

autocrat
retreat

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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:


- In the video, Prime Minister Rasmussen points out that, “The first half of the twentieth century was the bloodiest in human history. That was before America became a global superpower. Since America’s ascendancy, the major world powers have coexisted in relative peace. Now that peace is threatened, and America must step forward again. Simply put, no one else can do it.” Why do you think that this is the case- why is America uniquely suited to bring relative balance and peace to the world?
- Prime Minister Rasmussen answers the last question by explaining that, “... only America has the credibility to lead... Only America has the moral greatness to lead the free world— not for the sake of power, but for the sake of peace.” What do you think Prime Minister Rasmussen means by ‘for the sake of peace?’ What do you think gives America the credibility and ‘moral greatness’ to lead the world? What makes America different from other nations in history that had the power to dominate the world?
- Indeed, Prime Minister Rasmussen further explains that, “...the stability that has permitted the vast and world-wide economic expansion since World War II, an expansion that has lifted billions of people out of poverty, could not have happened if America had not guaranteed it.” How do you think that relative peace and stability in the world is related to economic expansion? Explain. Do you agree that America is the key to guaranteeing that stability and the resulting international economic growth? Why or why not?
- Prime Minister Rasmussen states in the video that, “As tempting as retreat might be, it won’t make America and the other freedom-loving countries safer or more prosperous. History shows us: the bad guys don’t stay in their own neighborhoods. We only need to look at Pearl Harbor or 9/11 to be reminded that the safety of Americans is deeply connected to the rest of the world.” What do you think is the relationship between America becoming involved in world conflicts and ‘freedom-loving countries’ being safe and prosperous? In what ways, specifically, is the safety of Americans ‘connected to the rest of the world?’
- At the end of the video, Prime Minister Rasmussen warns us that, “...stability, freedom and prosperity don’t come for free. And they are not the norm - they are the exception. An American retreat will unleash a new plague of dictators and oppressors who seek to undo all the good America has done to secure peace and prosperity in the West for decades. And that could lead to a fire no one will be able to put out.” What do you think Prime Minister Rasmussen means when he states that stability, freedom, and prosperity don’t ‘come for free?’ Why do you think that stability, freedom, and prosperity are not ‘the norm?’

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Ukraine

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “As America and Russia talk, Ukraine fights,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What is happening between Ukraine and Russia? What happened three days after a flare-up on January 29th? Who did the American ambassador blame for starting the attacks? Who are the victims? How does each side interpret the Minsk Two ceasefire agreement? How has the Trump administration handled the conflict differently than the previous administration?
- Do you think that this conflict is a good example supporting Prime Minister Rasmussen’s assertion that stability, freedom, and prosperity aren’t the norm? Why or why not? Do you think that since America has ‘credibility’ and ‘moral greatness’ it can help to resolve this conflict, or is this already a ‘fire that nobody can put out?’ Explain.
- What do you think America should do, in terms of getting involved in this conflict? What do you think is going to actually happen? Explain.



QUIZ

WHY AMERICA MUST LEAD

1. **Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014 was the first gunpoint land grab in Europe _____.**
 - a. since the end of the Revolutionary War
 - b. since the end of World War I
 - c. since the end of World War II
 - d. since the end of the French Revolution

2. **Why was the first half of the twentieth century the bloodiest in human history?**
 - a. British imperialism.
 - b. Weaponry lacked sophistication.
 - c. National intelligence agencies lacked credibility.
 - d. America had not yet become a global superpower.

3. **An American retreat will _____.**
 - a. give European nations their time to shine
 - b. calm the conflict in the Middle East
 - c. unleash a new plague of dictators and oppressors
 - d. not affect the world at large

4. **Only America has the moral greatness to lead the free world—not for the sake of power, but for the sake of peace.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. **Which country other than America has the credibility to lead the world?**
 - a. France
 - b. Russia
 - c. Any European nation
 - d. None



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21716091-new-clashes-donbas-may-show-vladimir-putin-testing-donald-trump-america-and-russia-talk>

Tanks for calling

As America and Russia talk, Ukraine fights

New clashes in Donbas may show Vladimir Putin testing Donald Trump

Feb 4th 2017



THE timing was ominous. A day after the first, seemingly cordial telephone conversation between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, the residents of Avdiivka, a small town on the Ukrainian side of the conflict line with Russian-backed separatists, heard the echoes of heavy artillery fire. The conflict that Russia started in Ukraine in 2014 has been partly frozen over the past two years. But on January 29th it flared up with renewed force.



Three days later, on February 1st, the bodies of seven Ukrainian soldiers killed in the fighting were brought to Kiev. Maidan, the city square that was the site of the country's 2014 revolution, once again swelled with people. Social media were filled with messages of support for soldiers and calls to collect supplies for victims, along with videos of shelling by Russian Grad rockets. Ukrainian soldiers received text messages seemingly sent by the Russian side: "You are just meat to your commanders". Since then other Ukrainian positions along the front line have been attacked, and the death toll is rising.

Following the flare-up, the American ambassador to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which monitors the ceasefire, blamed "combined Russian-separatist forces" for starting the attacks. Ukrainian forces have been creeping forward into the "grey zone" in recent months, seizing positions in several small towns. The rebels might have felt it was an opportune moment to hit back.

Whoever started the fighting, its victims are the 16,000 civilians in Avdiivka, who for days were cut off from electricity in temperatures of -20°C , and those in the rebel-held territories, many of whom lack water. The violence underscores the difficulty of implementing the Minsk Two ceasefire agreement, signed in February 2015, which the two sides interpret differently. For Kiev and its Western backers, the agreement is a path for Ukraine to reassert control over its east and close its border with Russia, followed by a decentralisation of power to its regions. Russia, however, sees the agreement as a way of retaining control over eastern Ukraine, keeping the border open and demanding that Kiev recognise Donbas as an autonomous region within Ukraine. This would give Russia permanent influence over Ukraine's future.

From Ukraine's point of view, the violence was a warning to its American and European allies, several of whom are considering lifting sanctions against Russia. "Who would dare talk about lifting the sanctions in such circumstances?" asked Petro Poroshenko, Ukraine's president, who cut short a visit to Germany to attend to the crisis. Mr Poroshenko later said he would call a national referendum on joining NATO—which Russia considers a red line and NATO itself does not want.

Doubting the Donald

Many Russia-watchers think Mr Putin may have stoked the conflict to test his new American counterpart. Mr Trump has promised better relations with Moscow. Mr Putin may have decided to probe his willingness to turn a blind eye to Russian actions in Ukraine, the two countries' main point of conflict. The Russian government says Ukraine was discussed in their telephone conversation.

In the past, significant escalations of fighting were quickly met by the White House or the State Department with strongly worded statements condemning Russian aggression and supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. This time it took the State Department two days to say it was "deeply concerned"; it did not mention Russia. This response was duly noted in Moscow. "Washington does put the blame on the [separatist] republics, does not express support for Kiev and does not say a word about Russia's role," *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, the official government newspaper, wrote jubilantly.

The Kremlin also noted the American failure to react to the news that Alexei Navalny, an opposition leader and anti-corruption campaigner, would be tried again on trumped-up charges. Mr Navalny pledged to run against Mr Putin in next year's presidential elections, but is now likely to observe Mr Putin's re-election from a prison cell.

Correction (February 3rd): An earlier version of this article misattributed a statement by the American ambassador to the OSCE. This has now been corrected.