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more closely with the West. Journalist Yulia Latynina of the *Novaya Gazeta*, a leading Russian opposition paper, has said that as a result of the Ukrainian crisis, "The gap between Russia and the civilised world will become deeper" (Latynina 2014). Despite being a minority in Russia, the opposition has deep pockets (BBC News 2014), and as the economic impacts of international sanctions are felt, they will gain traction. In future, they may prove to be a serious political threat to Putin.

Tensions are also beginning to divide the West. The US and its EU allies are pushing for more sanctions (Bremmer 2014). However, the EU has a vested interest in not overly damaging the Russian economy because they rely on Russia as a major trading partner and so cannot afford the sanctions to be too severe. Russia provides one-third of Europe's gas – 50% of it piped through Ukraine (BBC News 2014). France has been critical of Putin's actions throughout the Ukrainian crisis, and yet is completing a multi-billion euro deal, supplying warships to the very regime that they have denounced. The UK's priority on the other hand, being less dependent on Russia than the other major European economies, is to maintain its alliance with the US (Holtom 2014).

These conflicting national interests risk further splitting an already divided EU at a time when the UK is already rethinking its membership (Helm 2014). The European Union is becoming stuck in the middle of a 60-year standoff between the US and Russia that threatens to tear it apart. The tensions have been brewing under the surface for 25 years, and it is only in the aftermath of MH17 that the extent of the deterioration in relations has become clear.

It is too early to predict where all of these competing tensions will lead, but it is certain that the ramifications of MH17 will be felt for many years. It has had massive global ramifications, and whatever happens, it has changed the world's geopolitical landscape whether it is in the West's favour or not.

As Francesco Mancini, senior advisor to the International Peace Institute writes (Mancini 2014), "the main risks to peace and prosperity lie in the uncontained spill over of crises, one region to another, as MH17 has tragically reminded us".

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Comprehensive bibliography supplied with essay on IGS website's Portal:
www.igssyd.nsw.edu.au

The IGS Global Scholar's Prize 2014

Winning Essay



The inaugural IGS Global Scholar's Prize (2014) rewards an outstanding essay addressing issues of global complexity and significance.

The competition for the prize this year was open to all students in Years 10 and 11 and the topic I chose was *In the Shadow of MH17*. Entrants were assessed on their ability to present a clear and well-structured response with well-informed judgements, evidence of broad research and accurate referencing. I was amazed by the high standard of the entries.

The award of this prize will be made annually and each year the topic will ask students to interrogate contentious global issues that have emerged during the year.

I am delighted to announce that this year's winner is **Samuel Garrett**, Year 10. I'm sure you will be as inspired as I am by his accomplishment in global scholarship.

Shauna Colnan, Principal



About the prize winner

I am honoured to have received the inaugural IGS Global Scholar's Prize. Since a young age I have been fascinated by global issues and in the way nations and people interact and relate to each other.

IGS's international outlook has been a major factor in nurturing this interest, and over the 13 years I have attended IGS it has been, for me, one of the best aspects of the school.

So, when the new Global Scholar's Prize was announced, I was particularly excited and interested in it as a way of improving my writing, research skills, and analysis of global issues. I believe that this essay has allowed me to deepen my interests and given me a lot of experience in the writing process. It has been a great opportunity.

Samuel Garrett, Year 10

In the Shadow of MH17

Historians will look back on the tragic destruction of MH17 as a moment that changed the global geopolitical landscape. Since the Cold War, the West has scrambled for more influence in an increasingly globalised economy, and the states of the former Soviet Union have looked for ways to improve their financial situation (*Mancini 2014*). MH17 drove a wedge between them the moment it exploded in the skies over Ukraine. Years of hope and good intentions now lie scattered like debris and it will take time to pick up the pieces, and international relations have taken on a whole different dynamic as a result.

Like the attack on Pearl Harbour, the fall of the Berlin Wall, or even the attacks of 9/11, the most significant impact of the MH17 disaster was not the event itself but the galvanising effect it had on world leaders, and the global rethink in international relations that it caused. MH17 means much more than whether Eastern Ukraine re-joins Russia. It holds implications that extend far beyond the battlefields in which it now lies, and it is these shockwaves that traversed the world that are changing the way the world's powers interact.

This essay will look beyond the confines of the Ukrainian conflict and the human tragedy of MH17. It will examine the event's impact within Russia, the way it relates to the US and the rest of the world, and what it means for relations within Europe and the future of the EU. It will show how highly publicised events like this expose and widen underlying tensions between nations.

The speed and severity of the accusations of direct Russian involvement in the immediate reaction to the tragedy demonstrates the extent to which Russia's relations

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with the rest of the world had deteriorated even before the missile was fired (*Gill 2014*). Ukraine and Russia still dispute whose fault it was, but from the beginning, the rest of the world had made up its mind: it was Russia and those affiliated with them who were responsible (*Knott 2014*). Most of this breakdown in relations has occurred beneath the radar of the world's attention, having been glossed over by optimistic rhetoric. It is only now, after 298 people are dead, that the rest of the world is realising just how far away the world's 8th largest economy (*Carroll 2014*) had drifted.

In the aftermath of MH17, the Northern Hemisphere has returned to its historical blocs. Angry accusations have been traded between the US and Russia, each blaming the other for the deterioration in relations, and a dramatic reshuffling of foreign policy in Russia and the US has followed (*Russia Today 2014*).

Russia, for its part, is retreating from the Western world. The downing of MH17 has prompted a renewed onslaught of economic sanctions on Russia, many of them targeted at high-ranking officials and associates of Vladimir Putin himself in an attempt to pressure him to change his policies (*Connolly 2014*). Four months after the crash, these sanctions have only served to further isolate Russia while Putin's stance remains defiant. His decisions are based more on national ambition than fiscal responsibility, even with the economy on the brink of recession (*Deutsche Welle 2014*).

Forcibly cutting off Russian industry from the international market may just strengthen it back at home. With a stronger domestic industrial sector, the Russian economy may split from the world, even when the West is eventually ready to welcome it back. Increased sanctions on Russia could result in the creation of a parallel world economy, composed of Russia, China, and former USSR states in Asia.

Sergei Neverov, a high-ranking member of the United Russia party, and one of those currently sanctioned, is one of many who consider the sanctions ill advised. He agrees that they will only help Russia domestically, saying it "is a way for America to destabilise the situation and enter into the European market in the future". Norman Pollack, a US professor of history at the University of Michigan has called the sanctions "poorly designed tools" and has accused Obama of using "attitudes of the Cold War". Perhaps it is not just Russia returning to the Cold War, but all sides involved (*Komsomolskaya Pravda 2014*).

Far from fearing this push into exile, Putin appears to embrace it, but even as he tightens his grip and turns Russia down a more imperialistic path, a small, vocal Russian opposition, made up of political groups and those aligned with the "white ribbon" anti-Putin movement, are attempting to instigate change to align Russia

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