





When I was growing up during the Cold War, the geopolitical narrative seemed clear-cut and favored Americans. The United States and the Soviet Union faced off for supremacy in every corner of the globe, fighting proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, Central America and beyond. Most American presidents developed reputations as strong leaders, staking their presidencies on promoting democracy, liberty, free-market economies and Judeo-Christian values. Soviet premiers were similarly strong, and equally committed to spreading collectivism, repression and atheistic totalitarianism. Most Americans knew that Uncle Sam was on the right side of history. The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and resulting freedom for hundreds of millions behind the Iron Curtain proved it. Yet today, it seems [Barack Obama](#) and [Vladimir Putin](#) have collectively thrown away those playbooks and in essence created a new "Bizarro World" order. Baby boomers will recall "Bizarro World" from '60s-era Superman comics as a planet resembling Earth, except instead of spherical, it is strangely cube-shaped, and all things held dear on Earth are despised there. It is, in effect, a counter-Earth. So, it seems, is our world in the Age of [Obama](#). Perhaps it started when [Mr. Obama](#) campaigned in 2008 as a "global citizen" who advocated a world free of nuclear weapons. In 2009, his first priority in office was attempting to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp and grant constitutional rights to al Qaeda and Taliban terrorism suspects, even though they had killed nearly 3,000 people in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and countless thousands more around the globe. Later that year, he unilaterally scrapped a planned missile-defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic meant to defend against an eventual Iranian intercontinental ballistic-missile capability. Now [Mr. Obama](#) has ushered in roughly \$1 trillion in defense cuts over a decade, which will hollow out the military in similar fashion as the 1970s, and leave our armed forces unable to defend American interests, let alone those of our allies. Across both the Atlantic and Pacific, Soviet premiers were viewed as ruthless, and owing to their party line of atheism, labeled in the West as "godless communists." While [Mr. Putin](#), a former KGB lieutenant colonel, is every bit as ruthless as his Moscow predecessors, he's found religion. In fact, [Mr. Putin](#) has made defending Christianity and advancing its values a central platform of his rule. Ironically, he's helped to defend Christians in Syria, under attack by the Islamist-dominated opposition that the White House supports. Like many Americans, he's also "alarmed" to see the onslaught against Coptic Christians in Egypt at the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood, a terrorist organization that was in power in Cairo in 2012-13, thanks in part to Team Obama's support of Islamists throughout the Arab Spring. While American military might is being slashed and global leadership fades, [Mr. Putin](#) has built up his military capability significantly, increasing [Russia's](#) defense budgets 40 percent since 2007. Following up on his annexation of two Georgian provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in 2008, [Mr. Putin](#) has now taken over Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. He's working on Eastern Ukraine now, and who knows where he'll set his sights tomorrow. [Mr. Putin](#) says he wants to



“protect Russian speakers,” and is willing to accept economic and diplomatic punishment to make it happen. Why? He knows [Russia](#)’s population is slowly falling, as is the case in many developed countries, dropping from 148 to 143 million people since 1994. One reason for the decline: [Russia](#) leads the world in abortion rates, divorce rates and alcoholism. Male life expectancy is just 64. For cultural reasons, however, those social problems on steroids aren’t similarly impacting [Russia](#)’s Muslim south in breakaway republics such as Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia. As detailed by the American Foreign Policy Council’s Ilan Berman in his new book, “Implosion: The End of [Russia](#) and What it Means for America,” with current demographic trends, [Russia](#)’s 20 percent Muslim minority could be the country’s majority by 2050. [Mr. Putin](#) knows this, and it terrifies him. It’s why he is desperate to “protect Russian speakers,” and is trimming around the edges of neighboring former Soviet republics. Since [Mr. Obama](#) and our European Union allies won’t stop him, [Mr. Putin](#) likely won’t be satisfied with Georgia and Ukraine. I just spent two weeks in Belgium and Spain, speaking at a European Parliament forum on the Trans-Atlantic Trade  and [Investment](#) Partnership (TTIP) negotiations between the United States and the European Union. [Russia](#)-Ukraine dominated nearly every discussion with dozens of opinion leaders in politics, think tanks and media. My sense is the EU is reluctant to seriously confront [Mr. Putin](#), since their 28 member states [depend on](#)  [Russia](#) for an average about one-third of their natural gas. For nations closer to [Russia](#) — for instance, Hungary and Finland — those numbers rise to between 80 percent and 100 percent. Thus, [Mr. Putin](#) can punish them with significantly higher energy prices. Why should they take a risk by implementing tough economic sanctions or even considering military action, especially if they can’t count on [Mr. Obama](#) to be similarly tough? It’s a fair point, especially considering the new “Bizarro World” order we live in today. I wonder what Ronald Reagan would say. Read the [original article](#) at WashingtonTimes.com.