



CRISIS IN UKRAINE:

**My 2014 - 2015 Observations
on Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk,
and United States Aggression
Towards Russia**

Craig Peterson, Jr.

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This is a compilation of essays that I wrote in 2014 and 2015, and therefore, some of the information expressed in this eBook may be outdated and repetitive. However, I have kept the integrity of the writings intact from that time period. Updated information on the topic has been stated in my more recent blogs. Please keep in mind that these are my earlier works as an inexperienced and unpublished author.

Two Weeks After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 1 – March 6, 2014

The former Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic has become a chaotic and dangerous place since the late February protests that evolved into a frenzy of fear about a return to the historical Cold War. What must be asked, however, is what has caused this unorthodox set of events to transpire and what is the rest of the world's role in all of it? There seems to be an undeniable rift in the country that may ultimately lead to the formation of two independent countries or the secession of parts of the country, which may later join the Russian Federation. Only time will tell, but there is no doubt that the United States (almost 5,000 miles away) will try to dictate the sequence of events in the next several weeks.

It has been said that the people of Ukraine want to move closer to the European Union and that the protests were the result of the people of Ukraine taking action against a tyrannical regime filled with pro-Russian sympathy. It is true that the Ukrainian Parliament was trying to sign an economic deal with Europe, and the former president, Yanukovich, turned his back on it in order to keep traditional ties with Russia. This led to the well-televised violent protests that occurred in Independence Square in Kiev and the Euromaidan movement in the western parts of the country. Once its parliament voted to oust the president and send him running for his life, the new interim government was looked at by the West as advancing democracy in the midst of chaos. However, is a system of equal representation really what the United States and its allies are after by taking such an interest in the country? What about the people of eastern Ukraine and Crimea? In parts of the country, up to sixty percent of the people are ethnically Russian and are more favorable to the federation for ties in the military and economy than to Ukraine. Also, Russia has decried the situation as a coup against a democratically-elected government (the president and his cabinet were elected by a majority of the Ukrainian people).

The Western response to Vladimir Putin's (with the Russian Federal Assembly's support) deployment of 16,000 troops into the autonomous region of Crimea to protect Russians living in the peninsula has been that of criticism and aggressive threats. The European Union, no doubt, would like to see another country in its sphere of influence, and the United States would like to see Russian power diminished in order to remain the sole world superpower. The Western powers also claim that an invasion against the Ukrainian people is in violation of international law. Russia has a national interest in the region because of a warm water port in Sevastopol (Russia's only access to a port year-round) and its location as the home to many Russian military installations. Who, then, has the diplomatic and political right-of-way?

In short, both Russia and the Western powers are playing a strategic game to check the power of the other party and see how much can be accomplished short of war. The Russians know that the United States and the European Union will not engage them in all-out conflict, and since this issue is so important to their interests, they will push as far as necessary. Likewise, the Americans and Europeans could not sustain such a costly and unpopular war with Russia, but they want to halt their actions as effectively as possible. The West will point to an agreement in 1994

in which Russia and the United States agreed to not violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine with force in exchange for the country giving up its nuclear weapons left over from the former Soviet Union. Russia responds with its opinion that since there was a coup against the legitimate government of Ukraine, the accord is now irrelevant. It will also bring up the fact of another treaty signed with Ukraine and the government of Crimea that it is allowed to keep up to 25,000 troops in the peninsula. The West has responded that that treaty is inconsequential and that the deployment is an invasion to be condemned. Despite all of the tensions, Crimea was ceded from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 under the rule of Nikita Khrushchev of the United Soviet Socialist Republics (commonly known as the USSR), and historically it has been considered part of Russia. Does this mean that Crimea should be annexed by the Russian Federation?

There is no simple answer to the fate of Crimea, but generally missing from the debate by both parties on the issue is what is best for the people there? The Russians want to protect their national interests and the people living in the country, while the United States and the European Union want to limit Russian dominance. The Crimean legislature, which is closest to the people of the region, decided to allow for a referendum later this month to decide whether Crimea would remain an independent republic within Ukraine or whether it would become a republic within the Russian Federation. This is an equitable and noble principle, where the people can decide for themselves who is to govern their region. Just as Thomas Jefferson once wrote in the Declaration of Independence, when the people decide that the government they are under is no longer necessary, it is both their right and duty to decide the future of their nation. This is the only way liberty can assert itself in the affairs of men. Government is established by the people and to govern their needs. It is too bad that Abraham Lincoln got that principle wrong during the American Civil War, but the Crimeans have a real chance to live under it. However, the referendum should be unbiased, without intimidation, and support a supermajority (between sixty and eighty percent in the affirmative) for finality in order to prevent unjust results and oppression of minority groups (such as Ukrainians and Tatars).

This vote of referendum has not received favorable feedback from the West. President Obama has condemned it as a violation of international law, but the same president claims that the United States wants to stand with the Ukrainian people. What about the Crimean people? The interim Ukrainian government claims that a referendum in Crimea is unconstitutional, but the principle of the Declaration of Independence is universal and takes precedence when the people decide who they are to be governed by. Have Americans forgotten about their own history and the concept that the founding fathers established? It seems as if the United States government is only interested in aiding Ukraine because it does not want Russian influence to expand. War hawks, such as Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, scream for extremely harsh economic sanctions on Russia and a revisiting of the missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic similar to the placing of nuclear missiles in Greece and Turkey, which were pointed at the Soviet Union prior to the Soviets doing so in Cuba. They do not have the best interests of the Crimean people at heart.

President Obama has talked about the immorality and illegality of violating Ukrainian sovereignty because Russia was unprovoked in sending troops. It is deplorable that President Putin has resorted to such tactics, but what should be remembered is that one should practice what one preaches. The United States has sent agents of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to many

countries to destabilize anti-American governments for years. This has been the case since the 1953 coup against the democratically-elected Iranian government over the nationalization of oil, but even to this day, agents have been supporting groups that are in opposition to the ayatollah and his government (the Iranians have also partaken in operations to weaken the influence of the United States in the Middle East and the government of Israel). There are countless cases of the United States intervening in world affairs (mostly through covert operations), including the disastrous Iraq War (the United States invaded unprovoked). It seems as if this hypocrisy could lead to coercion against the Crimeans.

The House of Representatives has voted in the affirmative for the president's proposal for sending up to one billion dollars in economic aid to the poor country of Ukraine (the Senate has yet to cast its vote, but it will likely go along with it). The question that must be asked is: can the United States afford such a loan at a time when the public debt is well over seventeen trillion dollars? Republicans cry for small government and staying within the country's means, but they concede when it comes to the military and foreign domination. Democrats vow for less intervention in foreign policy when Republicans control the government, but switch their positions when the tables are turned.

President Obama has proposed some economic sanctions (through executive order) to be imposed on Russia if it does not comply with the West's demand of recalling its deployed troops in Crimea. The European Union has not been completely united on this issue because of many of the countries' dependency on Russia (especially for oil). It is likely, however, that both groups will join together to create new cold war tensions. Russia has vowed to respond in like if such actions are taken. It will likely freeze American and European assets and lessen its dependency on American trade. If this occurs, the global economy may be affected, and for what? These arrogant demands and sanctions will be an aggressive act of war, and furthering this threat will only lead to bitter tensions and a less stable world. Also, sanctions are generally not effective against authoritarian governments and do more to harm the average citizen (which was the case with American sanctions against Iraq prior to the war).

It is likely that the United States and Europe are afraid that additional Russian annexations will reanimate the oppression that came with the Soviet Union. In 2008, as many people may recall, Russia took the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from the Republic of Georgia, and little was done to stop it. Since then, Russia has not tried to invade other countries. Vladimir Putin is not an irrational actor who is trying to bring about the Cold War. Rather he is acting in his country's best interests as any president of the United States would do (and has done). Is it that important for the Western powers to remain on top, and particularly for the United States to remain the sole superpower? For most of history, there has been a global or regional balance of power that was disrupted with the fall of the Soviet Union. This event paved the way for the United States to essentially dominate global politics and in many ways, rule the world (through threat of military force, domination in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and unbalanced power in the United Nations).

Ukraine Social Media Post – March 15, 2014

The Crimean people are set for a referendum to decide whether or not to remain an independent republic within Ukraine or whether to become an independent state within the Russian Federation. The American government is quick to condemn the action as a violation of the Ukrainian constitution and international law. The Ukrainian parliament is even voting on whether to dissolve the Crimean legislature.

The American colonists' secession from the British Empire would have been considered a violation of British law during the American Revolution, and if the United Nations had existed at that time, the action would likely have been treated as a violation of international law. In fact, one of the grievances against the British was that they dissolved the legislatures of some of the colonies.

Should not the Crimean people have the right to decide for themselves who is to govern? Is that not one of the principles articulated by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence? Have Americans forgotten their own history and where they came from?

One Month After Viktor Yanukovych's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 2 – March 25, 2014

Russia has not given up its claimed right to deploy troops in Crimea in order to take over the peninsula. After the popular referendum on March 16, the people decided to become a part of the Russian Federation, and both houses of the Russian legislature agreed to the annexation, despite warnings from the European Union and the United States that such an illegal act would put Russia on a path to isolation in the global community. The West has been crying that former President Ronald Reagan's "evil empire" is back on the world scene and that eastern Ukraine, the autonomous Transnistria region of Moldova, and other parts of the former Soviet Union are the next targets. It seems as if some American officials are preparing for a second cold war, but with increased sanctions, demands, and troop movements, the same may just get what it wishes for. It is unlikely that another cold war will subsist, and Russia would be unjustified in building another empire, however, the people of those regions should be able to choose who governs them or if they want to become an independent nation.

The people of Crimea and Sevastopol (an important port city that has been administered separately from the rest of the peninsula under Ukraine and will likely be under Russia) overwhelmingly (with a majority of over ninety-six percent of votes) voiced their opinions to leave Ukraine in search of greener pastures. Although the minority groups largely boycotted the elections (the Tatars and Ukrainian nationals), the Crimeans may now enjoy their new opportunity and sovereign will. Just as the American colonists seceded from the British Empire and the Confederate States of America seceded from the United States, the Crimeans displayed courage in the wake of tyranny. Even though the Ukrainian parliament had the audacity to vote to dissolve the Crimean parliament as the British did to the American colonists, the people decided that they were not going to remain slaves to the Ukrainians or Western interests. However, with all of this,

the Crimeans should respect and protect the rights of the minority people living within their region of Russia, and Russia should also do the same.

Americans often bring up the possibility of fraud in the referendum and the fact that the Russians were once the Communists that were enemies to the United States (they were actually more like authoritarian socialists and not true communists). However, the Cold War is over, and although many Russian officials were members of the former Communist Party under the Soviet Union, including Vladimir Putin himself (who has been elected by the Russian people), the Russian Federation has two houses in its assembly, which consists of democratically-elected members who must represent their constituents in a similar manner as in the United States. This means that Russia is not the same old Soviet Union that they once were, and not all member nations and subjects of Russia are oppressed people. There may be some examples of the same, but there are still elements of freedom and democracy (really representative democracy or republican government). Regardless, that is the decision of the people of Russia to decide and not the West.

Americans complain that the people of Crimea were forced to vote a certain way, and when they are under Russian rule, they will become oppressed. To the latter, it should be reiterated that the people should have the right to choose who governs. This means that if the Russian government becomes oppressive to their livelihoods, the Crimeans should be able to leave Russia and become independent or rejoin Ukraine (if Ukraine would allow them to). To the former, there is very little evidence that suggests coercion at the polls of the mid-March election. Russia's objective after the Ukrainian parliament set up an interim government (not democratically-elected) was to protect ethnic Russians and its interests in the Black Sea. It did not send troops into Crimea in order to conquer a long, lost territory (however, the Russians deny even sending troops into Crimea) but to maintain the status quo. Even if the Crimean defense forces, which are pro-Russian, intimidated the people (which would be an outrage and abomination), ethnic Russians were a majority and the West was not surprised at all by the results (maybe just the numbers).

What has the Western response been amidst the chaos that has ensued over the past several days? President Obama has issued a few executive orders, unconstitutionally, to economically target a bank (Bank Rossiya) that President Putin has been alleged to have been associated with (he has mocked President Obama's efforts by saying that he will now open an account there to make a point) and some twenty Russian and Crimean officials. The European Union has responded with several of its own sanctions on Russian officials. The members of the G8 economic summit (a club of the most economically productive countries in the world) have decided to expel Russia (now it is the G7) in addition to the sanctions. These measures have and will do very little to halt Russian hostilities in the future, and they may just provoke them into further actions. Russia has responded by placing its own sanctions on American lawmakers, which is merely an act of ceremonial retaliation. Sanctions are an act of war and aggression, and in many ways, they can be viewed as a form of revenge (a primitive and evil characteristic of human nature). They often lead to war or future complications (as was the case with Iran, Iraq, and Japan prior and during World War II). Increasing the sanctions will only lead to increased tensions.

Is the United States just looking for another war? If these sanctions and demands increase, Moscow will not be deterred, and it may even look for other military options. Already, it has begun amassing troops on its western border with Ukraine for exercises. Although, it claims that they are routine, it is likely that they are preparation in case a larger conflict erupts. It has also taken over

several bases in Crimea (which has been surprisingly and fortunately mostly bloodless in nature) forcing Ukrainian forces to withdraw, which is to be expected since Russia now has control of the peninsula politically.

American officials are reassuring eastern European countries that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (commonly referred to as NATO) is on their side and is willing to protect them from further Russian aggression. This useless chatter only works to expand tensions and assume that a broader conflict is imminent, and it could cause increased European and American troops and exercises in eastern Europe, including a revisiting of the American defense missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic (another Cuban Missile Crisis?). This would not only look like a threat to Russia, which would respond with similar measures (a back and forth chess match, perhaps), but this could lead to an inadvertent incident that has catastrophic results (like having American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, leading to the incident that bears the gulf's name and ultimately, the Vietnam War). With all of these threats and demands against Russia, American and European actions could escalate a situation that does not need to be intensified, leading to a superfluous global conflict.

It would be unwarranted for Russia to conquer other territories, and its actions in Crimea should be condemned in part because they invaded a sovereign country to an extent (it deployed troops that it was allowed to have based on a treaty with Ukraine). However, it is not anything that every American president has not done since the Cold War. Presidents have sent in agents of the Central Intelligence Agency or other covert paramilitary organizations many times to destabilize governments that are not Western-friendly (overtly, wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Serbia, and Somalia have also led to regime changes or attempts). How are Russia's actions any different? This condemnation is pure hypocrisy on the part of the American government. Look at the conflict under President Bill Clinton with Serbia. The United States encouraged and supported a region of Serbia, known as Kosovo, to break away and become an independent nation. Why is it that when Americans support regime change or a nation seceding from another, it is acceptable, but when a different powerful country supports similar actions, it is condemned?

Congress is still debating whether or not to send economic loans to Ukraine and whether to increase sanctions against Russia. A bill has passed the House of Representatives and the Senate to give up to one million dollars in loans and possibly more for increased security and allow President Obama to authorize more economic sanctions against Russia. The bill must go back to the House because of language in the Senate version of the bill that would allow for a crisis fund in the International Monetary Fund to be used to fund countries struggling economically, such as Ukraine, and it could possibly weaken the United States in that organization (and strengthen weaker countries' position in it). Republicans argue that the IMF provision, which is adopted by most leading industrialized countries, would increase the American taxpayers' burden (the United States is the biggest contributor to the IMF), but that is debatable. Regardless, the United States cannot afford to send aid to a country when it cannot even pay its own bills, and why should a country that is weak economically get additional funds from the United States just to anger Russia? What about the poor people of other countries that are even worse off? They do not get aid simply because Russia is not after them? The United States cannot pick and choose which countries to give aid to and which ones to let remain in strife. If anything, let the European Union bail out Ukraine and be its protector, since Ukraine is thousands of miles away from Washington, D.C.

The Crimean Crisis will continue for many more weeks, but it will still be on the back burner to more interesting stories like the missing Malaysian Airline Flight 370. The Crimean people have been dealt justice in the eyes of liberty, but will the international community try to bring Crimea back or push Russia into war? Only time will tell, but it is unlikely that a war will ensue, especially with an increase in global diplomacy compared to previous times in history (global diplomacy can also lead to closer relations between countries, which can lead to increased tensions because of a community feeling). This may even spark separatist movements or government rebellions in other countries as well, like the Arab Spring. Scotland is set for a referendum in September to break off its union with England from 1707 and leave the United Kingdom (this is unlikely to be the will of the people, but at least in this case, the United Kingdom is allowing the vote). The Venetian Province also had a referendum about breaking from Italy, and the Basque region may eventually secede from Spain. Let freedom reign and allow the people to decide!

Two Months After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 3 – April 18, 2014

The situation that has been occurring for the past few months in Ukraine has worsened over the last couple of weeks, and the real potential for a civil war is on the horizons. United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, has met with leaders of the European Union, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine to discuss the de-escalation of conflict that the West claims Russia has been fomenting. Yesterday, a deal had been struck in Geneva, Switzerland, but whether or not the pact will take effect is another matter. Pro-Russian forces are adamant about their right to secede from Ukraine as Crimea did approximately one month ago. Careful planning and diplomacy are necessary for such a conflict, but in order for such a feat to occur, all parties must be willing to compromise, including the United States and its persistence on aggression towards Russia.

As the skirmishes wage on in some of Ukraine's eastern cities, one must be concerned with the path in which the two major powers will take to try to get their own way in the political standoff that is reminiscent of the Cold War. War will likely not occur directly, as it did not during the forty plus year tensions in the twentieth century, and President Barrack Obama has made it clear that the military option, at least for now, is not on the table. However, such a rivalry could produce future hostilities between the two powers, especially with the childish threats and drama imposed by economic sanctions that could harm more than just the Russian and European citizens. Sanctions are often precursors to war, and even if such an event would not occur, they may act as a pretext for conflicts with other groups or countries, as the sanctions on Iraq did for al-Qaeda prior to the horrific attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. (sanctions on Iraq were not the only reason for the attacks). This could lead to another cold war, with proxy fighting between pro-Russian and pro-Western forces on a much larger scale than just what has been seen in Ukraine. If a broader European conflict or even worldwide one occurs, it could have catastrophic results for many people and countries.

The United States should strive to heal the rift that has occurred between itself and Russia and avoid aggressive political tactics. This means giving up some of its demands on pro-Russian forces, who will accept nothing less than autonomy and the ability to have stronger relations with Russia. The people of eastern Ukraine do not want to be treated as pawns on the international scene, and they do not want their future dictated by a faraway world power. If the United States is to take a leading role in the conflict, it must allow for Russia to get some of what it wants. However, since this is a European conflict an ocean away from the United States, the European Union should take the leading role. Americans should heed the words of people like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, who advocated for staying out of European drama. Also, having unfriendly relations with any nation should be undesirable, and war should be avoided if at all humanly possible.

Interim Ukrainian President Olexander Turchynov and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who have launched an anti-terrorist operation (it has failed thus far) against the separatists, have said that they will grant amnesty to the forces that have seized administrative buildings in the eastern cities, and this granting process was agreed upon at the meeting in Geneva between the four major parties. However, the pro-Russian forces have not helped their case with requirement to force Jews to register for alleged support of the interim Ukrainian government and their refusal to accept the international deal unless the government steps down. A new deal might need to be made to incorporate the views of the pro-Russian officials into the future of their region. The actions taken by these separatists are abhorrent, but it is important that a compromise occur to de-escalate the situation.

Russia has claimed that Ukraine is on the brink of civil war and that it is not involved in the unrest that has occurred in Mariupol (protesters attacked a Ukrainian military installation, but the attack was quelled), Slavyansk (separatists surrounded and captured Ukrainian military vehicles as they went to try to take back the city where government buildings had been captured by the militants), Kramatorsk (captured by separatists, but an airfield outside of the city was recaptured by Yatsenyuk's anti-terrorist operation), Donetsk (clashes have occurred between pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian forces), and other cities and regions (the Donetsk region declared itself the Donetsk People's Republic, calling for a referendum similar to that of Crimea on May 11 to allow the people to decide if they want to remain part of Ukraine or join Russia). The United States, the European Union, and Ukraine have expressly condemned Russia's actions, and they have called for a recalling of Russian forces near the Ukrainian border (even though the Russian Federal Assembly has approved operations within Ukraine to protect Russian-speaking citizens, but President Vladimir Putin has said that he hopes that such measures are unnecessary). However, it is important to note that if there is an accusation of political upheaval by Russia, the burden of proof is on the Western powers to prove it. Thus far, there has been no proof (at least that has been released to the public). The United States does not need another pretext to war that reveals itself as erroneous, as was the case with Iraq.

Political unrest in Ukraine may be in Russia's national interest and it may be likely that it has something to do with it, but it has not been proven, and Russia has agreed to make a deal with Western powers to de-escalate the situation. All parties on an issue should be included in negotiations, and the Ukrainian separatists have not been; and Russia cannot control the actions of these groups and should not be held responsible for them. It can, however, try to influence them

in a positive way. It should be applauded that the United States has, thus far, remained committed to diplomacy rather than war, but continuing the threats of sanctions against Russia will only escalate tensions. Also, the Donetsk People's Republic, if it is to declare independence from Ukraine, should be sympathetic to the rights of minority groups; but if the will of the people there is really to achieve separation from Ukraine, they should be allowed to obtain their future happiness. The people have the right to choose their government, and the government does not have the right to force itself on a discontented populace.

Crisis in Ukraine 4 – May 8, 2014

As civil war edges closer to the broken country of Ukraine, the Western nations have not recanted their solid rhetoric against the evils of the Russian Federation. Although Russia is not innocent in this grave international situation, the fact that the United States and the European Union continue to condemn its every action shows negligence not only to the people of the world (in terms of a possible international conflict that would affect many people), but also to the citizens of southern and eastern Ukraine. The separatists that have plagued Ukraine need to be included in the diplomatic process in order for the people's interests to be represented in a courteous and equitable manner. All parties must be willing to compromise for a solution, and a Western-dominated negotiation will not suffice.

The Ukrainian military has been involved in anti-terrorist operations throughout the country to quell the rebellion set in motion by the pro-Russian separatists weeks ago. Not much progress has been made thus far, as separatist forces held their territory in many skirmishes. Recently, the Ukrainian forces took control of most of the city of Mariupol but were commanded elsewhere, causing the rebels to retake the city. In the important port city of Odessa, the military and separatist forces clashed, leading to separatists demanding the release of detainees and a building fire that killed several people. Later, the Odessa police released the detainees in exchange for a discontinuance of hostilities. In Slavyansk, rebels shot down Ukrainian helicopters and much violence has occurred. This trend has taken place in many cities across southern and eastern Ukraine with no signs of ceasing. The Russians and the separatists blame the Ukrainian government for violence and superfluous force, while the Western nations and the Ukrainian government blame the terrorists and rebels for provoking tensions and being agents of Russia.

On May 7, Russia claimed that it was pulling back its troops from the Ukrainian border but retaining those necessary to run military exercises pertaining to nuclear responses that had been planned months in advance. The fact that Russia alleged that it was keeping troops there solely for military exercises is worrisome, but at least it agreed to withdraw them in order to de-escalate tensions. Russian President Vladimir Putin also called for the May 11 referendum for autonomy in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk Republic to be suspended and for elections by the Ukrainian government on May 25 to begin to ease tensions between the military and the rebels. Some people believe that this is a response to the United States' and the European Union's efforts to impose sanctions on Russia, which have caused companies and investors to anticipate further economic troubles in Russia in the future. Regardless, at least there is some willingness for compromise, or is there?

Almost instantly after Putin's statements, the Ukrainian government called it bogus and refused to acknowledge cooperation. The United States government even stated that the referendum should not take place at all. In addition, on May 8, the separatists respectfully declined Putin's attempt to de-escalate the situation, and they decided that they would go ahead with the referendum. This should show the West that the separatists are not agents of the Russian government and that the Russians cannot control the actions of the rebels. Therefore, punishing Russia for the actions of groups that are pro-Russian would be like the Chinese punishing the United States because of pro-American groups that are not affiliated with the United States but operating within Chinese territory. All along, the American government has refused to give the people its proof that Russia was supervising the separatists and causing much of the conflict that has consumed Ukraine. It may be that the United States is taking the word of the Ukrainian government, but how honorable is a policy that reflects such ignorance?

The statements by the United States government and that of the European Union have shown an unwillingness of these two powers to compromise on the issue. They will not stop until Russia abdicates on the protection of Russian-speakers within Ukraine and forces the rebels to stand down. This type of negotiation is impractical because only one side of the controversy benefits. Russia has shown a readiness to compromise, but all parties must be included in the talks, including the separatists.

The people of southern and eastern Ukraine must have a say in their political future, so the referendum should take place to allow for the legitimate political entities of Donetsk and Luhansk to determine whether they are to be as autonomous as Crimea was before its secession. Separatist leaders have stated that they will determine at a later date whether they want to remain in Ukraine, become independent, or join Russia. If autonomy is chosen by the people of the two republics, representatives should be sent for another set of diplomatic agreements with the European Union, the Russian Federation, the United States (not necessary, but it would be involved), and the Ukrainian government. Another referendum would have to be taken in order to determine which of the three outcomes would ensue.

If the people chose to remain as part of Ukraine, some constitutional changes would need to be made, the rights of Russian-speaking citizens would need to be confirmed, and new elections would have to be held (as is planned currently). The latter two options would cause a more diplomatic dilemma because the Ukrainian government would not be willing to relinquish an important industrial area. Plus, polls have shown that the people of Ukraine as a whole would prefer to be united (though this likely reflects the sentiments of the western portion of the country). However, it is the right of the people living in those two oblasts (provinces) to decide who is to rightly govern them and not people who are outside of the borders, who would subjugate them to unitary government. Freedom of the people to choose who governs was advocated by John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, and many others who helped found the United States after British liberties had been so wrongly violated.

It seems as if the West will not back down from its aggressive approach with Russia until its every demand is met, which is a dangerous road to head down. Does the United States want to bring back cold war tensions? Is the Nobel Peace Prize recipient, President Barack Obama, hoping to influence the outcome in Ukraine and cause further detriment to American-Russian relations? Some people argue that the United States has been involved in Ukraine since before the civil

conflict erupted, and if true, this speculation is not unprecedented by any means. The only way for all parties to be content about the results of this crisis is for a compromise by everyone.

Four Months After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 5 – June 3, 2014

Now that the newly-elected president of Ukraine after the May 25 elections, Petro Poroshenko, is due to take office on Saturday (June 7), the country is back on track to being a unitary republic instead of a mob government resulting from a coup d'état. This is the statement that is given by President Obama's administration and the European Union, as Vice-President Joseph Biden heads to Ukraine to celebrate democracy with the leaders of that country. However, the questions must be asked: will the situation in the struggling country change, who is this new president, and is hope of unification on the horizon? The citizens of eastern Ukraine are not going to stand by idle while their lives are infected by the force of a unitary government. If the people of Donetsk and Luhansk cannot be included in negotiations or are hunted down in anti-terror operations without the chance of diplomacy and the Western nations continue to support the current Ukrainian government, the situation in Ukraine will just continue to get worse and escalate into a full-scale civil war.

The events this past month have not been promising for the objective of peace, as further conflict has struck the former provinces of eastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian military has engaged in additional attempts to quell the terrorist rebellion, and the pro-Russian militants have sought to defend their territory. The militants shot down a helicopter near the city of Slovyansk during a battle, which allowed the Ukrainian authorities to appeal to the people's emotions in condemning the attack. At the Donetsk International Airport, the militants pursued an operation of seizure, but the Ukrainian military recaptured the airport, resulting in many deaths to the militants. Yesterday, the militants attempted to acquire a Ukrainian military installation in the city of Luhansk but failed. In addition, the Russian Battalion, a group of Russians that have embarked on a mission to the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics to aid the separatists, and some Chechnyan fighters have joined the fight to keep the Ukrainian government away from those regions.

President-elect Poroshenko has made it clear that he will continue the military operations to subdue the rebels and force them into compliance with the iron fist of Ukrainian democracy. The United States government was overjoyed by the results of the decisive election, as if to say that the desires of the eastern regions of Ukraine are of no concern and the openly corrupt government may persevere (Poroshenko is a billionaire chocolate company owner and part of Ukraine's elite; and President Obama cried exploitation and disregard for the rights of Syrians under President Bashar al-Assad but not when it was a United States or European Union ally). Western-friendly leaders have historically been favored by the United States, regardless of whether they have the best interests of the people at heart. The intentions of all governments are for their concerns to be met, and the rights of the people as an issue serves as a convenient emotional appeal. However, when a government disagrees with the issues raised by groups screaming human rights,

such issues are ignored. Propaganda and exploiting people's faith in their government work considerably well.

Since Russia has been cooperating with the West, there has been less talk about another cold war or raising conflict between them and the United States. The Russian Federation has shown much effort in complying with the Western demands of pulling back thousands of troops from its western border. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been monitoring movements and has thus far concluded that the military is packing up for the Russian interior. Although it is a positive announcement that tensions may settle between the two powers, Russia received scant advantages from the situation. If compromises are one-sided, bullying has occurred, and the rights of the citizens of former eastern Ukraine are diminished. Russia has claimed countless times that it retains the right to protect ethnic Russians, and this could be used as an excuse to involve itself militarily in Donetsk and Luhansk, especially with the Russian Battalion assisting the separatists. The West has also urged Russia not to use its oil company, Gazprom, to bribe Ukraine. Russia had agreed to assist the struggling economy of Ukraine before the crisis commenced, but it is demanding the money back now that conflict erupted. The United States and the European Union are scrambling to relieve the stress that the Ukrainian government has burdened itself with through a weakened economy, so that Russia cannot hold it hostage to its debt. Some of this aid will be used to pay off the Gazprom bill, and negotiations have been reached by both parties to give a more favorable paying system to Ukraine. All of these efforts have eased some of the tensions between Russia and the United States, but the war hawks continue to beat their drums and endorse sanctions on Russia.

The United States and the European Union have been far too supportive of the current Ukrainian government, which is corrupt and has even violated its constitution to oust former president, Viktor Yanukovich. The people of eastern Ukraine need to be brought into negotiations with the government, instead of the one-sided military campaign currently waged. The Western nations have dominated Ukrainian politics, which has not allowed for the people who are more sympathetic towards Russia to have much of a say in the affairs that affect them. If the people of Donetsk and Luhansk are to be brought back into Ukraine, the only equitable way would be to federalize the country, which would allow for more autonomy of the provinces that are closer to the people. Also, any international discussions that occur must include representatives from Donetsk and Luhansk in order to have everyone's interests included.

Crisis in Ukraine 6 – June 25, 2014

The events in eastern Europe have not improved much since the onset of hostilities between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian nationalists, but the cease-fire agreement set in place by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko is a step in the right direction. May there be an end to the conflict and a diplomatic solution on the horizon? It is doubtful that such a development will ensue in the near future due to the persistence and obstinacy of the separatist fighters, and the United States and European Union will likely continue their harsh criticism and implication of Russia as an aggressor in the crisis (although much criticism and sanctions have not been taken as of late). However, the international focus of the United States has been the recent civil conflict in Iraq, where the Sunni group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, is hopeful of establishing a caliphate

and conquering lands owned by the new Shiite government under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. The United States will likely end up attempting to rescue Iraq from the terrorists instead of allowing the country to establish itself as a legitimate political authority.

Recently, the Ukrainian government succeeded in taking the southeastern city of Mariupol, where the government boasted compliance with the citizens there (the people supposedly welcomed the invaders), but the separatists have been holding their own against a much more powerful force. The Ukrainian government in conjunction with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has accused Russia of sending tanks and personnel carriers across the international border into Luhansk (they have been supposedly spotted by officials) as well as weapons and ammunition, and Russia has denied these claims. Violence has remained constant during the conflict, and it is unlikely that the separatists will abandon their cause without some type of beneficial compromise. Also, Russia and Ukraine failed to make a deal about gas supplied by Russian-owned Gazprom, thus hindering the flow of the important substance to Europe via pipelines flowing through Ukraine. This military and economic crisis has put Russia on the West's list of most abhorred countries.

The cease-fire implemented by the current Ukrainian president is a token of good measure, but the accomplishment of such a feat rests in the ability of both parties to accommodate one another's concerns while still receiving their own interests. The president has agreed to lay down arms until June 27 and provide amnesty to separatists who have not committed violent crimes. In addition, he has agreed to decentralize power to the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, but at the same time, he has effectively closed the Russian-Ukrainian border to end the supply of weapons, ammunition, and fighters. The separatists have largely ignored the proposal, as hostilities by the separatists have continued. Russia has been urging the Ukrainian government to include the separatists in talks for weeks, but it has been instead taking a military operation to rid itself of terrorists. Regardless, the United States and the European Union will support the Ukrainian government no matter what its actions may be and will continue to charge Russia as the aggressor until Western demands are made, based on past precedent set by the American government. It is very unlikely that the separatists will get much of what they desire in any type of negotiation, but with the United States distracted in Iraq, perhaps Europe can decide its own fate for the time being.

The emerging civil conflict in Iraq is of no less importance to the United States' foreign policy and the aging War on Terror that persists in the minds of war-hawks. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) threatens to tear apart the weak government that has been established after the overdue departure of American troops from that country approximately three years ago. Twelve years after former United States President George W. Bush erroneously announced that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was connected to the terrorist group al-Qaeda, a splinter-group of the same has infested Iraq. It seems that the United States displaced one terrorist group (the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party), only to have another one take its place (ISIS), as was foreseen by some years ago. Thus far, ISIS has succeeded in taking about three-quarters of Anbar Province, as well as Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, and a few other major cities. The central government of Iraq has had many "strategic" withdrawals from the fighting, and many of the soldiers are losing morale. However, a new wave of young Shiites is signing up to defend Baghdad, which is due to be invaded shortly (according to many officials).

United States President Barrack Obama revealed a plan to assist Iraq in its fight by sending three hundred advisors to collaborate with Iraqi military officials on strategy and intelligence. He resisted the pressures of war-hawks in Congress, including Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, but has not ruled out the possibility of aggressive air strikes (referred to as “American air power” by the senators) in the future to prevent the spreading of terrorist territory gain throughout Iraq. It is reasonable to assume that the United States will increase its role there if the situation gets out of control. It should be noted that ISIS is a violent and brutal group with the goal of implementing the unreasonable Sharia law across a yet-to-be Islamic Sunni caliphate, but why should the United States combat a force that the president was so willing to support in the Syrian Civil War. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was the enemy there, so it did not matter if ISIS and other al-Qaeda affiliates were part of the rebellion, as long as the dictator that the United States did not want in power was gone (al-Assad is still in power and the civil war continues to this day).

The American government should allow for the new Iraqi government to be able to fight its own battles because it is an independent country (or three nations, depending on one’s perspective) and cannot remain dependent on the United States forever, plus the War in Iraq (2003-2011) is over. This is a brand-new conflict for the Iraqi people to wage. The United States cannot afford another conflict and should not be regarded as the policeman of the world, picking and choosing which conflicts to get involved in and which parties to support. Also, Iraq is not a united nation, so ISIS is able to pick up assistance from Sunnis along the way. The Sunnis will never be content with a government favoring Shiites. This may end up erupting into a civil war between Sunni rebels and a Shiite-dominated central government, much like the Syrian Civil War.

Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, is accused of causing a divide amongst Iraq’s three largest groups, so at some point, he may need to step down from power to better unite the people. The best solution, however, is to allow the three groups to have their own independent countries, since the British decided to include all three groups when they formed the country of Iraq. This has only caused problems. Sunnis are rebelling against the Iraqi central government, so would not it be suitable to grant them the ability to create their own nation? Kurdistan has a distinct culture and the desire to seek independence, so why should it not be able to become free? The Kurds are complying with the Iraqi government in some areas in this new conflict, but Secretary of State John Kerry, upon visiting the region, has not mentioned the independence of Kurdistan, which brings up the question of whether the United States gets to be the judge on determining the status of those people.

The conflict in Iraq is only a continuance of American foreign policy dominance that has been seen throughout the years. The United States will seek to control and influence the Middle East and as much of the world as possible. Is this new form of empire justified? The United States picks its allies, like many countries in Europe (to include Ukraine), and defends them as its own territory; but then, it challenges any country that does not comply with its demands. It will ultimately get its way against Russia in the conflict with Ukraine, as Russia and the separatists will be forced into compliance or war.

The cease-fire set in place by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has now ended, and the central government has continued its anti-terrorist campaign against the separatists, capturing several key points and the important cities of Slovyansk and Kramatorsk. Meanwhile, the United States has continued its anti-Russia rhetoric, despite the attempt of the Russian Federation to negotiate and end tensions between the two powers. The separatists' demands of increased autonomy will not likely be met due to Ukraine's persistence in quelling the rebellion, and the United States and the European Union will continue to threaten economic sanctions on Russia. This conflict has become so one-sided that the people of the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics will never achieve statehood within Ukraine or outside of it without fighting for their right to exist.

Ironically, the economic deal that Ukraine signed with the European Union (the one that sparked the whole conflict, as former President Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign the deal and got ousted from power by protestors) not only furthers trade between the two nations, but it strives to recognize democracy and human rights throughout Europe. Georgia and Moldova took part in the agreement as well, further isolating Russia's former Soviet states. Although the former Soviet block should not be under the influence of Moscow, it should also not be subject to the domination of Brussels (capital of the European Union) or Washington. If the European Union and Ukraine were genuinely concerned with the rights of Europeans and the flourishing of democracy, they would allow the citizens of eastern Ukraine to have a voice in the politics of that country.

Instead, the people of those regions have been met with military force, which is similar to the coercion seen under the presidency of Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War. Eleven states decided to manifest the principles of the Declaration of Independence by seceding when they no longer perceived a benefit to remaining in the union. Although the Confederate States of America were never recognized as a country, as Donetsk and Luhansk are not, and their primary issue for existence emerged from one of the biggest scourges on mankind in American history (slavery); it is important to remember the right of the people to choose their own government, as the American colonists did during the American Revolution. President Poroshenko was willing to negotiate with the separatists of eastern Ukraine, which should be applauded, but he revoked the cease-fire after ten days. He also agreed to give greater autonomy to the people there, but the separatist forces continued violent attacks. In part, the militants are the culprits for their situation because the violence that they have displayed is unwarranted, but not compromising on their pleas for freedom is a disservice to the end of democracy and contentment within the Ukrainian borders. Like in the American Civil War, the inevitable termination of the separatists will come through military suppression, but one should not forget the struggles of people worldwide that would prefer citizens not to live under the chains of imperialism and strong, centralized government.

In addition to the neglect of abuses on human rights carried out by the Ukrainian government, the United States has been extremely critical of Russia's role there. Russian President Vladimir Putin has asked the Federal Assembly (Russia's legislature) to nullify military action in Ukraine and it has complied, and Russia has attempted diplomatic talks with the United States to bring the two nations away from the deteriorating relations displayed over the last several months. This has been greeted upon with the deaf ears of a country that is resentful over the annexation of Crimea. The United States does not want to hear of reconciliation efforts on the part of the Kremlin and Assembly because then it cannot destabilize the Russian economy and eliminate some of its

competition on the world stage. The American government still speaks of further economic sanctions, despite Russia's best efforts; but the dispatching of hundreds of troops, equipment, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's) to the aid of the Iraqi government to combat the extremist Sunni group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which has taken control of large stretches of both countries, has distracted the United States on its foreign policy objectives. Regardless, it would seem as if the United States would be unwilling to negotiate with Russia, even if tensions could be mitigated. It is either the demands of the United States or there will be no deal. This could prove to be a grave mistake in the future for both American citizens and the rest of the world.

One can only hope that the eyes of the Ukrainian government, as well as the European Union and the United States, will be open to the possibilities of all citizens of Ukraine living in contentment and true democratic spirit. If the United States could halt its aspirations of being the global policeman, exit intra-continental affairs, and stop instigating a future cold war, Europe could be left to its own devices to shape the type of continent it would prefer to create. The citizens of eastern Ukraine need their autonomy, and it would seem as if this conflict has shown the world that some political borders are drawn arbitrarily and against the best interests of the people who live there. Only time will tell if freedom will reign in Ukraine, but it seems unlikely that Donetsk and Luhansk will ever be labeled on the global map.

Five Months After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 8: Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 and the Israeli and Palestinian Developments – July 24, 2014

Just as one thought the spotlight of Malaysia Airlines had finally dimmed into the darkness of past occurrences in the news media (although the mystery of Flight 370 is still unknown), yet another incident involving the same airline company has sparked back into the blaze of endless coverage. Now, an international investigation into the type of missile that was used to down the aircraft in rural Donetsk, as well as the culprits involved, is being conducted (mostly by the United States, Ukraine, and the European Union). American intelligence has thus far found that the separatists with the assistance of the Russian Federation had accidentally fired upon the airplane, assuming it was a Ukrainian military transport aircraft. Similarly to the condemnation of Russia on practically everything that has developed in Ukraine by the United States, this incident will fare no differently in international diplomacy; and Russia will continue to be blamed as an aggressor, as they are pushed into further economic sanctions and closer to a new cold war. This comes as the world's biased mediator must decide on the issue of what to do concerning the escalating tensions between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

As the Netherlands prepares to receive the remaining bodies from the destroyed jet (most of the victims were Dutch), the investigation into the cause of the event ensues. It has been stated that the rebels treated the bodies with disrespect and hindered the ability of investigators from gaining access to some of the crash site. In addition, the black box of the aircraft was only later handed over, increasing concerns that it may have been tampered with (specialized equipment, as well as much training, is necessary to change the audio recordings, so it is almost impossible that

this could have been done; but some of the data may have been erased). If the separatists are to legitimize their claim of independence to the international community, these types of mishaps are things that must be avoided. Even if they were not culpable, impeding an international investigation does a great disservice to the world.

The Ukrainian government quickly decried the rebels' attack as an act of terrorism, claiming that the world should treat them as a terrorist organization supported by Russia, and alleged that the airliner had been shot down with a Buk surface-to-air-missile within Russian territory. The United States has largely defended that claim, but it has diverged by adding that the separatists likely acted under a pretense of mistaken identity (though they may have been drunk) and were within Donetsk territory. The evidence includes: satellite imagery showing it was a surface-to-air missile, an audio recording of separatists discussing that they had downed a Ukrainian military aircraft, and a Buk system being hauled into Russia with one missile missing. If a surface-to-air-missile system was used, it is likely that it was the rebels because the Ukrainians, at least it claims, had no missile capabilities in that area of eastern Ukraine (the Russians refute that claim). However, the Russians assert that a Ukrainian SU-25 fighter jet was within three miles of the commercial airliner when the incident occurred, further complicating the story by adding the possibility that the Malaysian airplane was shot down by the Ukrainian military. Although it seems most likely that the separatists were responsible, the world should wait for the investigation to yield the results before jumping to conclusions about when and how actions should be taken against Russia or the rebels.

If examination of the situation reveals rebel culpability, a neutral court under the administration of the United Nations and not the United States or the European Union should be established to determine the compensation that should be owed to the families of the victims, similar to the tort system in American law (likewise, if the Ukrainians were responsible, they should make the payments). Also, the soldiers that fired the missile and the commanders, if applicable, that gave the order to shoot should be prosecuted under the charge of negligent homicide. If Russia was involved, the percentage of its guilt should be determined and reparations given accordingly. However, the fault of Malaysia Airlines for flying a plane in a war zone and being told by Ukrainian officials that it was not welcome to fly below 32,000 feet in altitude (it should have known it was a war zone, even if it was cleared by Ukrainian officials) should be taken into account and subtracted from the compensation owed by the rebels and Russia (if applicable).

The finger-pointing at Russia continues, and it is likely that such an event will conclude with extra economic sanctions against that country. Doing so will only aggravate the tensions between the West and Russia and force Russia to take actions that might further be condemned. This continuing cycle may eventually erupt into further conflict between the two great parties, but compromise on the issue is something that the West will not be willing to partake in due to its imperialistic intentions and military arrogance. Although American intelligence has stated that Russia is backing the separatists and attempting to cause unrest in eastern Ukraine, the evidence has not been released to the public and should not be believed until the proof is solid. The United States government has the desire to protect one of its European "allies" and destabilize one of its rivals, and is therefore, likely to believe the Ukrainian government on any of its intelligence. Even if the Ukrainian government is correct in some of its analysis, it is not something that is

unprecedented by the United States government (American units have caused political unrest in many places worldwide). This hypocrisy has done the American people a great injustice, and it may just lead to a war that will be regretted.

In the meantime, the Islamic Resistance Movement (commonly referred to as Hamas) has been firing rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israeli cities, causing panic amongst the Jewish citizenry. As a result, the Israeli Defense Force has responded with *Operation Protective Edge* to destroy Hamas targets and prevent future attacks from the military wing of the organization that controls the small strip of land. It should be apparent to most that Israel has the right to exist and defend its borders from attack, but the method in which it utilizes is superfluous in that it causes much collateral damage, including mass civilian casualties. Approximately seven hundred Palestinians have been killed (mostly civilians) compared to the thirty Israeli troops (mostly military), and much of Gaza's infrastructure has been obliterated by the much-superior Israeli force. The Israeli government has responded that it has sufficiently warned the Palestinians and that Hamas uses its own civilians as human shields. The people of Gaza are poor and have few places to go, so even with the warnings, leaving has proved difficult. Also, the claims that Hamas uses its own people as human shields is too difficult to determine in the gunfire that has persisted (it is possible, though, in order to get international support for the Palestinian cause), but Hamas has a political wing that is very involved in the civil matters of Gaza (there are claims that Israel has targeted people belonging to the political wing as well, and it is, therefore, targeting civilians). The American media is very pro-Israel and has not exactly been impartial on this bitter conflict that has arisen from the post-World War II era. Israel often demolishes the homes of Palestinians, especially in the West Bank, leaving countless victims homeless in a world full of Israeli limitations on the Palestinian people (a manner similar to martial law). The Palestinians are not innocent either, as they often support organizations that conduct violent raids and bombings on Israeli citizens and cities (as Hamas did at the outbreak of this current conflict). The United States government has been trying to referee this conflict, but it is obvious who will get the upper hand in the negotiations between the two parties.

As the civil war rages on in Ukraine, the same old rhetoric is used to describe the separatists as terrorists and the Russians as a nefarious empire concentrated on bringing all or most of Ukraine and other parts of eastern Europe back into its iron teeth. Recently, the Ukrainian government took control of the Donetsk International Airport, and it is likely that Donetsk and Luhansk will be forced back into Ukraine in time with little to gain; but the separatists have been fighting back and have even downed a few Ukrainian fighter jets (including two after the incident involving Flight 17). It is hopeful that this civil war will soon fade with the two break-away regions gaining autonomy from the unitary government in Ukraine, but as the lessons of Abraham Lincoln would teach, the people are only free to choose their type of government under certain circumstances.

Crisis in Ukraine 9 – August 14, 2014

The intensity has increased recently between the United States and Russia, as new sanctions have been placed on the latter by the former and the European Union. Russia has been identified as the culprit in the civil war in Ukraine on the world stage because the United States, the most powerful nation that has ever existed, has and can continue to modify the rhetoric. In

doing so, the inevitable escalation of the conflict will result because neither of the two powerful countries involved wants to be inferior to the other. If the conflict is allowed to spiral out of control, the very real possibility of a new cold war may exist, but this time, the complexity of the World War I-style alliances and the factor of multiple nuclear powers brings about the threat of a global nuclear war.

It may be that war is not on the horizon and the inflated talk that has ensued between President Obama's administration and the President Putin's Kremlin is merely a matter of beguiling, but regardless, misunderstandings may at times have the most unfortunate consequences. President Putin has stated as of late that the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize recipient (President Obama) may be responsible for bringing about a new cold war between former rivals during the Soviet era. President Obama has had nothing but harsh words towards Russia, despite its efforts to de-escalate the situation. The worst part about the whole thing is that this is solely a European conflict and should be treated as such, but as usual, the United States has made it a global issue.

The United States still accuses Russia of supporting the rebels of eastern Ukraine with troops, weapons, and supplies, but Russia and the rebels have denied those claims. As the Ukrainian military has aggressively attacked the Donetsk People's Republic, the capital city, Donetsk, has been under assault. It is unlikely that the separatists within the city will be able to hold it for long because the Ukrainian military is superior, despite the rebels' claim that they have shot down several Ukrainian fighter jets. Russia has also amassed up to 20,000 troops along the Ukraine border, according to officials of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Western world is crying that Russia may invade Donetsk and Luhansk in a similar manner that it did Crimea back in late February and March (both provinces were originally part of Russia, but were given to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as a gift for joining the Soviet Union).

In addition, Russia is performing military exercises several miles from the Ukraine border, but the West complains that exercises were executed just prior to the Crimean Crisis. It is unlikely that Russia will invade eastern Ukraine, and exercises are part of the standard routine to strengthen the capability and readiness of a military force. The United States performs them all of the time, often in conjunction with allied nations such as South Korea. Russia is likely preparing itself in case a deployment is necessary at a future time and to show force and strength amongst a plethora of Western criticism. Russia does not want to be seen as weak, and it is likely that the United States will use the normal procedures of exercises as justification that Russia is becoming a rogue nation that must be stopped.

Russia has also sent a convoy of over two hundred white trucks (indicating that they are not threatening) in a humanitarian mission to aid the people of eastern Ukraine (particularly the city of Luhansk) by providing food and other essential supplies. The International Committee of the Red Cross said that it had not heard of the convoy in which President Putin had claimed would be working with them, and the convoy has diverted from its supposed path towards the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Although these actions are highly suspicious, the first thought by the Ukrainian government and, in turn, the American one was that this was a pretext to invasion of the self-declared republics of eastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian government even went as far as to claim that the white trucks once displayed a pattern associated with military vehicles but were painted white

to reduce uncertainty in its motives, however, this claim has not been proven. President Obama has watched and cautioned Russia not to invade or else there would be dire consequences.

It should be obvious to most that humanitarian aid is necessary to the people of eastern Ukraine due to the intense fighting that has occurred, especially as of late. It has been reported that over two thousand Ukrainians have been killed and hundreds of thousands have been displaced to Russia or western Ukraine. The United States sends aid often to countries that need it, and the recent humanitarian aid in Iraq, offered to assist the Yazidi minority with supplies after attacks by the Islamic State that have swept through that country and Syria conquering much land, has been followed by American air bombing and combat troops (despite President Obama's promise to not send in ground troops except military advisers) to assist the Kurds and Yazidi soldiers rescue trapped civilians on Mount Sinjar. It may be convenient for American troops to be present, since Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has vowed to stay in power, despite Haider al-Abadi, who is backed by the United States, being chosen to take that office. The American military or paramilitary (like the CIA) may then sweep in to force al-Maliki to resign. Regardless, if the Russians want to send aid to relieve Russians or Ukrainians suffering in war-torn areas, that is a decision by their government. Although Ukraine agreed to allow the convoy to pass at Kharkiv, if it ends up driving through a different part of Ukraine, the government there has warned that it is a declaration of war.

The United States and the European Union have implemented a series of new sanctions targeting the Russian oil industry (including research for improved methods of extracting oil) and weapons industry. Instead of the weak and symbolic ones that previously went after specific individuals, the new ones have been applauded by the American government as weakening the Russian economy. Russia has responded by placing a food ban on imported goods from the United States and Europe (Russia gets a lot of food from European countries), which may in turn hurt the European Union's economy. Targeting Russia's economy will do nothing but escalate tensions and decrease the already sensitive Russo-American relations. Perhaps President Obama should remember the actions taken by President Franklin Roosevelt against the Japanese Empire just prior to the incident at Pearl Harbor, lest some horrific and behemoth attack occur on American soil once again but by the hands of the reawakened Russian Empire.

One of the frequent events that was a characteristic of the Cold War was the proxy wars that generally took place within a country consisting of a Communist faction and Capitalist one. Although the war was fought primarily over power and who could dominate the most countries, the Soviet Union and the United States would try to secretly fund one of the factions and attempt to gain control of the government or retain control of it. There are countless examples of these proxy wars that have been declassified, but in the future, it will likely be public knowledge that the United States funded the pro-Western faction in Ukraine and had Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents inside the country at the time of the ousting of former Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich. The United States has had covert missions to overthrow regimes that happen to want to be independent and refrain from Western dominance, and the overthrowing of the Ukrainian government is no different. It is a move by the American Empire to destabilize and weaken the power and influence of Russia and to bring more and more of the once Soviet and satellite states of Russia into the European sphere of influence, which would benefit the United States (the European Union and NATO countries are allies of the United States). In response to the covert

actions, Russia responded with the invasion of Crimea. It has also possibly armed the rebel forces in eastern Ukraine, but even if that proves to be true, it is nothing that the United States has not done.

Because of the complexity of entangling alliances (ones that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson warned Americans against), the real possibility of war exists between the sole superpower and its former nuclear rival. NATO, established to combat the spread of Russia's empire, now includes many of the former eastern Soviet satellite states and is attempting to bring as many as it can to the organization to weaken Russian power further. This treaty is dangerous because it has the potential to drag the United States into another serious European war. At least the United States technically remained neutral at the onset of both world wars, but in modern times, the American government has spread its hegemony over the European countries and is ready to come to their aid militarily, if necessary. Russia has become friendlier with China over the recent years, and China has been flexing its muscles in Asia over disputed islands and water and air space with Japan, Vietnam, and Taiwan, in addition to increasing its military budget. Russia and Iran are also allies, and proxy wars between Iran and Israel for power in the Middle East may spark larger conflict. One mistake, misunderstanding, or blunder may send a spiraling of events that drag nations to war where it would otherwise not have occurred, as was the case in World War I.

As the Ukrainian military continues to take an aggressive stance towards the separatists and plans on capturing the city of Donetsk in the very near future, one must be reminded of the seriousness of the situation. Not only is liberty for the people of eastern Ukraine being threatened by the Ukrainian government, the European Union, and the United States, but the implications of such large-scale alliances may prove to be beyond the scope of normal relations between countries. There has been no balance of power between nations since the fall of the Soviet Union, but the current world system is establishing two powers in the making: the United States, its European allies, and its other global allies versus Russia, China, Iran, and their allies. In the past, countries have joined together in an alliance of convenience (for war or through marriage), but permanent alliances are a recent phenomenon. The Ukraine crisis may be the onset of a third world war or the issue may fade into history as nothing more than a spark of intense conflict. One will have to wait to see what will result, but if diplomacy is allowed to work where both parties get something they desire, war may just be averted.

Six Months After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 10 – September 4, 2014

Russian involvement in Ukraine has now been deemed an invasion of the country, according to Ukrainian government officials and intelligence gathered by NATO and the United States. Will the United States stand idle while a powerful nation invades the territory of a sovereign European state, or will the war hawks and neoconservatives in Congress persuade President Obama that action must be swiftly taken to avoid an imperialistic onslaught? The likely outcome will be continued sanctions, which are currently being discussed by President Obama and German Chancellor Merkel and the European Union, and a continuation of the status quo through

seemingly endless cycles of retaliation and condemnation by both parties. The Ukrainian civil war will likely commence as a proxy war between Western powers (led by the United States) and the Russian Federation.

What started out as a routine humanitarian convoy en route to Luhansk from Russia, turned into the claim by the Ukrainian government that an invasion was imminent and coming disguised as aid to the distressed people of the Luhansk Republic. Once the convoy decided to come back on the map, the government of Ukraine approved its goal to assist civilians within the country but only under observation by the International Committee of the Red Cross. When the Red Cross opted out of the mission due to violence and intense fighting between government forces and separatists, Russia sent the convoy in despite Ukraine's condition, which caused harsh words from not only the government there but from the United States.

Russia had blatantly violated the territorial sovereignty of another nation, but at the same time, President Obama was approving surveillance in Syria and considering airstrikes by drones in that country. Reports were even released that stated that teams attempted to rescue the journalist James Foley, who was just recently beheaded by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), without the consent of the Syrian government. Is it not undeniable hypocrisy when one nation claims that it has the right to go into another country without approval from that government, but when a non-friendly nation does it, extreme condemnation is at hand? To top it all off, President Obama is now considering cooperating with Syrian President al-Assad, who just months ago was considered an enemy to the United States and a possible recipient of American troops and airstrikes aimed at him and his army, against the Islamic State, as well as with bitter enemy, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Now that the Ukrainian government was convinced that a Russian invasion was imminent, any movement of Russian troops or anything deemed as peculiar was the only evidence that it needed to convince the European Union and the United States of its rhetorical position. After ten Russian soldiers crossed into Ukrainian territory likely by accident (Ukraine claimed they were there on a mission from Russia), the Ukrainian government claimed that Russia fired artillery rounds across the border into the southern town of Novoazovsk, and that by August 28, the town was under control by Russian ground troops. Russia has denied all of these allegations, but NATO satellite photographs seem to tell a different story. The United States has also claimed that it has intelligence debunking Russia's assertion (although it has yet to be released to the public). Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Donetsk, Alexander Zakharchenko, has granted that a few thousand Russian troops are fighting for the separatists, but they are likely retired or vacationing soldiers who have made individual decisions to join the fight and were not ordered to do so by the Russian government.

It might be that NATO, American, British, and Ukrainian intelligence is faulty or propaganda is at work to persuade the world that Russia is evil and must be stopped. The satellite images may have even been misinterpreted, but it is difficult to understand how militiamen could have obtained advanced military technology that the West claims the separatists have without some type of Russian assistance. It is likely that Russia is assisting the rebels to a certain degree (not to that which the West claims), but it seems as if a proxy war might be occurring between it and the United States and European Union. The United States likely sent in covert forces to destabilize the Ukrainian government when it was more pro-Russian and probably continues to have some sort of presence there, and now Russia is likely doing the same to destabilize the pro-Western

government. Both parties, if true, have taken steps in further escalating the crisis, but the West's position is much more hypocritical and dominating (thus, more imperialistic).

It is difficult to say whether Russia has covert troops (ones that may have been discovered) working in Ukraine, but NATO and Ukraine claim that a thousand or more troops (up to four thousand or even more), including a few tanks, personnel carriers, and vehicles with artillery capabilities are fighting in the Donetsk region and along the Sea of Azov. The Ukrainian government has tried to make the case that Russia is trying to take control of the southern coast in order to secure a land bridge to Crimea. Along the main highway from the Russian border through Novoazovsk and on to Crimea, sits the important city of Mariupol, which may be the next target of the separatists (or Russia). The Ukrainian government may be correct in that assumption, but it should not be forgotten that the people of Donetsk decided that they no longer wanted the burden of being under the rule of Kiev. The people of eastern Ukraine are being slaughtered by their former government, and many of the civilians are crying out that the aggression by the Ukrainian government must halt immediately.

The scare-tactics established by the United States has continued with President Obama's trip to Wales and Estonia to bolster support for eastern European countries that are anxious of the "inevitable" Russo invasion. Failing to admit American aggression, he put all of the blame on Russia, issuing an edict ordering that the NATO countries contribute more troops and concentrate a higher proportion of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on military spending to stop the spread of Russian influence and military ambitions. NATO has also agreed to send permanent troops and weapons to some countries bordering Russia to act as a deterrent and ensure the safety of the eastern European countries, despite it being a violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, which prohibits such stationing of permanent troops. NATO has and will continue to get around the wording of the treaty by rotating troops in and out of different bases in the region, while still maintaining a permanent presence (possibly even pointing ballistic missiles at Russia, as was the case when the United States established such sites in Greece and Turkey, leading to the installation of missile sites in Cuba by the Soviet Union). This preposterous suspicion and aggression against Russia will, if left unchecked, continue to escalate tensions between the two parties and possibly lead to another European war.

All of this is being done, while in the meantime, Russia has denied even being involved in the Ukrainian civil war. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin, prior to the supposed invasion by Russia, had come to an agreement that the conflict needs to be terminated. De-escalation of the crisis was finally a possibility, but that soon faded. The Obama administration was vocal about the prospects of Russia being trusted, and he will not allow Ukraine out of the situation without causing detriment to the Russian economy, influence in the region, and military strength. Some NATO officials have claimed that they have been searching for a reason for the organization to remain in existence, and they now have justification. Therefore, as the leader of NATO and the dominating power on the planet, the United States will not allow Russia to de-escalate the situation and jeopardize the expansion of NATO. This was just the situation that the West needed for its aggressive agenda.

Will Russia go on a war path to conquer some of its lost territories from the Cold War era, will Russia be forced into another cold war by the United States through economic sanctions and proxy wars, or will all of the parties join in a diplomatic solution and put an end to the hostilities?

Only time will tell, but the war hawks in Congress will likely claim that since appeasement did not work against Hitler's Germany, Putin's Russia must be hit as hard as possible. One must also realize that if Russia really did intend to invade, it could send a lot larger of an army than a few thousand troops. However, any such move would be met with war by the United States and the European Union. This volatile situation will hopefully be resolved before catastrophic consequences occur.

Crisis in Ukraine 11 – September 19, 2014

The violent conflict that has consumed Ukraine in civil conflict for months has become more tranquil in the last few weeks, and a ceasefire was agreed to in Minsk, Belarus between Ukraine, the separatists, and Russia. The point has finally approached where peace may be a real possibility between the warring parties, but will the United States and NATO allow for the situation to subside without further weakening the Russian Federation? Although the war drums are still beating in Washington, D.C. in regards to Russia, the primary American foreign policy mission has shifted to Iraq and Syria, leaving Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko begging Congress to commit the American taxpayers to fund his efforts and supply him with weapons and war vehicles needed to subdue some of the very people he once called countrymen. Congress and President Obama will likely acquiesce to the leader's whim in order to keep the conflict enduring long enough to force Russian President Vladimir Putin to stand down and no longer aggravate their non-NATO ally and other nations in their sphere of influence (which is basically the whole world).

The September 5 ceasefire has been unstable since its inception, as reports have come out that the rebels have violated it, resulting in Ukrainian soldier casualties. However, for the most part, the agreement has held and war has not continued. Both sides were willing to lay down their arms to try to resolve the conflict peacefully, and the Ukrainian Parliament even passed a resolution to grant greater autonomy to eastern Ukraine, allow Russian to be used as a primary language of business in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, and grant amnesty to the rebel fighters regardless of whether they killed Ukrainian soldiers. This appears to be beneficial to both parties on the surface, but in exchange, the separatists must turn over their weapons to the Ukrainian military. Doing so would disarm them, possibly opening themselves to invasion by the Ukrainian military (especially since the Ukrainian track record on corruption is fairly high). The United States, the European Union, and NATO would either condone such an invasion or outright assist the military in its adventure, even though it would clearly be a violation of international law and the respect for the rights of humanity. Decentralization of power is favorable in Ukraine; however, would the Ukrainian government actually hold up to its end of the bargain or gradually (or even abruptly) shift back to its unitary control of the eastern provinces?

The United States State Department and President Obama have released forty-six million dollars of "nonlethal" aid to Ukraine to battle the separatists amidst the announcement that the rebels will not surrender their weapons to the Ukrainian government. President Poroshenko has made it plain that military supplies are not enough and that weapons and military vehicles are needed to finish off the threat from the rebels. The Ukrainian government has made it its foreign policy to implore Western nations to not only involve themselves in the civil war, but also to build up its weak military, which causes a dependence on other countries. If the United States does decide to send "lethal" aid to Ukraine, it would be no better than what Russia is doing (or not

doing, depending on the source) with the rebels. Congress will decide on a bill that will be introduced by the Senate Foreign Relations panel to pledge an additional three hundred fifty million dollars, which would include both military weapons and supplies (this is not included in the one billion dollar package from earlier in the year). In addition, the United States has agreed to train the Ukrainian National Guard starting in 2015. The United States has continued to meddle in affairs that are thousands of miles away and that only affect Americans because escalation of conflicts can have devastating consequences. To top it all off, Ukraine is only an ally of the United States and NATO because of this conflict and its strategic importance in diminishing Russian influence. NATO was created as a counter to Soviet influence on Eastern Europe, but now it has the chance to come back in full force, if it can convince the world that the Soviet Union has risen from the dead. In this way, the Western powers will not allow the conflict in Ukraine to be resolved until Russia becomes a significantly weaker country as a result.

The sanctions from Washington, D.C. and Brussels will continue to diminish the chances for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. With President Obama claiming that he has executive authority to deal with the Islamic State (of Iraq and Levant, or of Iraq and Syria, depending on one's name preference), Congress attaching legislation to a bill, which further funds the government until the next period, that trains and arms moderate Syrian rebels (what moderate rebels are, how confident the United States is that these rebels will not turn against this nation after the war is finished, or whether the weapons that are supplied will not fall into the hands of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or al-Qaeda are important questions that have not been sufficiently answered; however, the American government will continue down its path of ludicrousness), and the overall aggressive condemning of Russia; it could be reasonably assumed that the United States will not learn from the experience of history and will perpetually and arbitrarily support groups that put the American people in harm's way and cause blowback to the nation.

Eight Months After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 12 – November 12, 2014

The fragile truce between the Ukrainian government and the separatists has, after a brief but somewhat calm two-month period, essentially broken down, as both sides prepare for a continuation of the civil war (or rebellion, depending on one's perspective). The hostilities did not completely halt, as there were some bombings and bloodshed near the city of Donetsk and other areas, but the Minsk Agreement of 2014 allowed for a preservation of human life and return of the status quo for the people residing in eastern Ukraine. As the war engine revs up for the next phase of the conflict, the United States, who is already involved in a hopeless attempt to force the divided country of Iraq to defend itself and give "moderate" rebels the advantage to face off against not only the Islamic State but also the al-Assad regime, as well as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will be more than satisfied to be able to once again bring about an undermining of Russian influence, as it sides with the central government that presents force as its primary gift to the liberty-seeking citizens of eastern Ukraine.

The elections on November 2 displayed a unified voice on behalf of the people of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which stated that they wish to become recognized as an independent nation of Russian-speakers on the world stage and no longer be bound by the chains of the unitary government of Ukraine. Alexander Zakharchenko was elected executive of the People's Republic of Donetsk and Igor Plotnitsky was elected executive of the People's Republic of Luhansk. The people rejected the likely false claim that both oblasts would be given a certain degree of autonomy and amnesty from persecution, and even if the Ukrainian government was offering a genuine agreement, the people have spoken clearly for independence (not only with this election but with the Donbass Referendums on May 11).

Since the central governments of countries will never give up territory that they deem as having been their own for periods of history, freedom and independence must be achieved at a cost, and the people of eastern Ukraine have a long road ahead of them if they are to secure this right. An expected condemnation of the elections came from Kiev, as the events were decried as a violation of the Minsk Agreement and international law (international law can never take precedence over the right to self-rule). The Ukrainian government has frozen the pension accounts and other benefits of rebel-controlled areas but has allowed the accounts to continue accruing for when conflict ceases. This shows the Ukrainian government's intent to subdue the oblasts in rebellion and coerce them into compliance with the laws generated from Kiev. In a symbol of good faith and charity, the central government has decided against shutting off the power to rebel-controlled areas (they are dependent on the Ukrainian power grid for now) that would otherwise cause the people to freeze in the winter, but this decision was likely only contrived in order to escape poor publicity internationally as a humanitarian crisis. Positively for the people of eastern Ukraine, the unitary government has established checkpoints acting as quasi-international boundaries on the borders of areas controlled by the separatists, which means that the central government acknowledges that it is no longer in control of these areas and must take on imperialistic ambitions to regain its lost territories (the government, though unlikely, may lay down its arms to prevent further bloodshed of its former brothers).

On the international stage, NATO (led by the United States), in conjunction with the Ukrainian government, has stepped up its rhetoric against the Russian Federation once again with its claims that Russian troops and tanks have crossed the border into Ukraine to aid and arm the rebels. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, speaking for the European Union, proposed adding the newly elected leaders from the November 2 Donetsk and Luhansk elections as targets of new economic sanctions, but she has expressed disinterest in applying heavier ones against Russia in an attempt to protect (at least publicly) the German and European citizens from economic losses due to a lack of important imports (especially oil) from that country. These sanctions have not done much in the way of deterring Russia from acting covertly in Ukraine (if it even is) or supporting and recognizing the new government in Donetsk and Luhansk, and they threaten to harm the well-being of the people of Europe (though the American government would rather do that than allow Russia to rival it in power and have a sphere of influence like itself).

Since Uncle Sam has given into the neoconservative movement and has become a falconer, he has released his war hawks in Congress to hunt for every opportunity to engage in conflict and destabilize the noncompliant governments or movements of the world. The American government was behind the Euromaidan protests and helped spark the ousting of Ukrainian President

Yanukovych (refer to Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland's conversation with US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt), which led to the Crimean Crisis and subsequently to the civil war/eastern Ukraine rebellion. All of this was an effort to prevent Russian influence from spreading and to add Ukraine to NATO, transferring yet another former Soviet republic to American influence. The United States condemns Russia for acting covertly in Ukraine, but it will not even acknowledge its own meddling in foreign countries (including Ukraine). Now that the September ceasefire has fallen apart, the hawks are out prowling again, and NATO, which was founded to counter Soviet influence, once again has a purpose and a real chance to shine in a new cold war. The people of the world should be aware of such a sinister plot of imperialistic ambitions.

Nine Months After Viktor Yanukovych's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 13 – December 15, 2014

The crisis in Ukraine has evolved to the next step towards the Second Cold War between the United States of America and the Russian Federation with reports that Congress has passed a bill authorizing President Obama to send military aid to the central government in Kiev, which will lead to proxy wars with Russia. If the president signs the bill, Americans should brace themselves for a prospective nuclear war and the possibility of World War III. The agents working for the executive branch that have been meddling in the affairs of the European country and the war hawks in Congress have finally gotten their chance to weaken the influence of the "evil empire" and confirm America's status as the big dog superpower of the world for years to come. The new pledge will become: one world under American influence with liberty and justice for those who do not oppose.

The September ceasefire in Ukraine has mostly continued to hold up save a few incidents, but the Ukrainian government has prepared to increase its military size by drafting about forty thousand new enlistments to assist with quelling the rebellion and is ecstatic about the possibility of overt American military aid (it is likely that the United States government has continued to have a military presence in the country covertly to work with the Ukrainian government in its mission of suppression) of up to three hundred fifty million dollars over a course of a few years (in addition to the other aid that the United States has sent Ukraine since the start of the crisis). This war is being fought over the supposed territorial integrity of the sovereign Unitary Republic of Ukraine, of which the United States has supported without considering that Ukraine has a diverse population and a history of being considered the frontier between Russia and Europe, and East and West. Because of this, Ukraine has not long remained a united and independent country and will likely not be successful in such a feat in the future. With division between the Ukrainians and Russians, largely orchestrated and maintained by the United States under an imaginary concept of an emergent Russo empire capable of threatening the lives of Americans (without this type of rhetoric, the Eastern Slavic people would be able to live in peace without needing an East versus West split), the American and European war hawks can perpetuate a war that most Americans view as having been over for well over a score (period of twenty years).

Prior to the unanimous passing in Congress of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act (an ironic name since the people of Donetsk and Luhansk will not be afforded freedom and liberty out of all of this), the House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning President Putin's aggressive behavior in Ukraine, despite Russia's continued denial of such claims and Putin's request of revocation of the use of force in the said country. In addition to the condemnation, it accuses Russia of waging war in Georgia (the war that resulted in 2008 began when the Georgian military invaded the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia and Russia responded to defend it), Moldova, and Syria (it is ironic that the United States condemns the support of the al-Assad regime in Syria but is indirectly supporting the same by weakening one of its largest enemies, ISIS) and sets up the stage towards war propaganda that the American people will likely be subjugated towards. The congressional bill that has recently passed to support Ukraine's unitary government with military supplies is an irresponsible and nefarious prelude to a cold war that Americans can neither afford nor desire, plus the potential for many more casualties is not worth the fight. The bill also adds a plethora of additional economic sanctions (which was a major cause for Japan to attack Pearl Harbor), mainly aimed at Russian firms in the oil industry and those that do business in Moldova, Georgia, and Syria; and it calls for a recognition of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova as major non-NATO allies (entangling alliances lead to war as it did in World War I, despite warnings from American founding fathers, such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, for neutrality), which will further aggravate Russia into making the next move in this strategy game.

Most people should be aware of the escalation towards a new cold war by the actions of both powers. The Russians have been increasing military exercises on the Ukraine border, modernizing their navy, sending submarines and flying war planes into Swedish territorial water and airspace, and even sending fighter jets near Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico. The American government accuses them of acting to destabilize Ukraine through covert means, but no evidence has been offered to the public and the Russian government has denied such claims. The democratically-elected prime minister of the Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, has also denied such allegations as a falsehood by Western nations to undermine a liberty movement in eastern Ukraine. The United States has covertly acted in Ukraine, and Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland and US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt were discussing the people who were and were not to be allowed in the Ukrainian government before the Crimean Crisis erupted in late February. Also, the United States government, as well as the European Union, has been sending more troops in eastern European countries and actively attempting to bring former Soviet constituent republics into the NATO sphere of influence in order to decrease Russo influence in an area where there was once free reign. Such actions, in conjunction with the economic sanctions, are provocations of war.

American war hawks claim that Russia is paralleling Hitler's moves to defend the German people in other countries from unjust government and Western oppression (this led to Germany conquering much of Europe), but Russia is not actively engaging in wars and is only responding with force when its interests or people are being threatened. No doubt, Russia should be condemned if it takes steps towards invasion, but there is no evidence that this is the case, plus the United States uses military force to get its way on a regular basis. Russia should continue to respond with such actions that it has taken in recent weeks, provided that it does so in a non-violent manner (violent aggression against another country is immoral unless an attack has occurred), as

a way to protest American imperialism. However, there have been reports that Russia now wants the people of Donetsk and Luhansk to rejoin Ukraine with a revised constitution. Such a request, if genuine, is almost traitorous to a people who want independence from Kiev. What if France had called for the American colonists to rejoin the British Empire during their brave war for independence and liberty in the late eighteenth century to appease England?

Ten Months After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine 14 – December 31, 2014

With the passing of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act, which President Obama has signed into law, it is clear that another cold war between the United States of America and the Russian Federation is inevitable. Both nations intend to flex their military muscles and keep their national interests well alive in order to balance the power of the other. However, the United States government's irresponsible actions against Russia to try to isolate it from the rest of the world, including troop buildups in Eastern Europe in conjunction with NATO, the annexation of eastern European countries into the NATO confederation, and the issuing of a plethora of economic sanctions which normally are a prelude to war (if one does not consider sanctions an act of war already) will only cause problems in the future because many countries will likely support Russia as a way to abate American imperialism. This will cause a divide between the world's countries (reminiscent of the democracy-communist split during the First Cold War) as a new cold war gets under way in 2015 between the American Empire and those that oppose a world order dominated by the United States and its allies.

Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Council of Ukraine, or its parliament) voted to overturn a law implemented under former President Viktor Yanukovich, in which the country would not enter into alliances with the world (essentially neutrality, and called non-alignment status), and move towards the possibility of joining the American-led NATO. President Petro Poroshenko signed the law and is ready to further aggravate the relations between the East and West (however, he has, at the same time, agreed to allow for a popular referendum nationwide to decide whether Ukraine should join the irrelevant anti-Russian alliance). This capricious and thoughtless move by Poroshenko's government will, no doubt, be viewed in Russia as another act of war by NATO and one that will need to be met by aggressive or substantial tactics. Although Ukraine will not vote to join NATO for some time and the NATO countries may refuse to accept it (very unlikely), Ukraine is now preparing itself to meet NATO criteria, and with the aggressive nature of NATO and the momentum of all of Europe and the former Soviet republics towards the United States' sphere of influence, Russia will absolutely view this as a huge threat to its well-being and national interests.

There is finally an end in sight to the War in Afghanistan (2001-2014/15) as 2014 winds down (although thousands of troops will remain in the country), but with the escalation of the Ukraine crisis, the United States government has plans to transfer tanks, weapons, and troops to Eastern Europe to use a show of force against Russia. Some of this equipment will likely be used to directly aid President Poroshenko's anti-terrorist military campaign (which has recently

resumed) and towards an effort to terminate alleged Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine. The Federal Assembly of Russia is also debating whether to give President Vladimir Putin the power to use force in eastern Ukraine and arm the rebels to counter American and NATO assistance, and this further illustrates that Russia is not involved in eastern Ukraine currently. The American federal government should offer up definitive proof of Russian involvement before subjugating subsequent generations to a policy of chronic war. Russia is sick and tired of being bullied by the West and will likely strike back. This proxy war in Ukraine could turn into a Vietnam War-style conflict where the United States is involved in another country's civil war but is ignorant of the culture and issues that are present across that land.

Once American military aid reaches Ukraine, the next step would be to label the separatists of Donetsk and Luhansk as terrorists. These brave patriots, including Prime Minister Alexander Zakharchenko of the Donetsk People's Republic, are not entirely dissimilar to the American patriots that seceded from the British Empire in the late eighteenth century and waged war to have equal representation and the right to self-rule under a liberty-minded government, but President Obama and members of the United States government have forgotten or do not care about their rich history. By adding more enemies and terrorist groups to its arbitrary list, it takes away the freedom of speech to support such groups and speak out against the tyranny of one's government, as such people could be viewed as aiding or supporting the enemy. Also, the more enemies or threats that the government can claim there are, the more excuses there are to undervalue liberty and minimize free speech, right to a trial, and right to be free from unwarranted searches (among other things). If a warm war with Russia occurs, one can be certain that there will be more violations of civil liberties that could make the USA Patriot Act and the National Security Agency's (NSA) data collection and spying look like an appetizer at a presidential dinner.

As 2014 closes and a new year begins, one may reflect on the erroneous and fomented policies of the United States government that have led to the melancholy situation in which the world sees itself in currently. It is unfortunate that the federal government has dragged its people into an era where nuclear war may once again seem a reality. Welcome to the Second Cold War!

One Year After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Crisis in Ukraine: One Year Later, Part 1 – February 28, 2015

The civil war in Ukraine has not subsided, and the events that unfolded after the February 21, 2014 coup against democratically-elected President Victor Yanukovich in the Euromaiden protests by the pro-European Ukrainians have had real repercussions on the relations between the Russian Federation and the United States of America and the European Union. Subsequently after the coup, Russia annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, and the West was quick to condemn the actions and implement a set of economic sanctions to punish Russia. Later, the Ukrainian oblasts (provinces) of Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence, much like the Thirteen Colonies of America seceded from the British Empire to form an independent confederation in 1776, and they have been fighting to keep and gain control of their territory. The war has claimed the lives of over 5,000 people, thus far, and the West continues its

harsh criticism of the allegations that the Russian military is invading eastern Ukraine and sending weapons to the rebels.

The separatists (or rebels or terrorists, depending on one's perspective) have made great leaps in holding the areas around the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, and they recently captured the railway hub of Debaltseve, giving them quick and easy transportation between the two major cities. Although this was done after the second ceasefire agreement (called Minsk Agreement II by some after the capital of Belarus where the negotiations took place) of February 11, 2015, the separatists claim it did not apply to the Debaltseve operation because it began before the negotiations. As a result, the ceasefire has only partially held up, and the Ukrainian military is preparing for an assault on the port city of Mariupol, which would give the separatists unimpeded access to the Black Sea via the Azov Sea if successful.

As can be seen in the mainstream media, this war is often perceived by the West as a violation of the territorial sovereignty by a world power. First of all, it has not been confirmed that Russia is involved in Ukraine, and if it is, it is likely that it is just sending weapons and supplies to aid the rebels. The Obama administration is contemplating sending lethal assistance to the Ukrainian government to quell the rebellion and has already sent money and nonlethal aid. If Russia were invading the country, Ukraine would no longer exist as a political entity. If Russia were covertly destabilizing parts of Ukraine, it would be fomenting protests and rebellion in other oblasts. If the undermining were true, it could only be condemned by the West through hypocrisy because the precedent set by the United States of delegitimizing foreign governments is astounding.

Second of all, the people of Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk voted for independence by a very large margin, and it should be made apparent to all that there is a deep divide between the eastern and western halves of Ukraine. This can be witnessed by viewing a presidential electoral map from 2010 (the split is very concentrated along geographic areas) that expressly illuminates the need for at the very least federalizing the government. The people should be free to choose their own form of government instead of having a centralized, unitary one dictate to them how to live.

Third of all, there is undisputable evidence that the United States was involved in Ukraine prior to the ousting of President Yanukovich and may have even abetted and initiated the protests in order to weaken Russia's power. John McCain, an outspoken Senate war hawk, was praising the protest while it was transpiring and met with leaders of the Ukraine's alleged fascist government. Undersecretary of State of Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland and American Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt, in a leaked telephone conversation, discussed the politicians that should and should not be present in Ukraine's government, as if that were any business of the United States, and spoke of possible Russian actions that would be taken if the United States were implicated. The United States government cannot get enough of destabilizing foreign governments when it is convenient for it (of course, it is equally enthused to support dictators when it suits its purpose, or condemn people choosing their own government when it weakens the government of an ally).

Fourth of all, since Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko signed legislation allowing for the possibility of the country to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United States is ready to bring its empire to Russia's doorstep and further aggregate it. The American Empire

has already expanded NATO into former Soviet Union territory and has continually increased troop buildups near Russia's borders. As if that were not bad enough, American troops participated in Estonia's Independence Day parade, and were flaunting American power in Narva right across the river from Russia.

Economic sanctions that the United States government has implemented against Russia for its alleged invasion of Ukraine are nothing but a precursor to war, and these sanctions have been detrimental to the Russian economy that is already suffering from low global oil prices. However, Europe is dependent on Russia, so the United States threatens to take Europe down with it. In addition, Russia has been trying to become friendlier with Greece and Turkey to possibly divert oil through there instead of Ukraine, which would further devastate the Ukrainian economy.

Russia is strengthening its stand in the world and ramping up military exercises in the western part of its country and even sending fighter jets and submarines into Europe. This is a dangerous game between two of the most powerful nations on earth, and the fight over Ukraine does not seem to be letting up any time soon. The Ukraine crisis should be referred to as the starting point of the Second Cold War and possibly, if it comes to that, the beginning of World War III (the American Empire and the European Union versus the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China). United States interventionism is detrimental to the American people and the people of the world, and until it is stopped, Americans should anticipate war with Russia and many other nations worldwide (perpetual war means more money for the military-industrial complex) because of their government's arrogance. Only a change in the mentality of Americans against the perspective that perpetual war brings freedom and security will prevent devastation and foster cooperation amongst nations.

Crisis in Ukraine: One Year Later, Part 2 – April 27, 2015

The Ukrainian ceasefire agreement, termed Minsk II, has been, for the most part, holding quite well, which attributes to the success of diplomacy in international and civil conflicts. There have been violations of it by both sides (including skirmishes), but troop withdrawals from the demarcation line that divides the separatist-held territory from the rest of Ukraine have been honored. Although peace may be in the minds of observers viewing the conflict from outside of the divided country, war is very much still on the minds of both the Ukrainian government and that of the Union of Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic (Confederation of Novorossiia). There is no doubt that the Ukrainian government led by President Petro Poroshenko will re-invade the former eastern oblasts in due time just as American President Abraham Lincoln invaded the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War, but it will likely do so under the direct approval and aid of the United States of America.

The United States government has already sent hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Ukraine, in addition to a one billion dollar loan, large contributions due to funding of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) multi-billion dollar loan, and a green light to "preserving democracy" by Ukraine waging war against a population that has little interest in remaining part of the country; but now President Obama has approved an additional seventy-five million dollars in nonlethal aid, as well as armored and unarmored Humvees. In addition, several American troops were sent into the war-torn nation to train the Ukraine National Guard, which violates one of the

ceasefire terms because foreign troops are not supposed to be involved in Ukraine during the duration of the agreement (NATO insists that Russian troops are aiding the separatists, however).

All of this just condones the actions of aggression and imperialism on the part of the Ukrainian government, and makes the American government culpable in the death toll that arises, especially because the Euromaidan uprising was backed, if not initiated, by the United States. The preposterous thought that taxpayers living thousands of miles away and with little connections to Ukraine are training and funding, if not actively involved in, the invasion of a group of people who decided to unchain its shackles of oppression through democracy and self-defense, much like the United States did during its revolution from Great Britain in the eighteenth century, is simply unacceptable and should be condemned by the American people. The United States is not attempting to secure democracy in Ukraine, but rather, it wants to add yet another former Soviet Union nation into the American sphere of influence via the European Union and NATO. It is all about stripping the Russian Federation from rising to potential rival status with the American Empire, and in doing so, the United States is willing to risk its own citizens and the lives of the people of many other countries in a large-scale global war. The arrogance on the part of the American public officials is astonishing and outright sinister.

Despite constant media attention of Ukraine's perfect democracy, the country is plagued by corruption (on the scale that many claim it is run by fascists, oligarchs, and criminals) and has been for years. Since the pro-Russian government has been overthrown in an unconstitutional coup, the operations of business oligarchic rule have not seemed to halt, and this problem has not been solved by Poroshenko's regime. Democracy and human rights is not that abundant in Ukraine, and recently, the president has imprisoned journalists who oppose the war in the eastern part of the country and outlawed owning anything with Communist or Nazi symbols. He has also started tearing down historic statues of Communist leaders and attempted to rewrite history, in part, by separating his country's involvement with the Soviet Union. Yet, the United States government does not condemn this blatant violation of freedom of expression, and more than likely, it will just further aggravate the divide between the Russian-speaking population and the Ukrainian-speaking one. This has the potential to lead to more uprising, expansion of the conflict, and the possibility of other Russian-sympathizing oblasts seceding. Already, some of the largest Ukrainian cities have seen protest of these policies, as well as talk of secession. Poroshenko would be overwhelmed by militarily invading large sections of the country, and this could lead to further proxy wars between the United States and Russia, or possibly increase the chances of nuclear war.

The separatists just want to be left alone and live their lives in peace. The Ukrainian government will not let that occur, and it will violate the principle set forth eloquently by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence that people have the right to self-rule. The government wants the resource-rich territory, and permitting secession will only cause further damage to the country's impaired economy. The American and Ukrainian governments should learn from the founding of the United States and allow for separation of an already-divided post-Cold War nation (Ukrainian prior presidential election maps display division, and most of eastern Ukraine identifies with Russia and speaks the language).

The United States and its subordinate allies in Europe are willing to risk global, nuclear war in order to keep Russia in check (as well as China, but that is a different story) by enacting massive amounts of economic sanctions, which have added to the already crippled Russian

economy, expanding NATO's influence by adding former Soviet republics into the American sphere, and threatening Russia with military exercises and troop buildups in eastern Europe (Russia has responded in kind). To those who claim (mostly American politicians and citizens due to the media propaganda, NATO, and the Ukrainian government) that Russia is invading Ukraine, it should be remembered that the American colonists received foreign aid from France, Prussia, and other nations; so Russia is not doing so any more than France was invading Great Britain during the American Revolution. Although Russia is not perfect in this conflict, one should begin to question the lack of apathy when it comes to the well-being of the American people. As soon as the Ukrainian government launches its next wave of attacks on the people of Donetsk and Luhansk, the separatists will aim to take Mariupol and other Ukrainian settlements in their respective oblasts, which may lead to increased involvement by the United States (the United States may have deployed the CIA or other forces to fight alongside the Ukrainian government already, and American soldiers have volunteered in the conflict) and Russia (Russia may have voluntary soldiers or even well-trained generals aiding the separatists already) and push both countries to the brink of war. Hopefully, a diplomatic solution will be reached, but it will require compromise on the part of the United States, Europe, and Ukraine.

Additional Information

The democratically-elected prime minister of the Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, is a very strong and noble leader, who has articulately explained the cause of Donetsk freedom and condemned the actions of the United States, NATO, and the European Union. He is just and fair and has treated his prisoners of war with dignity and respect. The labeling of the separatists by the Ukrainian and American governments as terrorists is unwarranted as is the United States' participation in the conflict.

A Year and a Half After Viktor Yanukovich's Ouster

Ukraine Ceasefire and the Iran Nuclear Deal – September 30, 2015

Ukraine Ceasefire

Another temporary ceasefire has been reached in Ukraine between the unitary government and that of the separatists to coincide with the beginning of the Ukrainian school year. Since the Minsk Agreement from February has been violated by both sides, there is little hope in the international community that it will last unscathed well into the future, but progress has been made. If the agreement is executed, the proxy war that has persisted for the last two years between the United States and Russia may be halted. The war of secession fought by the separatist forces and the civil war fought by the Ukrainian government (matters of perspective) has caused much damage to the economy and infrastructure of Ukraine, and a sensible peace deal would be beneficial to everyone.

A deal short of granting autonomy to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (preferably to both oblasts outright) and amnesty to the rebel forces and their leaders will not be acceptable. The fighting by the separatists has sent a clear message to Kiev that it will either be decentralization of power from the unitary government or a continuation of the war. Since the Ukraine economic

situation is meager, the central government will have little choice but to permit a certain degree of self-rule unless the United States or the European Union overtly invades to assist in capturing the territory. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has cried that over five million dollars per day is wasted on the conflict, and it seems that the commonsense answer would be to terminate these expensive operations of coercion and put the money towards the economy. With all of this, the separatists have achieved much victory in their secessionist efforts, and it is no longer a discussion amongst the world leaders of how to simply end the war but rather how to accommodate separatist demands and reintegrate them into Ukraine. In fact, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) has already debated and passed certain measures to prepare for specific sections of the Donbass to have specialty status within the Ukrainian governmental structure.

As for Russia and the United States, a continuation of a new cold war seems inevitable, especially because of the reports of Russian troops making their way into Syria to assist the government of Bashar al-Assad. This means that Russian troops are involved in military operations to rid the country of rebel forces and ISIS, and meanwhile, the United States and NATO are involved in operations to expel both Assad and ISIS. With little communication between the two superpowers and a complex web of coalition forces in the region, it seems as if the chances of a misfire or incident to occur leading to confrontation between both parties is all too likely, and it would seem more logical that the United States and Russia should cooperate on purging Syria and Iraq from the out-of-control radical Islamic group that is a common enemy. However, just like in the Ukraine crisis, the United States insists that Russia is always an evil player in geopolitics, and because of the arrogance of American leaders, anti-Russian propaganda trumps doing what is in the interests of both governments.

Although it seems likely that Russian troops (whether voluntarily or part of the Russian military) are in Ukraine to send supplies, train the separatist forces, and possibly perform covert operations, the United States has also done the same for the Ukrainian government. Now that there is less fighting in Ukraine and an influx of Russian troops and aircraft to Syria, the West is crying that Russian involvement in Syria is unacceptable (despite the fact that the United States and its allies have been there for months or even years) and that it proves that Russia invaded Ukraine but lost interest. As is the obvious response, if Ukraine really was invaded by Russia, it would no longer be an independent entity. If Russia is assisting the separatists, it is not much different than France's assistance to the American states during their secession (American Revolution) from the British Empire in the late eighteenth century.

There is a world meeting between the United States, the European Union, Russia, Ukraine, and the separatists scheduled for early October to discuss what is to be done in the next several months to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis. The separatists will hold their own local elections October 18 and November 1 (Donetsk and Luhansk, respectively), and they will be condemned by the United States and the European Union. However, the time for diplomatic means to end the civil war (or war of secession in this case) should be welcomed by the world, and it is time for Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts to gain autonomy independently, within Ukraine, or within Russia (the middle being the most agreeable by all sides and the likely scenario).

Iran Nuclear Deal

The Iran nuclear deal reached between the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, and Russia and approved by the United Nations has been one of the few foreign

policy successes of President Obama. Although his methods for achieving it have been of dubious constitutionality and under a framework that undermines the sovereignty of the United States, once implemented, the chances of the United States going to war with Iran will be significantly reduced.

First of all, the deal reduces the number of centrifuges from almost 20,000 to approximately 6,000 for the next ten years, and Iran must reduce its uranium stockpiles by ninety-eight percent. In addition, it will only be permitted to enrich uranium at less than four percent, which is not even close to high enough to produce weapons-grade uranium. The facilities at Fordow and Arak (a heavy-water production facility that can produce plutonium) will be reclassified and used for research or other purposes as approved by the international community, and the facility at Natanz will be allowed to enrich uranium at the low level described above. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the UN will monitor the known Iranian sites regularly and be allowed access to unknown sites when granted permission by Iran under its obligations.

This deal is a good compromise because it gives the United States assurances that Iran will not develop a nuclear weapon, at least within ten or fifteen years, as opposed to now where if it is developing nuclear weapons, it could produce them within the near future. Iran gets access to the 150 billion dollars that the United States stole from it in administering economic sanctions, and other sanctions, which have caused economic hardship for the people, will be repealed provided that Iran complies with the agreement (they will be added back on if it does not). Iran gives up some of its sovereignty in exchange for avoidance of war and opportunity for economic recovery.

War hawks in Congress (particularly the Republican ones in this case) have lost their dreams of bombing and sending troops to Iran. Because of this, they have attempted to unsuccessfully block President Obama's agreement. They argue that this deal gives Iran a nuclear weapon and threatens the existence of Israel. However, not implementing a deal will be more likely to threaten Israel and allow for the country to produce a nuclear weapon much quicker. Regardless, why should the interests of the most powerful country in the Middle East outweigh what is best for the American people? Is Israel one of the states of the American federation? This deal can avert war, so why are so many in Congress opposed to it? As far as giving 150 billion dollars to Iranians to use to fund Hezbollah and Hamas, this is not likely given the current economic situation in Iran, but either way, it is their money and there is little justification for keeping it (this amounts to theft otherwise).

Looking at the geopolitics of the Middle East and the Eastern Hemisphere, it is not difficult to see why Iran would want nuclear weapons. American bases surround and threaten the Persian country on a regular basis, and nuclear states exist around the landmass, including China, North Korea, Russia, France, Pakistan, India, and Israel (not to mention the United States and the United Kingdom). Iran fears the United States and would likely want a deterrent, but it still has yet to be proven that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon in the first place. The Iranian government claims that it is developing its program for medical and energy purposes. Those who dismiss the words of Ayatollah Khamenei when it comes to these statements are the first to believe him when he says death to Israel and America, so which is it? It seems as if these people believe the supreme leader only when it is convenient or supports war propaganda.

The deal will likely be implemented, but on the flip side, Congress had little say in its approval because it needed a supermajority in both houses to squash it. Also, the president went

to the UN first before consulting with the American legislature. The political process for the deal has been a corrupt one, but at the same time, it will lead to a more stable and peaceful world.

American Foreign Policy to Close 2015 – December 28, 2015

American foreign policy for 2015 has largely focused on three areas: Ukraine and Eastern Europe, Syria and Iraq, and the South China Sea. Three distinct regions of the world have become the new battleground for the United States in the absence of any real threat to the most powerful country that has ever existed. This mentality that perpetual war is beneficial for the safety of American citizens and boosts the economy (mostly corporations that are connected to the government in some way) has betrayed the very people that the government is supposed to be protecting and committed future generations to a plethora of entangling alliances that will only certainly lead to some large-scale war in the future. Now that al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq have been largely defeated, the United States has searched desperately to find a new enemy to feed the military-industrial complex's never-ending hunger for profit, and an enemy was created with Russia, the Islamic State, and China.

Ukraine

Since the separatist movement began in Ukraine, the United States has condemned the right of the people in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts to choose their government as the American colonists did during the American Revolution. Instead, this civil conflict was expressed as a Russian invasion of one of its former Soviet states and violation of international territorial integrity law. Ukraine is neither an official ally of the United States nor a member of the European Union, but the world's superpower saw this as an opportunity to begin the process of incorporating yet another eastern European country into the ever-expanding NATO and bringing the alliance's troops into one of Russia's closest economic partners. Most of the eastern European countries that were once part of the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact are either members of NATO at this point or are seeking approval in the future to join the organization.

Because of Russia's "invasion" against a non-ally, the United States and its EU partners have contributed to the devastation of the Russian economy by declaring economic warfare via sanctions and punishing the eastern giant for its defiance against the American Empire. Just as Western nations claim that Moscow has sent troops and military equipment to support the separatist movement, leaked information from the State Department revealed that the United States had some part in the coup against Russian-friendly Ukrainian President Yanukovich that sparked Crimea's secession from Ukraine with the aid of Russia and the civil war in the industrial east of Ukraine. The Ukrainian unitary government, backed by the United States, launched an invasion of eastern Ukraine to coerce the oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk back under a government that the people there no longer saw as legitimate or in their best interest. It then became apparent that the United States would increase security and mobilize more troops in Europe to "protect" the continent from Russian "aggression."

The United States now has its enemy in Russia after a conflict that has killed roughly 9,000 people and lots of war propaganda. A new ceasefire has been called as of December 23 and the situation has calmed a bit, but some fighting has continued as the last week in December gets under way. The conflict in Ukraine has largely dissipated from the mainstream media as the focus moves

to the situation in Syria. Russia is still seen as an enemy in this Middle East country, but countering the Islamic State's hold on parts of the Levant is the primary objective.

Iraq and Syria

The Islamic State (or ISIS or ISIL) has formed out of the void that was left after the United States toppled the regime of its former ally, Saddam Hussein, and a civil war in Syria that erupted between the government of Bashar al-Assad and various rebel factions. Some of these rebel factions were linked to al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremists, and the United States imprudently supplied the rebels with weapons. In addition, many weapons that the United States left in Iraq after its invasion there found their way to another terrorist group, ISIS, due to weak governance and military discipline, as well as religious and ethnic tension between the Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds. The United States is partially, if not more, responsible for the terrible brutality that has struck these two countries with ISIS's attempt to create a caliphate in the Middle East. Now that the United States has created a new enemy, it can use its military and resources to terminate it. This type of preposterous foreign policy has been championed by neoconservatives and war hawks in the American government for many years, and failure of it has not been enough for the American people to demand an end to it. Now the people must unfortunately deal with the choices and consequences of their government (such as terrorist attacks that stem from the ultimate source, American occupation of the Middle East).

Initially, the United States condemned Russia's entry into Syria's three-party civil war because it was claimed that the Russian military was bolstering Assad's military in order to end the rebellion and restore Syria to its former pre-war status. However, this stance is hypocritical because if the United States has a right (which it does not) to be in Syria to legitimize the rebel groups, some of which are connected to the United States' former enemies in Afghanistan, against government forces; why does Russia not have the same right (it also does not) to support the government forces against rebel ones? It is claimed that this is the case because the United States and its allies are fighting against a third party, ISIS, which at the moment is of higher concern than Assad's supposed brutal regime that allegedly utilized chemical weapons against its own people (this is speculative and has yet to be proven). Therefore, Russia needs to stop supporting its ally and join the international coalition to obliterate ISIS before the threat spreads, according to the United States.

However, what happens when the threat of ISIS is gone and the civil war resumes? The rebels that have been supported by Western nations will have the advantage of weapons and troops that the government forces would not if Russia were to cease supplying and supporting their forces, so strategically, it does not make sense for Russia to join the United States' leadership to end the Islamic State. Russia has been fairly cooperative with the United States by providing information about potential airstrikes, and tensions between both powers have eased in recent weeks, but one can only hope that a diplomatic solution to the Syrian Civil War is reached before ISIS is destroyed (to prevent a cold war between Russia and the United States in the country).

In addition to all of this lunacy, is the allegation that the Turkish government is purchasing ISIS' oil in the black market due to that country's demand. Turkey, a member of NATO, is being supported by the United States and even more so in the wake of Turkey's downing of a Russian fighter (because of obvious tensions between the two countries). Basically, the United States and its NATO puppets are fighting against ISIS but also providing it with large sources of revenue. If

the implications of this were not so great, this would seem like something straight out of a comedy movie. Also, when Turkey decided to commit an act of war against Russia by shooting one of its planes (some sources claim that the Russian fighter was warned sufficiently, while others claim that it was not even in Turkey's territory), this showed that not only would the United States be willing to risk war with Russia over Syria, but that because of the United States' involvement in this part of the world, all that is necessary for a major war to be initiated is one mistake or act of negligence (which is possible with increased involvement in other countries' affairs).

South China Sea

The South China Sea has become an area of contention, as China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, Philippines, and Taiwan have independent claims in the large body of water. The United States has aggravated the situation by sailing and flying within twelve nautical miles of the Spratly Islands and other artificial islands, which are claimed by China. This arrogant move is nothing more than the United States flexing its muscles and showing its dominance over this part of the world. Although most of the world does not recognize the generally-accepted twelve mile maritime territory for these islands, common sense would dictate that if a country claims such lands and some of the waters surrounding it, one should not see how close one can get to it before there is an incident. It's almost like the sinking of the RMS Lusitania, where the Germans warned Americans boarding this British ship that if it went in German waters, it would be destroyed. Sure enough, Americans boarded the ship, and the incident was used as one of the reasons for the United States entering World War I.

When the United States claims that its military can do whatever it wants and go wherever it wants, conflict inevitably ensues, and now China is viewed as yet another enemy of the United States. Politicians rant and rave about how Chinese intelligence has hacked into American computer systems without taking a moment to realize that the United States has done the exact same thing to China. All of this propaganda against China has caused Americans to believe that China is an enemy instead of an important trading partner in the world economy.

As 2016 approaches, Americans should take a hard look at their government's arrogance, mistakes, and ludicrous policies. Obviously, the foreign policy that has been in practice in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has not been successful and has been detrimental to the safety of Americans, so it seems like it is time to change course and sail towards new waters. As we count down the minutes and seconds until the New Year, let us not be counting down to the start of World War III.