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## Turmoil Creates More Turmoil

Written by: Cokie and Steven V. Roberts

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The crisis in Ukraine highlights two truths about international politics: Some things have not changed since the end of the Cold War. And some things have changed a lot.

What remains is the map. Ukraine still sits on Russia's western border; the name "Ukraine" means "borderland" in Slavic, and the area was once known as "Little Russia." With the rapid expansion of NATO eastward, Ukraine is one of only two countries (Belarus is the other) that provide a buffer between Russia and Western allies like Poland and Hungary.

That gives Russia's czarlike leader, Vladimir Putin, large and legitimate interests in who rules that country. As Charles King, a Russian expert at Georgetown, wrote in the New York Times, "Some things are not wrong just because Russians happen to believe them."

But geography is not as important as it once was. In a world of global markets operating in cyberspace, capital flows across boundaries as easily as water. Russia is far more connected to international commerce than it was before the Berlin Wall collapsed and that makes Moscow — and Putin — more vulnerable to economic pressures.

"What we see here are distinctly 19th- and 20th-century decisions made by President Putin to address problems," one administration official told the Times. "What he needs to understand is that in terms of his economy, he lives in the 21st-century world, an interdependent world."

All true. Yet geography has not yielded completely to globalization. One in five Ukrainians speaks Russian and identifies strongly with Moscow. Putin's argument that he was sending in troops to protect them was a fraud; there was no evidence that any ethnic Russians were in danger. But they remain a key factor in the geopolitical balance.

So does the historic ambition of Slavic people in Northern Europe to control warm-water, all-season ports. The Russian Black Sea fleet, based in Ukraine's Crimean region, has a direct route to the Mediterranean via the Bosphorus, the strait that runs through Turkey.

We lived in that region for almost four years. We watched countless Russian vessels sail through that passage, and the scene leaves an indelible lesson: Russia would do almost anything to protect its naval power. That's why Putin's troops occupy the Crimean peninsula.

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