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Mikhail Gorbachev Blames American 'Triumphalism' For Bringing About A New Cold War

Paul Vale

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Mikhail Gorbachev has blamed America for bringing about a new Cold War, warning that "militarists" are pushing Europe to the brink of conflict by building fences around his country.

Speaking to the Russian state-owned news agency Tass on Monday, the 83-year-old former Soviet President said that "triumphalism" emanating from Washington had led to rising tensions between East and West, though he added there was still time to resolve the growing dispute before it led to direct conflict.

Reported by The Telegraph, Gorbachev said: "Now there are once again signs of a Cold War." "This process can and must be stopped. After all, we did it in the 1980s. We opted for de-escalation, for reunification [of Germany]. And back then it was a lot tougher than now. So we could do it again."

Gorbachev warned that building "fences" around Russia would only increase tensions. "Even Germany which after reunification presented itself very well and called for renovation is now just on the brink of a split [from Russia]," he said. "And now nothing takes place without the presence and a push from America."

Gorbachev's interview came on the same day that a truce deal between the Ukrainian government and rebels in the Luhansk region came into effect. The conflict, which started in April, has claimed more than 4,000 lives, with Moscow-backed separatists clashing with forces loyal to Kiev almost daily over the past seven months.

Despite the deal, over the weekend Ukrainian officials said a Russian military convoy that included Howitzer tanks rolled into Donetsk.



Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has blamed American 'triumphalism' for bringing about a new Cold War

Overlooking these maneuvers, the ageing statesman, who initiated the policy of perestroika in 1986, which led to a thawing of tensions between the superpowers, added that a "tortured" America was responsible for the current standoff. "I don't want to praise our government too much," he said.

"It has also made quite a few errors, but today the danger comes from the American position. They are tortured by triumphalism."

Referring indirectly to the conflict in Ukraine, Gorbachev praised Putin for bolstering Russian security, but urged for the escalation to stop. "It's a good thing that the president [Putin] has taken care of security, strengthened our defence potential, developed weaponry and upgraded the army," he said.

"Now we are armed, so if it necessary we can respond in kind. But I think that is not our task now. Signs of a new Cold War have appeared and the whole process must be stopped."

On Tuesday, Ukraine's parliament approved the formation of a new government, bringing an end to weeks of behind-the-scenes political wrangling following an October election that ushered in a group of pro-Western parties.

The new Cabinet has come together as government troops and Russian-backed separatist forces agreed on a tentative cease-fire in one war-stricken region along the Russian border. That may provide much-needed breathing space to a national leadership that will have to work fast to keep the anemic economy from collapse.

With the backing of parliament now secured, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, 40, will continue in a position he has occupied since February.

The conflict began following the removal of former president Viktor Yanukovych after demonstrations broke out over his decision to move the country's economy away from the European Union and bolster closer ties with Moscow. Following his ouster, Russian forces annexed Crimea in March.