



## Ukraine crisis called worst in East-West relations since Cold War



By [Jordan Gass-Pooré - Spring 2015](#) Feb 10, 2015

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WASHINGTON – As fighting between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists continues, European leaders are expected to meet Wednesday in Minsk, Belarus, in an attempt to

breathe new life into a peace agreement drafted in September. The deal has largely been ignored.

On the agenda: a ceasefire, a demilitarized zone and U.S. weapons for Ukraine.

But change isn't going to happen overnight in a conflict that a February [report](#) co-produced by the Brookings Institution called the worst crisis in East-West relations since the Cold War.

Ukraine's civil war has left more than 5,300 people dead since mid-April, the [United Nations](#) reports.

The Woodrow Wilson Center hosted a [conference call](#) Thursday when experts analyzed how the U.S. decision to send military aid to Ukraine could tilt the balance of power.

Here are some of the issues they discussed.

**Q: What should the U.S. be doing to achieve a politically and economically successful Ukraine?**

**A: [Leonid Polyakov](#), senior adviser on defense issues for the New Ukraine Institute for Strategic Research:** "I believe in deterrents, and I believe that we'll stop Russians, but the issue is when and at what cost. And the cost will depend on whether we are supported by our partners and friends, or we are not supported, because we are resolved to fight and we believe that we will stop Russia."

**Q: How will Russia respond if Ukraine is supplied with more weapons?**

**A: [Stephen Blank](#), senior fellow for the Wilson Center's Russia, American Foreign Policy Council:** "I don't think anybody's saying that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin will back down if the United States sends in weapons. The point is, if we send in weapons and do this as part of an overall strategy, that then becomes much harder for Putin to move forward in Ukraine and much

harder to bear the cost. He's done everything possible to hide the cost from the Russian people. The sanctions are already hitting Russia much harder than the Russians want to admit."

**Q: What will happen to the Ukrainian Army if the U.S. doesn't supply it with weapons?**

**A: Michael Kofman, a Woodrow Wilson Center public policy scholar:** Kofman said Russia's offense has been limited and the country's goal is to erase the [Minsk agreement](#), the September cease-fire. He said a military offensive occurred in January, in freezing temperatures, because of U.S.-imposed sanctions. No amount of weapons can change Ukraine's army.

"Ukraine's in need of a new army, a real army. If we don't give Ukraine the weapons it needs, the only option is a political summit peace settlement, and that's the same answer as if we give Ukraine a whole bunch of modern weapons," Kofman said.

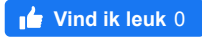
**Q: Why would the U.S. assume that Russia won't react if it supplies Ukraine with weapons?**

**A: Blank:** "The public opinion surveys indicate that Russians don't want to fight this war either. The problem we have here is that they are living in an information blockade. So, just sending weapons to Ukraine alone is not the answer. Ukrainians can be trained. We've trained people before; we trained Afghans to use the [Stingers](#) in the 1980s and it was brilliantly successful. Now, the fact is that Putin does not want to have a war with NATO."

*Reach reporter Jordan Gass-Pooré at [jordan.gass-poore@scripps.com](mailto:jordan.gass-poore@scripps.com) or 202-408-1490. SHFWire stories are free to any news organization that gives the reporter a byline and credits the SHFWire. Like the Scripps Howard Foundation Wire interns on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).*



Jordan Gass-Pooré is a Spring 2015 reporter for the SHFWire from Texas State University.



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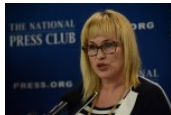
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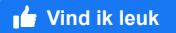



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