one is to look at strife elsewhere and as revealed by the investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn5" \o "), the result of the so-called Arab Spring or Arab Awakening and at the instigation of the new century’s second decade, a complex proxy-conflict is now being waged in Syria veiled in civil war. Following Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution in January 2011 the events in Egypt, which sparked the wave of protests throughout the Arab world, appear to have been orchestrated rather than being a completely spontaneous uprising, or at least that is what WikiLeaks’ Cablegate files seem to suggest[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn6" \o ").

In Libya the end of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and his regime (23 August 2011) at the hands of the armed opposition, with help from the U.S.A. and NATO, appears like a novel case of a military intervention. NATO’s air support of Libya’s rebels effectively turned the uprising into an *“Assisted Rebellion”* against an old foe of the West dating back to the days of President Ronald Reagan. The reality is however that the Libyan intervention was nothing but a Resource War according to the Global Trade Atlas, published by the International Energy Agency (IEA), in calendar year 2010, 28% of Libya’s oil exports went to Italy, 15% to France, and 10% to Spain and Germany each. The U.S.A received only 3% of Libya’s exports. In addition, Kevin Hall of McClatchy Newspapers points out that a confidential cable released by WikiLeaks reveals that the U.S.A. pressured Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi to dismiss a deal between Italy’s partly state-owned ENI and Russia’s Gazprom, a deal that would have given Vladimir Putin access to Libyan oil and an even greater share of the European market. Falling short of directly linking NATO’s air war in Libya with the American desire to curtail the Gazprom nation that is Russia, Moss nevertheless describes that there is a certain *correlation* between these two factors[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn7" \o ").

With the same token Andrew S. Weiss[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn8" \o ") seems to suggest that the intervention in Libya created the conflict that transformed the War-on-Terror renamed Overseas Contingency Operations into a new international order that echoes the Cold War, a contest between the U.S.A (and its NATO allies) and the new emerging power-houses of the 21st century, Russia and China who recently appears to keep its distance.

After all, Russia has long-standing ties with Syria. In 2011, when Syria’s strife first broke out, the Russian navy was planning to renovate the Soviet port of Tartus on Syria’s coastline. In 2010, the Chinese news agency Xinhua reported that *“Russia did not exclude the possibility of building naval logistic facilities in Socotra Island, Yemen, as well as in Tripoli, Libya”*. The conveniently timed eruption of the Arab Spring all but thwarted Putin's designs to establish footholds in the Mediterranean, a Russian desire since the reign of Peter the Great in the early 18th century. Russian bases in Syria, Libya, and Yemen would have lent a logistical dimension to Moscow’s designs *«to oppose a tangible American presence in the Arab world»*. Whereas Russia plans with regard to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden were shattered by the American administration *«building a secret air base in Yemen to serve as a launching pad for armed drone strikes»*. As a result, the outbreak of Syria's strife set the scene for dragging vibrations and echoes of the cold war back in what is known as the new proxy-wars of this century.

The opposition to Bashar al-Assad’s regime has received Western backing from the very start, with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and NATO-member with Turkey acting as the conduits for democracy. Iran, China, and Russia, on the other hand, have been eager supporters of the existing Damascus regime. The conflict is now in its third year, and due to Russia’s skillful diplomatic intervention by securing the removal of the government’s chemical weapons stocks, a direct military strike on Damascus has been averted, allowing Assad’s forces to slowly regain the upper-hand against his armed opponents. As a result, this battleground echoes perfectly the predicament of the Cold War that ended in 1990. The complicated nature of the Syrian conflict means that the area can no longer function as a viable proxy-war zone echoing the Cold War, and as a result of the ongoing crisis in the Ukraine which started in November 2013, one can see that the struggle for a new international balance of power between the West and the Federation of Russian states has now moved to the very edge of Europe.

Why is Ukraine in crisis?

The Ukraine country of forty-five million people has struggled with its identity since it gained independence with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Ukraine has failed to resolve its internal divisions and build strong political institutions, hampering its ability to implement economic reforms, overcome corruption, and lessen the sway of powerful elite. In the decade following independence, successive presidents allowed powerful elites to gain increasing control over the economy while repression against political opponents intensified. By 2010, Ukraine’s fifty richest people controlled nearly half of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP), writes Andrew Wilson in the CFR book *Pathways to Freedom.* Successive presidents allowed rich elite to gain increasing control over the economy while repression against political opponents intensified[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn9" \o ").

A reformist tendency swept in 2004 when the Orange Revolution, set off by unfair advantages given to one side presidential election, brought Viktor Yushchenko to the presidency. Yet infighting among elites hampered reforms, and severe economic troubles resurged with the global economic crisis of 2008. The revolution also masked the divide between European-oriented western and central Ukraine and Russian-oriented Southern and Eastern Ukraine.

Campaigning on a platform of closer ties with Russia, Yanukovich won the 2010 presidential election. By many accounts, he then reverted to the pattern of corruption and manipulation. His family may have embezzled as much as $8 billion to $10 billion a year over three years, according to Anders Aslund of the Peterson Institute for International Economics[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn10" \o "). He also turned against his opponent in the 2010 presidential race, Yulia Tymoshenko, one of the high-profile reformist leaders of the Orange Revolution, imprisoning her on charges of abuse of power.

Yanukovich continued talks with the EU on a trade association agreement, which he signaled he would sign in late 2013. (Tymoshenko’s release was one of the conditions set by the EU for the trade association agreement.) But under pressure from Russia, he dropped those plans, citing concerns about damage to Ukrainian industry by European competition. The decision provoked demonstrations in Kiev on what became known as the Euromaidan by protestors seeking to align their future with Europe’s and speaking out against corruption.

The Yanukovich government’s crackdown after three months of protests, in some cases spurring reprisals by radicalized demonstrators, caused the bloodiest conflict in the country’s post-Soviet period, with quite few people killed. Yanukovich’s subsequent ouster introduced new divisions between the Eastern and Western halves of the country, though a new group of transitional leaders promised to form a national unity government and hold elections on May 25, 2014. But the situation worsened in Eastern and Southern Ukraine in the month prior to elections. Pro-Russian separatists clashed increasingly with government forces and citizens loyal to the central government. Meanwhile, separatists had seized government buildings in at least ten towns in eastern Ukraine by early May 2014, and violence spread to Odessa. The Black Sea city experienced the most bloodshed since the latest round of communal clashes began when more than thirty people, most of them pro-Russian separatists, were killed.

Russian officials have repeatedly cited concerns about threats to Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine, and there are fears Russia could decide to assert control in the event of a contest for power there. Moscow has moved about forty thousand troops in the region bordering eastern Ukraine (There are Russian claims recently that troops were withdrawn), while Ukraine has deployed about eleven thousand troops in the area on its side of the border.

The Ukraine crisis came into its own when the democratically-elected President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, was forced to flee the country and seek refuge in Russia. The EU relies on Russia labeled as the *'Gazprom Nation'*, for about 20% of its gas needs, and, significantly, about 80% of that comes via the three pipelines crossing the Ukraine. The price of gas is of course a geo-political factor of the greatest importance, and in this instance, most of the political observers commented that*Russia was trying to punish the Ukraine for attempting to withdraw from Moscow's sphere of influence and to strengthen ties with the European Union and NATO*. The subsequent Russian annexation of the Crimea, following a popular referendum indicating that the majority of the population was in favor of a return to the Russian homeland, exacerbated the tense relations with the West. But in fact, the Crimean peninsula had actually been part of the Russian sphere ever since it was annexed by Empress Catherine the Great in 1783, an annexation which turned the Black Sea into a Russian lake. Then nearly two centuries later, in 1954, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred the peninsula from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to Ukraine, with the Russian Black Sea Fleet remaining stationed in the Crimea. And now, once again, the Crimea is part of the Russian Federation.

At the moment, the heavily pro-Russian Eastern region of the Ukraine is the focus of the world’s attention and scene of a bloody conflict, a confrontation between Ukraine’s central government and pro-Russian Ukrainian rebels that functions as the latest proxy-battle that echoes the Cold War, a contest that is shaping up to determine the outlook of the 21st century. The situation in Eastern Ukraine is turning more and more violent, particularly now that elections have been scheduled to be held on 25 May 2014 (this article is written before that date). Russia, however, doubts that free and fair elections can be held in the Ukraine under present circumstances. Whether reason will prevail and President Obama sit down with President Putin to come to an agreement that would satisfy most, if not all, parties in the conflict, is still to be seen. As an early comment, this article assumes that neither Russia nor the West is going to be able to secure its goals for Ukraine all by itself or without serious bloodshed. The fear from bloodshed will stalemate the situation. Any attempt to “win” Ukraine will almost certainly lead to the country’s collapse and de facto partition.

The fighting escalation in and around separatist strongholds in Eastern Ukraine appear to be setting in motion precisely the series of events that the West has sought to avoid: full-scale armed conflict between Moscow and Kiev and the prospect of Ukraine’s collapse as a unitary state. Ever since the dramatic overthrow of the Viktor Yanukovich government in late February, U.S. and EU leaders have failed to come to terms with an unpleasant reality. As former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Steven Pifer put it, Vladimir Putin “cares a whole lot more about losing Ukraine than the West cares about keeping it”[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn11" \o ").

There are a number of queries for the policies Putin has pursued. His annexation of Crimea and his embrace of Russian nationalist themes are evocative to the European power politics during the first half of the twentieth century. As events unfold, a protracted crisis in Ukraine may, over time, simply exhaust Western capabilities to counter a Russian campaign to destabilize Ukraine or to keep its basket-case economy afloat. There exist a number of similarities in issues to the case of Georgia across a territory close to the size of France with the potential for a lot more bloodshed. Rather than developing a new approach to avoid catastrophe, Western leaders are echoing back the game they used to play during the cold War. President Barack Obama and Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that the derailing of the May 25 presidential elections could be the basis for imposition of so-called sectoral sanctions (protecting some sector from competition, from imported goods or services) on Russia. While Western leaders continue to profess their desire to see a diplomatic solution to the crisis, high-level dialogue with the Kremlin amounts to little more than exchanging public statements. The West has said elections or else, but Moscow shows no sign of yielding to a smooth internal political transition.

Clash of Political Cultures

Sanctions will not push Russian leaders to hand back control over Crimea to Kiev. The sanctions effort may be hurting the confidence and pocketbooks of Russia’s business elites, but there is no indication whatsoever that their pain and suffering matter very much for Putin or the very small cohort of advisers he relies upon. In a similar vein, U.S.A. moves to sanction top figures in the Russian establishment simply by dint of their longstanding personal ties to Putin, not their actual behavior, raises a basic question about whether the sanctions can be lifted if the conduct of the Russian state changes.

As Chancellor Merkel’s visit to Washington demonstrated, it is also getting harder to maintain the appearance and reality of a consistent U.S.A.-EU approach on sanctions, which is why sanctions are not deterring further Russian escalation. The two leaders agreed on the need to impose costs on Russia but not on what those costs should be. The EU has focused all of its sanctions to date on officials and politicians who were directly involved in the annexation of Crimea or Moscow’s broader campaign of destabilization against Ukraine. Some of our European partners are fretting about the possibility of being hit with legal challenges, a process that has already exhausted some of the efficacy of sanctions regimes against Iran and al Qaeda. If and when such successful challenges are mounted, it could start to unravel the sanctions effort and provide Putin a victory.

The military options are even more problematic. The United States has rightly focused on reassuring NATO members such as the Baltic nations and Poland that the Alliance exists to defend them, but this does little to alter the facts on the ground in Ukraine. Sending military aid might be a nice, feel-good gesture, but Ukraine’s military is no match for Russia’s, and the recent announcement by the government in Kiev that they will be bringing back military conscription is not a secure policy. For this reason, the White House and key EU governments have stated repeatedly that they are not going to go to war with Russia over Ukraine, a position that enjoys strong popular support.

So where does that leave us? Isolating Russia politically and economically was an important step in the immediate aftermath of the annexation of Crimea to make clear to Putin that his actions were unwarranted, illegal, and strongly opposed by the international community. If Kiev cannot hope to hold meaningful elections on May 25 or reassert control over key parts of the country, what can the West do?  In reality neither side in this geopolitical impasse of war is going to be able to secure its goals all by itself or without serious bloodshed. Any attempt to “win” Ukraine, to repeat what is previously stated in this article, will almost certainly lead to the country’s collapse and de facto partition.

Since independence in 1991, Ukraine’s elites have generally treated politics as a play thing for a heavily criminalized, corrupt rich elite system. Each successive government has been worse and more dysfunctional than its predecessor. Even today, the promise of the Maidan movement (The Maidan People’s Union is an alliance in Ukraine formed by several political parties and non-partisan individuals and public organizations on the fifth Sunday 22 December 2013) is being harmed by the reassertion of entrenched old ways of doing business, the redistribution of property and rents, and the use of violence. It is Ukraine’s great tragedy that both of the two leading presidential contenders, Petro Poroshenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, are the products and beneficiaries of this corrupted system. The West originally saw the elections as an important milestone for putting the country back on track and establishing the legitimacy of a new government in the aftermath of a messy, chaotic revolution. Given that Russia has called for the elections to be canceled, it will be difficult for the United States and the EU to support postponing them. But holding elections as scheduled presupposes that the government that can provide a safe and secure environment for voters and a free and fair electoral process.

Gazprom and Ukraine crisis

A point beneath the surface of the Ukraine crisis is not to be neglected if one is to understand the concomitant of the feud between Russia and the EU. The European Union has hardened its stance on the construction of the South Stream natural gas pipeline. The EU commissioner for energy said in an interview with the Financial Times, “These days, with Ukraine, we are more and more defensive related to Russian pipelines than one year ago … These days, exemptions are not my priority for Gazprom”, Günther Oettinger was quoted as saying. Commenting on Russia filing a complaint to the World Trade Organization against the third energy package that was recently approved by the EU to limit Gazprom’s monopoly on the European energy market, Oettinger expressed doubt that the laws could be changed in the near future. “It is not realistic to expect that we change these rules in the next days or the next years”. No doubt there is a different culture. In Russia, the government and Gazprom prefer to dominate the whole chain from production upstream to downstream power plants”, Oettinger said, according to the Financial Times[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn12" \o ").

The third energy package prohibits owners of mainland pipelines to perform gas extraction, which means Gazprom would be required to grant access to South Stream to other suppliers. Russia filed a complaint on the matter to the WTO last week. Moscow is also concerned about the uncertainty around the Opal pipeline, which passes through Germany connecting the new trans-Baltic North Stream pipeline with gas transmission networks in Western and Central Europe. On Monday, the press service of the German Federal Network Agency told RIA Novosti that a decision on the issue has been postponed until mid-July. Last week, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said that there is a certain restraint on the part of European Commission against the construction of South Stream, which is aimed to diversify the export of Russian gas and is especially important in the context of recent events in Ukraine.

Russia annually pumps about 100 billion cubic meters of gas to European countries via Ukraine, which makes up 80 percent of its total gas supplies to Europe. The 15.5-billion-euro South Stream pipeline project is designed to cut Russia’s dependence on the Ukrainian transit system.

Russian energy giant Gazprom said it would announce the final South Stream pipeline route in summer. Gazprom is considering three routes for the project: through Bulgaria to Serbia, Hungary and Austria; through Bulgaria to Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia, Austria and Italy; or through Bulgaria and Greece to the south of Italy. One would wonder of how such issues would have been handled during the Cold War.

Another characteristic of the echoes of the Cold War is the effort by Russia under Putin, to resurrect its superpower status, and at the same time, further its grip on areas it identifies as vital to Russian interests part of which is the interest of the Russian energy giant Gazprom. The Middle East and the Persian Gulf oil rich region as well as the Indian subcontinent and Asia are areas in which Russia will seek to enhance its hold while taking advantage of what currently seems like US weakness, its loss of interest in the Middle East and the Gulf, and its diversion of resources to Asia. Unlike the Cold War, Russia lacks the economic and military resources that the leaders of the USSR were prepared to sacrifice to do battle with the United States. The Russia of today is a major power with nuclear weapons that manages to sustain itself due to oil and gas revenues. However Russia needs to invest massively in modernizing its energy infrastructures.

During the Cold War, Western Europe and the United States worked together because of the common threat represented by the USSR. However, since the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the expansion of the EU (and NATO) to the East the partnership has lost the glue that held it together. In the absence of a new definition of “common interests,” there are questions about any sort of trans-Atlantic partnership. This provides the EU with an opportunity to take the initiative in its own backyard. It is doubtful that it will be possible to call the EU’s conduct on the Ukraine crisis its finest hour. Germany is curbing those calling for a harsher policy toward Russia. There is no doubt that the construction of Ukraine is a challenge for the EU. Will it find the economic means to meet it? Time will tell. Its conduct so far raises questions about its ability to do so, and this will have repercussions for the EU credibility.

Putin’s decision to annex the Crimean Peninsula while disregarding principles such as not annexing territory by force, compromising the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another nation, and violating signed agreements, highlights the tension between global norms and national interests. The violation of these and other norms that are designed to serve as a foundation for state conduct in the global era endangers economic prosperity and peace, and sacrifices them for the sake of narrow national interests. This in turn is liable to lead to international lack of confidence in the present World Order.

The Cold War is long gone, says the American president, and the Ukrainian affair is not a “Cold War chessboard.” Syria and Ukraine, he adds, are about “expression of hopes” rather than acts of regional powers. And the same goes for Iran: “If John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan could negotiate with the Soviet Union, then surely a strong and confident America can negotiate with less powerful adversaries today”. But this parallel between past and present deserves closer inspection, especially given the president’s reluctance to intervene in any battle, be it Ukraine, Syria or Iran. Apparently, there is a difference between a battle of ideas and one of “international law”. And there exists a difference between the Cold War and its vibrations in the new international order.

To put ourselves in Putin’s shoes, Western observers and analysts have searched history for analogous moments in time. Historians tell us that if we can find similar historical circumstances, we might be better able to predict what will happen next. Some experts look to 1914 and the run-up to the Cold War for clues and insights. But for Putin and his inner circle, the most analogous moment in history is December 2001. Russia is playing the role of the U.S.A. as it stretches out in the initial “success” of Afghanistan and contemplated Iraq.

A rapid victory in Crimea, largely at the hands of Special Forces and intelligence services, Putin has mobilized and deployed a professional army, ready to fulfill his next orders. There is no opponent who stands in the way of a military adventure into Ukraine. With an approval rating above 70 percent, Putin has almost a universal support from Russians and elites for what he has done thus far. In the domestic narrative, he has swept into Crimea to protect the people from what some Russians are already calling the «Ukrainian Taliban». West-leaning protesters and opposition forces that include some extremist activists. He is now prepared to extend the same «protection» to other ethnic Russians in Eastern Ukraine, and maybe elsewhere unless the U.S.A and the EU negotiate a deal with him.

Putin›s dilemma is whether to use his current advantage to change the game inside Ukraine once and for all to Russia›s advantage. This is a choice very similar to the one U.S.A. President George W. Bush faced as he contemplated stretching his early success in Afghanistan into a game-changing victory in Iraq. The Russian military that is now positioned along the Ukrainian border is certainly the most capable force the country has mustered since the Cold War. According to the commander of NATO forces, U.S. General Philip Breedlove, there are 40,000 Russian troops deployed along Ukraine›s border, a combined arms force «capable of attacking on 12 hours› notice». This is still applicable even if the Russian withdrew their troops a bit far from the border.

But what would be the downside of war? Whoever «wins» Ukraine is to suffer from a long term problems. There is the economic mess that will cost billions to clean up; a corrupt political system. What’s more, someone will have to sort out the core of Ukraine›s sorrow; the ethnic antagonism between Ukrainians and Russians. The fundamental question facing Putin today is essentially the same one that faced Bush in his time: Where does bold initiative end and reckless overreach begin? What is President Vladimir Putin›s next move? The answer is thus far undecided, perhaps even for Putin[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn13" \o ").

Entwined Economies

**The West’s**economic and diplomatic pressure may harden back to an age of isolated blocs. And measures such as visa bans, financial sanctions and threats to boycott the G-8 summit that Russia is scheduled to host all certainly seem intended to isolate Moscow. But the economies of Russia and the West have become entwined since the Berlin Wall fell 25 years ago, meaning it would be hard to go back to the hermetic “us-versus-them” world of the Cold War. U.S. brands including McDonald’s and Pepsi have a big presence in Russia, and the European Union does far more trade with the country than the U.S. The Europeans are less eager than Washington to take punitive economic measures, in part because European companies from German engineering firm Siemens to British oil giant BP have major Russian investments. And Russia supplies almost a third of Europe’s natural gas. But economic rupture could hurt Russia even more. Russia relies heavily on income from oil and gas, which make up more than two-thirds of the country’s exports. Around half of Russia’s exports, mainly natural gas, oil and other raw materials, heads to the EU. And rich Russians rely on places like London for a place to hide their cash in homes, businesses and discreet, stable banks (so much that some British people refer to their capital as “Londongrad”.

“London is more important to Russians than Russians are to London,” said Yolande Barnes, head of global research at real estate agent Savills. She says Russians buy about 2.5 percent of prime London properties. “If Russians disappeared, I think London would barely blink”.

Conclusion

Rhetoric such as “dangerous escalation” and “brink of disaster”, as well as talk of boosting military defenses in Europe, vibrates and echoes Cold War tensions. But Western leaders show little appetite for a military response. NATO did deploy two surveillance planes to fly over Poland and Romania to monitor Ukraine, and the U.S. sent additional fighter jets to Lithuania and Poland to boost air patrols. Russia is in military control of Crimea but has not moved into other areas of Ukraine, aside from seizing a gas distribution facility just outside of Crimea’s border. The crisis could still escalate. Adrian Basora, a former U.S. ambassador to the Czech Republic, said that if Russia sent troops into eastern Ukraine, it could trigger an escalation that might pull NATO troops into Eastern Europe. He acknowledged that this would be “an extremely dangerous situation”. However, it is not probable.

But even if that is unlikely to turn into a global confrontation specially that China, the rising global power of the 21st century, has shown no desire to take sides. Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has discussed the crisis with U.S. President Barack Obama, has merely urged calm and restraint[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn14" \o "). it is true that Putin has launched a huge military modernization program. And Russia’s defense minister said last month that it was seeking to expand its worldwide presence by seeking permission for navy ships to use ports in Algeria, Cyprus, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, Seychelles, Vietnam and Singapore. Still, Matthew Clements, editor of Jane’s Intelligence Review, said Russia’s “ability to undertake operations across the globe is fairly limited”. “This is not a reformation of the Soviet Red Army”, he said[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn15" \o ").

In one area the Cold War comparison may be apt: a mutual lack of comprehension and trust. The Ukraine crisis has revealed that Russia and the West remain far apart, not just politically and diplomatically, but culturally and temperamentally. Putin has stoked a brand of macho nationalism increasingly at odds with liberal Europeans, who have reacted with anger to the jailing of punk protesters Pussy Riot and Russia’s ban on homosexual “propaganda”. Attempts to isolate Russia further may boost support for Putin, whose poll ratings have soared due to his tough stance on Ukraine, and make rapprochement harder.

But historians see fundamental differences. “Two things characterized the Cold War. First of all there was an ideological divide which was kind of black and white. “You’re either with us or against us”, said Margot Light, professor emeritus of international relations at the London School of Economics. “That really doesn’t exist anymore”[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn16" \o "). “And the Cold War started off as European, but it became global. And again, this isn’t it. I think neither Russia nor the United States have that kind of global reach any longer”[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn17" \o "). Events develop so quickly that we have not yet taken stock of the change, and out of disinterest regard everything as being just one more conflict between the Kremlin and the White House. At the beginning of the 1990s there were very many of them. There was a time when Russia merely showed its “teeth,” even if, because its own weakness, it could not change anything. Then Russia spoke out ever more pointedly, but always leaving a way out so that, having demonstrated its strength, it would concede. In Syria, the step back was not taken on this occasion, but there remained an orientation toward a certain joint control with the Americans. Now this too is gone. The points of view on the part of Russia and the United States on what Ukraine should be are not only counterpoised, they are on hold for future bargaining to settle a regional and perhaps an international compromise[[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftn18" \o ").

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[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war" \l "_ftnref17" \o ")-  Nicholas Burns, Globe Columnist, May 08, 2014, and Associated Press writers Sylvia Hui in London and Lynn Berry and Peter Leonard in Moscow.

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**الأزمة الأوكرانية: ترددات الحرب الباردة**

تستجر الأزمة الأوكرانية حروباً بالوكالة بدءاً بالشرق الأوسط وصولاً إلى الحدود الروسية؛ هذا وقد صدرت العديد من التعليقات في الولايات المتحدة وصلت إلى حد القول إن الغرب والولايات المتحدة خاصة كانوا يسمحون لروسيا بالخروج عن السيطرة في استخدام المجتمعات الأوكرانية لخوض حروب بالوكالة ضد الغرب. إن شئنا العودة بعقارب الساعة إلى الوراء وتحديداً إلى بداية الحرب الباردة لأدركنا أنها كانت عنيفة وأن ما نشهده حالياً في الأزمة العالمية ليست إلا ترددات وأصداء لتلك الحرب.  
تشكل المنطقة الشرقية من أوكرانيا والمؤيدة بشكل كبير لروسيا حالياً محط اهتمام العالم ومسرحاً لنزاع دامٍ حيث تقع المواجهة بين الحكومة المركزية الأوكرانية والثوار الأوكرانيين المؤيدين لروسيا وتُعتبر هذه المواجهة كأحدث معركة تُخاض بالوكالة وتردد صدى الحرب الباردة. هذه المنافسة تتطور بشكل سيؤدي إلى تحديد مستقبل القرن الـ21.  
يزداد الوضع في أوكرانيا الشرقية عنفاً أكثر فأكثر. ما زال هناك شكوك حول ما إذا كان المنطق سيسود وسيجلس الرئيسان أوباما و بوتين معاً للتوصل إلى اتفاق يرضي أغلبية الأطراف إن لم يرضِ الجميع. هذا المقال يفترض أن أي من روسيا أو الغرب لن يتمكن من أن يضمن أهدافه في أوكرانيا بمفرده أو من دون سفك الدماء.  
الخشية من سفك الدماء سيساهم في تأزيم الوضع. أي محاولة “للفوز” بأوكرانيا ستؤدي بشكل شبه حتمي إلى انهيار البلاد وإلى التقسيم بحكم الواقع. تشار

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/ukraine-crisis-vibrations-cold-war#sthash.fsct2bvm.dpuf