

Connecticut Debate Association

September 27, 2014

Novice Scrimmage, Greenwich High School and Simsbury High School

Resolved: The West should provide direct military aid to the Ukraine.

Deterring a European War

The Wall Street Journal, Updated Sept. 4, 2014 11:27 a.m. ET

Putin wants to break NATO, and his next move may be against the Baltic states.

This week's NATO summit in Wales is being billed as one of the most important in its 65-year history, and with good reason. The Atlantic alliance needs to prove it is serious about deterring the no longer unthinkable prospect of another major war in Europe.

Lest you think we overstate, on Monday the Italian newspaper La Repubblica quoted Vladimir Putin telling European Commission President José Manuel Barroso that "if I want, I can take Kiev in two weeks"—a statement the Kremlin did not deny (though it did denounce the leak). Mr. Putin is talking openly about "New Russia," with specific mention of the cities of Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk in eastern Ukraine as well as Odessa on the Black Sea.

Such talk may be bluster, but the stealthy seizure of Crimea was supposed to be unthinkable only a few months ago. So was Russia's invasion of eastern Ukraine last month. The problem with calling something unthinkable is that it tends to dull the thinking needed to keep it that way. Europeans also thought the world wars of the last century were unthinkable right up until they broke out.

Wars happen when aggressors detect the lack of will to stop them. After Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, we warned that "Ukraine, which has been pushing Russia to move its Black Sea fleet's headquarters, could be next." ("Vladimir Bonaparte," Aug. 12, 2008.) We also noted that "the [NATO] alliance needs to respond forcefully." It didn't. Here we are.

The good news is that NATO's institutional leaders, civilian and military, have been awake to reality for some time. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the alliance's energetic Secretary General, was warning well before Russia's invasion of Ukraine that NATO's European members needed to spend a great deal more on defense. "We must shift the argument from the cost of defense to the cost of no defense," Mr. Rasmussen said last October.

NATO Supreme Commander Philip Breedlove has also been clear in describing the nature and sophistication of Russia's military moves. "Surprise, deception and strategic ambiguity have been adeptly employed by Russia against Ukraine," the general wrote in these pages on July 16, adding that "this strategy, quite simply, has significant implications for Europe's future security."

Far from clear, however, is whether Western political leaders share this sense of urgency. The European Union has refused to impose serious sanctions in response to Russia's attack on Ukraine, and French President Francois Hollande has ruled out military aid to Kiev while selling warships to Moscow.

As for the ostensible leader of the Free World, President Obama is busy downplaying the threats to world order by saying, as he did on Monday, that "the world has always been messy" and the new global disorder is something "we're just noticing now because of social media." Social media aren't sending those Russian tanks toward Donetsk.

President Obama's visit this week to Estonia, a NATO member on the Russian frontier, is a more realistic political statement because that could be where Mr. Putin strikes next. Like Ukraine, the Baltic states have sizable Russian-speaking minorities whose petty discontents could be used as pretexts for Moscow's mischief. Mr. Putin might act against the Balts precisely because he wants to show Russians and Europeans that NATO is a spent promise.

The only way to deter such military aggression is with a show of comparable military and political resolve. NATO officials are floating the idea of a brigade-sized rapid-reaction force, capable of being deployed on two-days notice, with equipment pre-positioned in frontline NATO states from Norway to Romania. This is useful as a way to counter Mr. Putin's infiltration tactics without forcing NATO to scatter resources among multiple potential targets.

But it isn't enough. NATO will also need to begin permanently stationing troops in eastern Europe, an idea floated a decade ago by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The 1997 NATO-Russia "Founding Act" is supposed to forbid such a move, but that text was carefully written with a view toward "the current and foreseeable security environment." In 1997 Russia wanted to join the world of democracies. Now it is an autocracy seeking to dominate its

neighbors.

NATO states—including the U.S.—will have to reverse the trend of cuts to military spending. The entire British Army fields 156 tanks—and Britain has one of NATO's larger militaries. Of NATO's 28 states, only four spend 2% of GDP on defense, the technical minimum for membership. "NATO is currently not well-prepared for a Russian threat against a NATO Member State," warned a report this summer from a U.K. parliamentary committee.

The temptation of democracies is to believe that autocrats treasure peace and stability as much as we do. Europeans in particular want to believe that their postwar institutions and economic integration have ended their violent history. But autocrats often prosper from disorder, and they need foreign enemies to feed domestic nationalism. This describes Russia under Mr. Putin, who is Europe's new Bonaparte. His goal is to break NATO, and he'll succeed unless the alliance's leaders respond forcefully to his threat.

Putin Sets Out Peace Terms for Ukraine

The Wall Street Journal, By Paul Sonne and Gregory L. White, Updated Sept. 4, 2014

MOSCOW—Russian President Vladimir Putin pushed a cease-fire deal with Ukraine that would freeze in place gains made by Russian-backed separatists, setting the stage for the kind of partitioning Moscow has used to tame other neighbors.

Mr. Putin said he and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko were "very close" on agreeing to a path for resolving the nearly five-month conflict. The Russian leader proposed an end to the rebel offensive, but also a pullback of Ukrainian troops, which would be a major concession for Kiev.

Mr. Poroshenko said he "supported Russia's readiness to implement a joint plan for peaceful resolution" of the crisis, and that he hoped talks with pro-Russia separatists set for Friday would lead to the start of a peace process.

He didn't directly address Mr. Putin's proposal for a pullback of Ukrainian forces, which has already stirred an outcry from some in his government.

The move toward a compromise drives home the reality that Russia, with centuries-long cultural, linguistic and economic ties to Ukraine, time and again has proved willing to put more on the line than the West to exert influence over Kiev. Russia views preventing Ukraine from entering the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as vital to its own national defense.

Western officials have repeatedly stepped up sanctions on Moscow; France said Wednesday it may withhold the delivery of a warship to Russia, due next month, because the Kremlin's support for breakaway forces in Ukraine threatens peace in Europe.

But the West has consistently ruled out any type of military intervention in Ukraine, realizing the risk of opposing Russia in its own backyard, thus making it clear to Mr. Poroshenko that he may have to compromise.

Under Mr. Putin's plan, Ukraine likely would need to delineate a boundary defining the rebel-held territory in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and agree to keep its troops out.

The Ukrainian President's office said that he and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to a cease-fire regime in eastern Ukraine. The Kremlin took issue with that wording, saying the two leaders only discussed steps towards peace. WSJ's Paul Sonne joins Simon Constable on the News Hub with more on this. Photo: Getty

Such a boundary would risk becoming a de facto border for a rebel state. Disputed borders would make NATO membership for Ukraine all but impossible.

Similar Russia-backed, frozen-conflict zones, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Transnistria in Moldova, have lasted for decades, based on borders settled during cease-fire negotiations in the 1990s.

Western capitals expressed confusion at the cease-fire proposals, which spurred a rally in Russia's crisis-bruised financial markets.

"No realistic political settlement can be achieved if effectively Russia says we are going to continue to send tanks and troops and arms and advisers under the guise of separatists, who are not homegrown, and the only possible settlement is if Ukraine cedes its territory or its sovereignty," said President Barack Obama on a visit to Estonia aimed at demonstrating the U.S. commitment to protect its NATO allies.

A German government spokesman said Chancellor Angela Merkel, in a phone call with Mr. Poroshenko, had praised his willingness to work toward a cease-fire and reiterated her view that Moscow had a duty to stop weapons and fighters flowing across the border.

To be sure, past cease-fire agreements quickly fell apart amid mutual recriminations. After the heavy fighting of recent

weeks, both sides could use any respite to regroup for new offensives.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki noted Mr. Putin has previously expressed support for peace without any change in Russian support for the rebels. But Wednesday marked the first time that Mr. Putin set out his idea for a peace plan himself—a potentially critical difference.

Strobe Talbott, former deputy U.S. Secretary of State and president of the Brookings Institution, warned that Moscow has crafted such volatile zones to keep former Soviet republics under its thumb.

A quasi-permanent rebel state in Ukraine, constantly threatening to revert to armed conflict, could scuttle Kiev's plans to move closer to Europe and revive the country's battered economy.

"That undermines the legitimacy of the government, which has staked its reputation on cleaning up all the messes of the past and asserting Ukraine's European identity," said Jeffrey Mankoff, director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Russia and Eurasia program.

Mr. Poroshenko has consistently called the separatists "terrorists" and vowed to root them out. But he has found his choices limited after a Russian incursion last week forced his army into retreat, and appeals for Western military aid were met coolly.

Moscow has denied sending troops or materiel into Ukraine and insists it doesn't control the separatists there.

Contradictory reports of the agreement trickled out early in the day, apparently underlining the political maneuvering.

Mr. Poroshenko's office initially said the two presidents had agreed to a permanent cease-fire deal, but then dropped the word permanent and changed it to a "cease-fire regime."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Mr. Putin couldn't have negotiated a truce, since Russia "isn't a party to the conflict."

Ultimately, Mr. Putin announced his seven-point plan, saying he'd drafted it on a flight to Mongolia after the early-morning call.

It calls for the separatists to end their offensive against Ukrainian forces around Donetsk and Luhansk, while Kiev would pull its forces back "to a distance that prevents the use of artillery and rockets against population centers," Mr. Putin said. It wasn't clear how much territory that would require Kiev to give up.

"The plan that President Putin is proposing isn't a dogma that is being forced on someone," Mr. Peskov told a Russian radio station later. "The main thing is achieving the ultimate goal, a cease-fire, the start of talks and joint efforts to ease the horrific humanitarian situation."

Final agreement could come at the talks in the Belarusian capital of Minsk, moderated by Russia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mr. Putin said. Implementation would be supervised by "full-scale and objective international monitoring," he added.

Other issues, including the final legal status of the separatist territories, would be the subject of future negotiations, the Kremlin told Interfax news agency.

If those negotiations render the rebel-held parts of Donbas an autonomous republic within Ukraine, officials in Kiev worry it would become a Moscow proxy bent on disrupting any initiatives deemed counter to Russia's interests.

Ukraine's Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, whose party is expected to run in parliamentary elections next month, denounced the Russian proposals as an attempt to deceive the West on the eve of a NATO summit, and to avoid new sanctions.

"The real plan of Putin is to destroy Ukraine and to restore the Soviet Union," he said.

If Mr. Poroshenko is viewed as complicit in creating a frozen conflict zone, "he has to assume that's the end of his political career in Ukraine," said Matthew Rojanksy, director of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute.

Mr. Poroshenko said he had spoken to Mr. Putin at 5 a.m. local time. "Peace is our first task," he wrote on his website. "It can't be denied that people must stop dying."

In a phone call later, Mr. Poroshenko told Ms. Merkel that a peace plan should include a binding cease-fire to be monitored by the OSCE, the withdrawal of foreign troops from Ukrainian territory, the creation of a border buffer zone with Russia and the release of hostages, according to the president's website.

Soldiers from the U.S. and other NATO members will take part in military exercises near Lviv, in western Ukraine, Sept. 13-26, Poland's defense ministry said Wednesday. The exercises were delayed earlier this summer because of the fighting.

In Estonia, Mr. Obama said Ukraine "needs more than words" as he denounced Russia for its "brazen assault" on Ukraine's territory. "NATO needs to make concrete commitments to help Ukraine modernize and strengthen its security

forces," he said.

Still, he didn't offer lethal aid or suggest NATO support would be directed at helping Ukraine achieve its immediate aim of winning the conflict in the east.

"President Obama in particular has made it clear all along that it's not forthcoming, that there is no military solution, which is a way of saying: Ukraine, you have to bargain, because you're not going to win militarily," said Kimberly Marten, a political-science professor and Russia expert at Columbia University's Barnard College.

Ukraine's broad military gains in recent months obscured that message. Ukrainian forces had been taking back rebel-held territory and closing in on regional capitals that had become separatist strongholds. But last week, what Western officials described as an incursion of Russian soldiers and materiel dealt a deep blow to Ukrainian forces, sending them into retreat.

"At some point Ukraine is going to have to give in to some sort of Russian political pressure," Ms. Marten said. "The only question is, 'At what point does Ukraine say 'now is the time,' and how much are they going to give in?'"

How to Put Military Pressure on Russia

The Wall Street Journal, By Jim Thomas , Updated March 9, 2014 6:56 p.m. ET

NATO now has reason to station nuclear forces in front-line member states.

Russia's seizure of Crimea should be a wake-up call for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The absence of serious thinking about NATO's territorial defense mission—its *raison d'être*—and the weakness its 28 member nations have shown since the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia have proven catnip for Vladimir Putin.

Most of NATO's European members have spent the past two decades rationalizing how they can spend ever-smaller sums on security. And now the U.S. is cutting its defense expenditures while trying to "pivot" its strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific. So it isn't surprising that pundits and government officials have tended to emphasize political and economic suasion for dealing with this latest Russian aggression.

Sanctions, skipping the G-8 summit in Sochi, hitting Russian oligarchs in their pocketbooks, isolating Russia in international forums—all of these options are legitimate responses to Mr. Putin's land grab in the sovereign state of Ukraine. But there is also a need to think about military options.

First, NATO should reconsider its so-called Three Nos from the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act. The Three Nos were shorthand for the NATO allies' joint declaration that they had "no intentions, no plans, and no reason" to station nonstrategic nuclear forces in new member states. But NATO left the door open to future deployments if front-line allies were threatened. While NATO still lacks the intention and plans to station nuclear forces in new member states, such as Poland, it now has more than sufficient reason to do so.

A preliminary step should be making the Polish air force's F-16s capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear weapons so that they could participate in NATO's nuclear mission. That should quickly be followed by site surveys to identify suitable locations for potentially storing nuclear weapons on the territory of front-line allies, including Poland, if relations with Russia further deteriorate.

Second, NATO should reinforce its front-line allies with additional conventional force deployments. The time has come for the U.S. and other NATO allies to consider permanently stationing forces in Poland and Romania as well as the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to back up their words of strategic solidarity. Their mission should be defensively oriented, establishing what military strategists call "anti-access, area denial" zones. (This might include missile defenses to protect major bases in those countries along with anti-air, anti-armor and anti-ship weapons to counter air, land or naval incursions.

Taking these steps in the Baltic states would reduce Russia's temptation to encroach on their sovereignty in the name of "protecting ethnic Russian populations," a pretext it has used in Ukraine. It would also preclude Russia's option of a quick, Crimea-like operation to establish a *fait accompli* on the ground before NATO can decide to act.

Third, NATO should make it clear that it would seriously consider a future Ukrainian request for indirect military assistance, especially if Russia escalates the crisis in Crimea or deploys its forces into other eastern Ukrainian provinces. NATO could certainly provide overt nonlethal and humanitarian assistance, while the U.S. might even consider covert lethal aid, as in Afghanistan during the 1980s Soviet occupation. This might include short-range precision guided weapons that could be used by resistance forces to attack bases and facilities on Ukrainian territory seized by Russia's forces or its proxies.

It may not be realistic to compel the withdrawal of Russian forces quickly and it is far-fetched to imagine NATO boots on the ground in Ukraine. Nevertheless, it would still be possible to exact a heavy toll on Russia in blood and treasure through a protracted irregular war if it formally annexes Crimea or attempts to occupy other parts of the country.

Fourth, the U.S. and its NATO allies should revisit their self-imposed prohibitions on lethal aid to moderate Syrian opposition groups. In the post-Crimea era, Syria should be viewed through the prism of not only the West's long-term strategic competition with Iran, but also its re-emerging competition with Russia. The defeat of Bashar Assad's murderous regime and with it the potential loss of Russia's naval port at Tartus would represent a heavy tax for Russia's adventurism closer to home.

Lastly, Russia's invasion of Crimea should prompt strategic reappraisals in both Washington and Brussels. The Ukrainian crisis raises fundamental questions about the wisdom of the Obama administration's attempt to "lead from behind" on foreign-policy issues with clear U.S. interests, its pursuit of "global zero" (the elimination of all nuclear weapons world-wide) and most directly its "reset with Russia."

Rather than "reset," the administration would do well to hit the "recall" button on the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review, released March 4, which treated Putin's Russia as an afterthought relative to other global threats, and astonishingly advocated another round of bilateral nuclear-arms reductions at a time of heightened tensions.

Leaders in Washington and Europe have allowed NATO's defenses to deteriorate to the point that Mr. Putin seems to think he can act with impunity. It is past time to start rebuilding those defenses, and Mr. Putin's Ukrainian gambit should be the catalyst.

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Let Crimea Go

By [Eric Posner](#), Slate, Jurisprudence, March 10, 2014

Next week's referendum on joining Russia is underhanded, dishonest, absurd—and completely legitimate.

Crimea's planned March 16 referendum on whether it should leave Ukraine and join Russia is underhanded, dishonest, and absurd—and completely legitimate. Vladimir Putin has yet again maneuvered the West into a corner. Jujitsu-like, he is using one of our most prized institutions—international law—against us. This is not the first time, and so calls to punish Russia and start a Cold War II are understandable. Yet we should swallow our pride and let him bask in his victory. In the long run, it gets him nothing.

If a fair vote is held, and Crimeans vote to join Russia, then any Western effort to stop them will be seen as an attempt to thwart the will of the people.

Putin's first victory against the West took place in 2008. At the time, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two renegade provinces in Georgia, were controlled by pro-Russian governments and patrolled by Russian peacekeepers. When the pro-Western Georgian government sent in the army to reacquire control of South Ossetia, Russian military forces moved in and crushed the Georgians. Russia then recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, in clear violation of Georgia's sovereignty. The West condemned Russia's actions but did nothing. Some Western analysts blamed Georgia for starting the war, but Georgia was merely trying to assert control over its own territory, which it has now irrevocably lost.

Putin's second victory came thanks to President Obama's rash announcement last year that the United States would send bombers into Syria to punish President Bashar al-Assad for using chemical weapons against civilians. Obama claimed that international law provided a basis for U.S. military intervention—but was blocked in the Security Council by Russia and China. In a Machiavellian [op-ed](#) obligingly published by the *New York Times*, Putin pointed out that U.S. military intervention would violate the sovereignty of Syria, breaking international law and harming the U.N. system:

We need to use the United Nations Security Council and believe that preserving law and order in today's complex and turbulent world is one of the few ways to keep international relations from sliding into chaos. The law is still the law, and we must follow it whether we like it or not. Under current international law, force is permitted only in self-defense or by the decision of the Security Council. Anything else is unacceptable under the United Nations Charter and would constitute an act of aggression.

Bereft of international and domestic support, Obama backed down after Putin offered him a fig leaf in the form of Syrian chemical weapons disarmament. Assad, Russia's ally, was free to continue slaughtering civilians using bullets and bombs.

In both cases, Putin used international law to advance his interests. However, Putin's military takeover of Crimea, in the wake of the downfall of pro-Russia Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich [flagrantly violated international law](#). It violated traditional principles of state sovereignty, the U.N. charter, and several agreements among Ukraine, Russia, and other countries. The temptation is therefore to punish him, to make Putin live up to his own words in the *New York Times*. The United States has imposed sanctions; other countries may join it.

But this is a mistake. By engineering the referendum in Crimea, Putin has again thrown international law back into the face of the West. If a fair vote is held, and Crimeans vote overwhelmingly to join Russia, then any Western effort to stop them will be seen as an attempt to thwart the will of the people, a violation of their right to self-determination, which is enshrined in the U.N. charter and multiple human rights treaties. And how would the West stop them anyway? Because Crimea would not be an independent state but a province of Russia, the usual ways of not recognizing a country—withholding U.N. membership, refusing to appoint an ambassador, and refraining from trade—would not work. Once Russia swallows up Crimea, we could not isolate Crimea without taking action against Russia. But Europe relies on Russia's oil and its bank accounts, and so the United States would stand alone, unable to hurt Russia and only isolating itself.

What of Ukraine's sovereign rights? We can sympathize with Ukraine while noting that Crimea is an already autonomous region over which Ukraine has enjoyed only nominal control. Crimea's ties with Russia go back centuries. It was transferred from Russia to Ukraine only in 1954 while both countries were regions of the Soviet Union. This transfer reflected a top-down administrative judgment, not the sentiments of the Ukrainian or Crimean peoples.

As for the principles of international law, Putin put it well last week:

We are often told our actions are illegitimate, but when I ask, "Do you think everything you do is legitimate?" they say "yes". Then, I have to recall the actions of the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, where they either acted without any UN sanctions or completely distorted the content of such resolutions, as was the case with Libya.

Putin is wrong about Afghanistan (a case of self-defense later ratified by the Security Council), but he is right about Iraq and Libya, and he could have added Granada, Panama, and Kosovo as well—all wars that the United States started in violation of international law. Other countries did not try to sanction the United States for these violations because those sanctions would have hurt them more than us. And now these countries are in the same position with respect to Russia. As Putin's patron saint, Thucydides, said, "Right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

We can take some comfort in the fact that, for all his cleverness, Putin's long-term prospects are bleak. Russia is a corrupt, stagnant country. Its economy, which is essentially a giant pool of oil, is the size of Italy's. It has steadily lost influence in the border regions of Europe, which long for the embrace of NATO and the European Union. Its vast neighbor, China, poses a long-term threat in the east. Along the south, weak states offer nothing but the prospect of endless ethnic strife.

In the end, Crimea—a poor, tiny region with a potentially unruly minority population of unhappy Tatars and resentful Ukrainians—is a booby prize in the contest over Ukraine. And in fact, Russia has lost that larger fight; Ukraine, more populous than Poland, is now permanently outside its orbit. Russia has no friends and only a handful of allies of convenience. Back in 2008, when Russia tried to persuade the world to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, only Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru (population 9,000), Vanuatu (population 262,000), and Tuvalu (population 11,000) heeded the call (and Vanuatu later changed its mind). By contrast, the United States' illegal military intervention in Serbia, a Russian client state, enabled Kosovo to break away and form a state with the support of the United States and more than 100 other countries. Today, Russia can call on Syria, Belarus, and Cuba for diplomatic support. It is a declining state that can do little more than bully a few impoverished and geopolitically insignificant neighbors. Let it.

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A Tortured Policy Toward Russia

The New York Times, By IAN BREMMER, MARCH 26, 2014

THE United States has once again twisted itself into a rhetorical pretzel. As when it threatened military action against Syria if a "red line" was crossed, the Obama administration's rhetoric about Russia and Ukraine goes far beyond what it will be willing and able to enforce.

Earlier this month, President Obama warned that America would "isolate Russia" if it grabbed more land, and yesterday, he suggested that more sanctions were possible. Likewise, Secretary of State John Kerry said the Group of 7 nations were "prepared to go to the hilt" in order to isolate Russia.

But Washington's rhetoric is dangerously excessive, for three main reasons: Ukraine is far more important to Vladimir V. Putin than it is to America; it will be hard for the United States and Europe to make good on their threats of crippling sanctions; and other countries could ultimately defang them.

First, the United States needs to see the Ukraine crisis from Russia's viewpoint. Threats from America and Europe will never be the determining factor in Mr. Putin's decision making. Ukraine is Russia's single biggest national security

issue beyond its borders, and Mr. Putin's policy, including whether to seize more of Ukraine, will be informed overwhelmingly by national security interests, not near-term economics.

Furthermore, Russia has provided Ukraine with some \$200-\$300 billion in natural gas subsidies since 1991. With an anti-Russian government in Ukraine, Moscow is likely to stop these subsidies, lifting a major economic burden just as the West tries to squeeze it financially.

Second, if Russia pushes farther into Ukraine, America's attempt at tougher Iran-style sanctions, coordinated with allies, will ultimately fail. Indeed, if Mr. Putin pursues a broader military campaign, a similarly robust response from both America and Europe is unlikely.

Russia's energy exports, its commercial power and its sheer size make the costs of ignoring it prohibitively high for Europe. Despite the Group of 7's recent exclusion of Russia, the Europeans don't want to go to extremes. The Ukrainian ambassador to the European Union called the current sanctions a "mosquito bite"; and even these modest actions have left many European powers feeling skittish. Britain and France have been very cautious, the Austrians and Cypriots even more so. (Austria buys more than half of its gas from Russia; Cyprus has huge Russian banking exposure.)

And finally, even if America seeks stringent sanctions against Russia, other nations will ignore them and offset any damage they cause. India absolutely refuses to treat Russia like a rogue state. More important, China will not observe such sanctions.

The fundamental problem is that the Obama administration doesn't want to bear the costs associated with an active foreign policy. That's understandable. A December Pew poll revealed the lowest level of public support for an active American foreign policy since 1964.

This domestic pressure was on display in Syria. Mr. Obama's error was not that he backed away from military action and accepted Russia's proposal to rid Syria of chemical weapons. The mistake was that he drew a red line that would have been more costly to back up than the United States was willing to tolerate. America lost credibility internationally for failing to make good on its threat.

Unfortunately, the Obama administration is repeating this mistake in Ukraine.

When Russia proceeded with the annexation of Crimea, the United States and Europe responded with punitive measures that had some economic impact. But they did not by any means "go to the hilt." Instead, the Americans and Europeans drew an even deeper line in the sand, issuing empty threats of sweeping sanctions if Russia tried to grab more territory in Ukraine.

Such sharp rhetoric from the West could push Mr. Putin to be even more aggressive. That's because he does not believe that the West would ever treat Russia like Iran and implement robust sanctions that would cut off vast areas of Russia's economy from the West. As Mr. Putin recently explained, in a globalized world "it's possible to damage each other — but this would be mutual damage."

"Isolating Russia" as if it were Iran or North Korea isn't a threat America can feasibly make good on. Just because Mr. Putin is acting like the leader of a rogue state, his country cannot be considered as such. Russia boasts the world's eighth-largest economy. Given the exposure of American corporations to Russia, there would be serious pushback from the private sector if Mr. Obama tried to relegate Russia to rogue-state status. The Obama administration needs to preach what it will ultimately practice. Otherwise Washington's credibility will erode further as it walks back its words.

A more hard-line response is not the answer. Mr. Obama was right to rule out the military option; diplomacy is America's only viable path forward.

But Washington needs to anticipate a Russian response from a Russian perspective. In a major speech on Wednesday, Mr. Obama hinted that further sanctions would be implemented if Russia maintained its present course. That is a mistake. Russia will not back down, and such talk will only ratchet up tensions.

The Obama administration should focus on supporting Kiev rather than punishing Moscow. That means using its leverage with Europe to ensure that this support sticks, and that Ukraine's new government does nothing to provoke an extreme response. This will require an acknowledgment of Russia's core interests and America's limitations — and an end to empty threats.

Ian Bremmer is president of Eurasia Group and a global research professor at New York University.

Lessons in Democracy for Ukraine's Neighbors

The Wall Street Journal By Milan A. Račić, March 13, 2014 7:03 p.m. ET

Putin and Russia are certainly in the wrong, but many of Kiev's problems were of its own making.

The world justifiably feels for Ukraine and finds itself scrambling to come up with an appropriate response to the Russian incursion. Yet even as a whole host of new democracies race to forget their pasts, one could see this Ukraine mess coming. If you are running any of the new democracies with difficult histories—Poland, any of the Baltic republics, Croatia, Hungary and others—what are you to make of the developments in Ukraine? What lessons are there for you and for your people? Here are three:

- Weapons trump agreements. Ukraine now looks incredibly naïve to have agreed to give up its nuclear weapons. Ukraine, the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom signed the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, under which Russia, the U.K and the U.S. promised to respect Ukraine's borders. They also agreed to abstain from the use or threat of force against Ukraine; to support Ukraine where an attempt is made to place pressure on it by economic coercion; and to bring any incident of aggression by a nuclear power before the U.N. Security Council. In return, Ukraine agreed to give up what was then the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world. The treaty clearly uses the term "assurances" in reference to the other signatories' pledges, but Ukraine has always interpreted the assurances as "guarantees."

It is arguable whether Ukraine had the wherewithal to maintain the weapons and even whether nuclear weapons are an effective deterrent against a conventional attack. But in hindsight, you can bet that Ukraine's acting president Oleksandr Turchynov and his transition team rue the day Ukraine gave up its rusty but powerful nuclear deterrent in return for paper assurances.

Other states beware: Treaties of cooperation, partnership, mutual defense and even union work wonderfully in times of peace and plenty—when you don't need them. All too often, though, such undertakings leave the weaker partners holding the empty bag in times of war or economic hardship.

As expensive as such advice is to follow, and as politically incorrect as it may seem, new democracies would be wise to look back to early last century for guidance and follow the admonition of President Theodore Roosevelt to "speak softly, and carry a big stick." This doesn't necessarily mean that new democracies need to go on a weapons-buying spree, but they do need to think twice before giving up their military capabilities or letting them degrade. In short, if you are a new democracy living in a historically dangerous neighborhood, speak softly—but don't give up your stick.

- Make hay while the sun shines. Ukraine was handicapped by the remnants of a heavy and long-term Russian colonization policy. However, like many of the new democracies, it had 20 years to get its act together politically and economically—and chose not to. This assessment may sound rough but it is true, and not just for Ukraine. The citizens and politicians of Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and a host of other countries have allowed inept leadership to squander the first two decades of their newly attained independence.

Instead of building on the national goodwill they inherited, which was ready to forgive many rookie leadership mistakes, the various leaders of Ukraine couldn't get over their adolescent self-absorption and allowed graft, corruption, greed and legal mayhem to eat away at an already fragile state, weakening it financially and militarily to such a degree that its ultimate survival has been thrown in doubt.

It is difficult to build a prosperous new democracy on the foundations of a harsh and oppressive past. Yet it is exactly that harsh past which should make its new leaders more responsible, not less; more honest, not less; and more statesmanlike, not less. The crisis in Ukraine today is a crisis of leadership—in Ukraine, the EU, U.S. and Russia. While Ukraine cannot influence the leadership elsewhere, it can control the leaders it produces and lets run the country.

Nation-building is messy, and democracy can seem further away with each new "free" election, and good leadership further away with each new political party. Ukrainians (and people in some other countries with similar backgrounds and choices) need to ask themselves:

What have we done for 20 years to ensure that we are economically and militarily as strong as possible? Did we pick leaders because they told us the truth or because they told us what we wanted to hear? Did we hold leaders accountable, or did we blindly follow the party line? Did we always blame Russia for our problems, even when we were our own worst enemies? Did we see corruption in what others did, but not in what we did, which we classified as merely helping our families? Did we get involved, or did we sit idly by and complain?

None of the foregoing absolves Russia of its responsibility for its military aggression or us from our responsibility to help. It does highlight that Ukraine is weaker because of its own choices.

- We are all potentially Ukraine. The "we" refers to any of the 20-plus new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe with a tumultuous past and an immature political present. We are not very different, and it can happen here. Many of us have frittered away the national dreams of generations, the goodwill of our countrymen and the good intentions of our friends and neighbors. That is nobody's fault but ours. Let the sad example of Ukraine be a wake-up call.

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Russia's Next Land Grab

The New York Times, By BRENDA SHAFFER, SEPT. 9, 2014

WASHINGTON — UKRAINE isn't the only place where Russia is stirring up trouble. Since the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, Moscow has routinely supported secessionists in bordering states, to coerce those states into accepting its dictates. Its latest such effort is unfolding in the South Caucasus.

In recent weeks, Moscow seems to have been aggravating a longstanding conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan while playing peacemaking overlord to both. In the first week of August, as many as 40 Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers were reported killed in heavy fighting near their border, just before a summit meeting convened by Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin.

The South Caucasus may seem remote, but the region borders Russia, Iran and Turkey, and commands a vital pipeline route for oil and natural gas to flow from Central Asia to Europe without passing through Russia. Western officials cannot afford to let another part of the region be digested by Moscow — as they did when Russia separated South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia, just to the north, in a brief war in 2008, and when it seized Crimea from Ukraine this year.

Conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is not new. From 1992 to 1994, war raged over which former Soviet republic would control the autonomous area of Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous region with a large Christian Armenian population of about 90,000 within the borders of largely Muslim Azerbaijan. The conflict has often been framed as “ethnic,” but Moscow has fed the antagonisms. That war ended with an Armenian military force, highly integrated with Russia's military, in charge of the zone. The war had killed 30,000 people and made another million refugees.

Even today, Armenia controls nearly 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, comprising most of Nagorno-Karabakh and several surrounding regions. Despite a cease-fire agreement since 1994, hostilities occasionally flare, and Russian troops run Armenia's air defenses. Moscow also controls key elements of Armenia's economy and infrastructure.

More to the point, Russia has found ways to keep the conflict alive. Three times in the 1990s, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed peace agreements, but Russia found ways to derail Armenia's participation. (In 1999, for example, a disgruntled journalist suspected of having been aided by Moscow assassinated Armenia's prime minister, speaker of Parliament and other government officials.)

An unresolved conflict — a “frozen conflict,” Russia calls it — gives Russian forces an excuse to enter the region and coerce both sides. Once Russian forces are in place, neither side can cooperate closely with the West without fear of retribution from Moscow.

The latest violence preceded a summit meeting on Aug. 10 in Sochi, Russia, at which Mr. Putin sought an agreement on deploying additional Russian “peacekeepers” between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On July 31, Armenians began a coordinated, surprise attack in three locations. Azerbaijan's president, Ilham H. Aliyev, and defense minister were outside their country during the attack and Mr. Aliyev had not yet agreed to attend the summit meeting. But the Armenian president, Serzh A. Sargsyan, had agreed to; it's unlikely that his military would have initiated such a provocation without coordinating with Russia. (The meeting went on, without concrete results.)

Before the meeting, Moscow had been tightening its grip on the South Caucasus, with Armenia's tacit support. Last fall, Armenia's government gave up its ambitions to sign a partnership agreement with the European Union and announced that it would join Moscow's customs union instead.

Renewed open warfare would give Russia an excuse to send in more troops, under the guise of peacekeeping. Destabilizing the South Caucasus could also derail a huge gas pipeline project, agreed to last December, that might lighten Europe's dependence on Russian fuel.

But astonishingly, American officials reacted to the current fighting by saying they “welcome” the Russian-sponsored summit meeting. Has Washington learned nothing from Georgia and Ukraine? To prevent escalation of the Caucasus conflict, and deny Mr. Putin the pretext for a new land grab, President Obama should invite the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia to Washington and show that America has not abandoned the South Caucasus. This would encourage the leaders to resist Russia's pressure. The United Nations General Assembly session, which opens next week, seems like an excellent moment for such a demonstration of support.

Washington should put the blame on Russia and resist any so-called conflict resolution that leads to deployment of additional Russian troops in the region.

Finally, the West needs a strategy to prevent Moscow from grabbing another bordering region. Nagorno-Karabakh, however remote, is the next front in Russia's efforts to rebuild its lost empire. Letting the South Caucasus lose its sovereignty to Russia would strike a deadly blow to America's already diminished ability to seek and maintain alliances in the former Soviet Union and beyond.

Economic Indicators G8 (for 2012)

Страны	Population, millions persons	GDP (official exchange rate), billions US dollars	GDP per Capita, thousands US dollars	Inflation rate, %	Unemployment rate, %	Trade balance, billions US dollars
<u>UK</u>	63.0	2434.0	38.6	2.8	7.8	-165.0
<u>Germany</u>	81.3	3367.0	41.4	2.0	6.5	216.0
<u>Italy</u>	61.3	1980.0	32.3	3.0	10.9	13.6
<u>Canada</u>	34.3	1770.0	51.6	1.8	7.3	0.8
<u>Russia</u>	143.0	1954.0	13.7	5.1	5.7	195.3
<u>USA</u>	313.8	15650.0	49.9	2.0	8.2	-745.0
<u>France</u>	65.6	2580.0	39.3	1.3	10.3	-91.4
<u>Japan</u>	127.4	5984.0	47.0	0.1	4.4	-64.0

Source - [CIA World Factbook](#)

percent since Q1 2012, Russia's GDP growth has declined from 4.8 percent to 1.2 percent during this period. Meanwhile, in the realm of public finances, public debt and deficit are manageable. However, the non-oil budget deficit is a concern. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Russia's non-oil budget deficit is expected to rise from 3.6 percent in 2007 to 10.3 percent of GDP in 2013.

Meanwhile, reserves where oil can be easily extracted are slowly declining. This spells trouble for Russia's hydrocarbons sector, given that any new exploration has to focus on remote areas like the Arctic and on shale formations in Bazhenov, Siberia. Although the latter is rumored to hold as much as 100 billion barrels of recoverable oil, the formations under it have not been extensively explored. So, the complexity of the extraction process is not yet clear to investors. At the same time, its remote location implies that setting up the requisite infrastructure for oil exploration, drilling, and transportation would require large investments. Given this and the complexity of extraction from shale, the cost of production is likely to be high. A review of the taxation structure has been an encouraging development in recent months. Companies operating in Bazhenov will not need to pay the mineral extraction tax. Thus, the government is also considering cutting their export duty liabilities.

A key medium- to long-term challenge for Russia's economy is the country's ageing population. According to projections by the World Bank and United Nations, the share of 15–64-year olds in total population is set to decline from 71.1 percent to 68.7 percent between 2013 and 2018.¹ To offset the economic impact of this, productivity has to be increased through large investments in both physical and human capital. Unfortunately, fixed investment as a share of GDP is currently low (average of 21.3 percent between 2007 and 2012) relative to emerging-economy peers like China (44.1 percent) and India (30.4 percent). Human capital is another area where Russia's edge is quickly eroding. The World Economic Forum's human capital index ranks Russia 51 among 122 nations, with managerial talent in particular ranking pretty low...

Russia: No quick fix Global Economic Outlook, Q1 2014, Deloitte University Press

...Russia's overreliance on hydrocarbons makes its growth heavily dependent on the fortunes of the global economy. Hydrocarbons account for nearly two-thirds of Russia's exports and half of the government's revenues. Of late, global economic growth has been slowing with emerging giants like China and India dipping to a lower growth trajectory. What has added to woes is a revival in oil in the United States due to the discovery of recoverable shale deposits. So, with oil prices declining by about 9