

# 'Cold War' fears overblown, say experts

Secret "Russian subs" off Sweden, tit-for-tat sanctions, Nato fighters scrambling to intercept Russian warplanes: relations between the West and Moscow over Ukraine have sparked incidents reminiscent of the Cold War that terrified the world for decades.

Even Cold War doyen Mikhail Gorbachev used the highly symbolic 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall to warn the world was "on the brink of a new Cold War", adding that "some are even saying that it has already begun".

And it's not just former leaders. Finland's PM also sounded the alarm, saying that Russia's actions over Ukraine were bringing the world to the "brink of a Cold War."

But while experts agree that the current situation is extremely dangerous, they say it is very different to when the two nuclear-armed superpowers faced off, seemingly only minutes away from all-out global destruction.

Instead of a Cold War, experts see a period of geopolitical rebalancing after years of the United States assuming the role of sole superpower. "Saying that we're in a Cold War is to misunderstand the situation," says Vladimir Evseev, director of the Moscow-based think-tank NCO Public Political Studies Center.

"This isn't a Cold War, but a period of transition. Western domination is coming to an end. The West can no longer impose its will on the world," added the expert.

"The most important difference today is the factor of China," said Sergey Radchenko, an expert on Russia and the Cold War at Britain's Aberystwyth University. "Today, China is the greatest assurance Russia has that it will not be isolated, neither politically nor economically. The difference is great, and the gist of it is that the West will find it a lot more difficult to deter Russia through a show of force," Radchenko told AFP.



Heads of states and international organizations pose for the "family photo" during the G20 Summit in Brisbane, yesterday. Australia is hosting the leaders of the world's 20 biggest economies for the G20 summit.

# G20 vows to 'extinguish' Ebola

The world's most powerful economies yesterday vowed to "extinguish" the Ebola epidemic ravaging west Africa, as the vast desert nation of Mali scrambled to prevent a new outbreak of the killer disease. "G20 members are committed to do what is necessary to ensure the international effort can extinguish the outbreak and address its medium-term economic and humanitarian costs," the leaders said in a statement, as they welcomed the International Monetary Fund's initiative to release \$300 million to combat Ebola. The Democratic Republic of Congo -- where a three-month outbreak of a different strain of the disease claimed at least 49 lives since August -- declared itself Ebola-free yesterday.

# Russia chill permeates G20

## Putin to leave summit early as Moscow-West tension flares

Russian President Vladimir Putin is to walk out of a G20 summit in Australia, an aide said yesterday, after he faced scorn and scepticism from Western leaders over Ukraine despite venturing to paper over Europe's deepest chill in relations since the Cold War.

"The programme of the second day (for Putin) is changing, it's being cut short," a source in the Russian delegation told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Putin will attend summit sessions today but will skip an official lunch and address reporters earlier than planned, the source said. The source denied that Putin was bowing out under pressure from top Western leaders, who accused him of "bullying" ex-Soviet Ukraine.

Putin is facing huge pressure from top Western leaders over Russia's support for a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine, with British Prime Minister David Cameron accusing Russia of "bullying a smaller state in Europe."

During a closed-door meeting between Cameron and Putin earlier yesterday, the British prime minister had warned that the Russian strongman had a choice to make, according to a Downing Street source.

"We can either see implementa-



tion of the Minsk agreement and what follows from that in terms of an improvement of relations," a British source said, referring to peace accords. "Or we can see things go in a very different way in terms of relations between Russian and the UK, Europe and the US." The West accused Russia this week of sending fresh military hardware into eastern Ukraine, fuelling fears of a return to all-out conflict. Going into the summit, US President Barack Obama said Russia's aggression against Ukraine

Mistral-class warship after handover delays on concerns over Moscow's role in the Ukraine crisis.

As tension soared on the diplomatic front, Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko yesterday issued a decree ordering the withdrawal of all state services from the rebel-held eastern regions, a fresh acknowledgement of them effectively breaking away.

The order covers services such as schools, hospitals and emergency

### UKRAINE CRISIS

Kiev orders closure of state services in rebel-held east

services, a senior security official speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP.

It comes just over a week after Kiev announced passport controls around pro-Russian separatist areas in the east, as well as the end of state payments including pensions to those in the areas.

Seven months of fighting between Ukrainian forces and pro-Moscow separatists with strongholds in eastern Ukrainian cities such as Donetsk and Lugansk have killed more than 4,100 people, the United Nations says.

# 'We can do this'

## Buoyed by China deal, Obama seeks world climate pact

A Sino-US breakthrough on curbing carbon emissions proves a global deal on climate change is achievable, US President Barack Obama said yesterday, as campaigners hailed new vibrancy in long-stalled talks.

Announcing a \$3 billion contribution to a UN-backed climate change mitigation fund, the American leader said the China-US deal unveiled earlier this week showed the way forward.

"If China and the US can agree on this, then the world can agree on this -- we can get this done," he said in a speech on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Brisbane.

The UN and green campaigners welcomed the funding pledge, saying it confirmed global warming was now central to the world's political agenda following the surprise deal between Washington and Beijing to reduce their greenhouse emissions.

Obama outlined his pledge to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) at the University of Queensland, drawing applause when he told the audience he wanted to ensure his grandchildren could visit Australia's famed Great Barrier Reef "50 years from now".

He said the fund would help developing nations cope with climate-related issues such as rising seas while also backing environmentally friendly infrastructure projects.

Despite Prime Minister Abbott's reluctance, climate change appears set to be mentioned in the G20 leaders' final communique today, a concession to US and European pressure that was described as a "victory" by a French diplomatic source.



# PHILAE digs treasure

Europe's science probe Philae sent home a treasure trove of data from a comet heading towards the Sun before falling silent as its power ran out, mission control said yesterday.

Crowning a historic feat, the robot lab streamed data from its experiments back to its mother ship Rosetta in the final hours before its battery ran down.

This included the outcome of an eagerly-awaited chemistry test of a sample drilled from the comet's icy and dusty surface, scientists said.

"Rosetta's lander has completed its primary science mission," the European Space Agency (ESA) said.

Lacking power, its instruments and most systems went into standby mode after three days of non-stop work, sending back data that will keep scientists busy for years.

"The data collected by Philae and Rosetta is set to make this mission a game-changer in cometary



An illustration of comet probe Philae

science," said Matt Taylor, Rosetta project scientist. Philae had landed in a dark shadow after a bouncy triple touchdown Wednesday. It did not get enough sunlight to recharge its batteries sufficiently to extend its mission beyond its initial 60-hour work programme. Mission engineers do not rule out making contact with the lander in the coming months as Comet 67P moves closer to the Sun. Conceived more than 20 years ago, the Rosetta mission aims at shedding light on the origins of the Solar System 4.6 billion years ago, and maybe even life on Earth. A theory gaining ground in astrophysics is that the fledgling Earth was pummeled by these bodies of cosmic ice and carbon-rich dust, seeding our planet with the basics to start life. Rosetta and its payload travelled more than six billion kilometres, racing around the inner Solar System before they caught up with the comet in August this year.



# UK prepared to walk away from EU

## Says Hammond

AFP, London

Britain will walk away from negotiations with European Union partners if its pleas for immigration reform are ignored, raising the real possibility of leaving the bloc altogether, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said Friday.

Hammond told the Daily Telegraph that the British public could vote to end the country's membership unless there was "substantial, meaningful reform" from Brussels.

Prime Minister David Cameron has promised an in-out referendum for 2017 if his Conservative Party wins next year's general election, but has failed to win support for border reforms from fellow European leaders.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel last week warned her British counterpart that he was approaching a "point of no return" with the EU over his immigration proposals, according to a German news report. However, Hammond insisted that there would be no turning back, saying that Britain would be "prepared to stand up from the table and walk away" if its proposals were not considered.

# Iraq retakes main oil refinery

Iraqi forces broke a months-long siege by Islamic State group fighters of the country's largest oil refinery yesterday as America's top officer flew in to discuss the expanded war against the jihadists.

Completely expelling ISIS fighters from the area around the refinery would mark another significant achievement for Baghdad, a day after pro-government forces retook the nearby town of Baiji.

"Iraqi forces... reached the gate of the refinery," the governor of Salaheddin province, Raad al-Juburi, told AFP.

Three officers confirmed that Iraqi forces had reached the refinery, 200 kilometres north of Baghdad, where security forces have been encircled and under repeated attack since June.

The new success for Iraqi forces came a day after they recaptured nearby Baiji, the largest town they have taken back since ISIS-led militants swept across Iraq's Sunni Arab heart-

land in June. Fully clearing the Baiji area of jihadist fighters would further boost Baghdad's momentum and cap a week which also saw pro-government forces retake a major dam in Diyala.

Meanwhile, America's top military officer, General Martin Dempsey, arrived in Iraq for talks on the expanding military operations against the jihadists.

A US-led coalition is carrying out air strikes against ISIS jihadists in both

### WAR ON ISIS

Top US military general arrives in Iraq

Turkey, US to train 2,000 Syrian rebels

US denies Qaeda-ISIS nexus in Syria

# NEWS IN brief

## 'Major milestone' in Polio battle

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A "major milestone" in the global eradication of polio has been reached, according to the US Centres for Diseases. Its experts think a second of the three forms of poliovirus has been eliminated after mass vaccination campaigns. Wild poliovirus type 3 has not been found for more than two years, while type 2 was eradicated in 1999. Type 1 polio remains endemic in three countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

## Tsunami alert sparks panic in Indonesia

AFP, Kota Ternate

A powerful 7.1-magnitude earthquake rocked the Maluku Islands in eastern Indonesia yesterday, sparking a tsunami warning and causing panicked people to flee their homes. Small waves generated by the undersea quake were detected in several parts of the sprawling archipelago, local authorities said, although there were no reports of casualties or major damage and the tsunami warning was lifted after a short while.

## Algerian president Bouteflika 'hospitalised'

AFP, Grenoble

Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, 77, who has been plagued by ill health since suffering a "mini-stroke" last year, has again been hospitalised in France. The clinic in the southern city of Grenoble did not offer a reason for the hospitalisation.

# Riversimple: A car that emits only water vapour

It is the car that delivers the equivalent of 300 miles per gallon and produces water instead of exhaust fumes.

This pollution-free two-seater uses hydrogen to generate the power to drive its electric motors. The two-seater urban car accelerates from 0-30mph in 5.5 seconds.

So far the company, Riversimple, has spent around £3m developing the technology and is trying to raise £20m more to put the car into full production.

The car, which weighs only 350kg, can recapture its own motion energy when braking, providing 80% of the power needed for acceleration.

However, as part of its plans to create a 'green' vehicle for cities, Riversimple will lease the cars rather than sell them. Drivers will pay £200 a month and then 15p a mile as part of a business model similar to a mobile phone contract.

While an exact fee remains undetermined, Spowers estimates it will total about £450 (roughly \$720) - comparable to the monthly operating costs of a new, moderately priced car. Fees will vary according to how far consumers drive each month. That consumers will eventually return their cars to Riversimple for "resale" motivates the company to design



products that last, as opposed to the conventional planned-obsolence mindset of the car industry at large.

The principle may be difficult for consumers to grasp initially, Spowers concedes, but Riversimple ultimately expects motorists to gravitate towards a clean, viable alternative to ownership or conventional leasing schemes. Beta testing of 20 vehicles is slated for late 2015, with production expected to start in mid-2017.