In a recent interview, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld suggested that U.S. weakness is fueling instability around the world.

How true. We can see the proof unfolding before our eyes.

Russia has seized Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Venezuela's regime has killed and wounded dozens of student protestors, jailing hundreds more. Syria's regime has killed 130,000 people and displaced another 9 million. Iran continues its march towards a nuclear weapon despite an international accord meant to stop it. And North Korea continues to run a nuclear-armed, nation-state concentration camp.

Tyrant after tyrant has oppressed countless millions without a second thought.

During the Cold War, there was greater stability worldwide as two superpowers maintained a delicate balance of power. Both the U.S. and Soviet Union backed up their words with real power – economic, diplomatic and military. Nation-states and non-state actors knew that each was tough, save President Carter, and when they made a threat, they carried it out. Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Central America all saw the results of these proxy wars between capitalism and communism fought out firsthand.

Once the Soviet Union fell, driven out of business by President Reagan's military buildup combined with falling oil prices that sapped Moscow's finances, it was supposed to be a global golden era for the free-market system, democracy and individual liberty.

And for the most part, it was.

But al Qaeda's terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, changed everything. In doing everything humanly possible to prevent a repeat, or even worse, the George W. Bush administration launchedwars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Those wars toppled al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, and removed Saddam Hussein fromIraq — a man who invaded two neighboring countries, routinely opened fire on U.S. jets for a dozen years, and continued to fund Palestinian suicide bombers. They were not flawless wars, very few ever are. Yet both energized the international left, which had sought to restrain U.S. power ever since the Cold War began in 1945.

Communist, anarchist and even al Qaeda-linked groups launched an all-out information war, using detention of enemy combatants, coercive interrogations, rendition of top terror suspects and a handful of isolated ugly incidents as their weapons of choice. It was a

powerful message, and one that sought to take U.S. power down a notch or two. Or three.

President Obama swept into the White House riding that sentiment.

He railed against Guantanamo, and fought to give constitutional rights to foreign terrorists at war with America. He banned coercive interrogations, depriving U.S. agents of valuable intelligence about the next attack. He unilaterally pulled out of Iraq, leaving it to the mercy of Iranian influence. He unilaterally halted our planned missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic.

He offered to negotiate with our staunchest foes, and was promptly rebuffed by dictators in Iran and North Korea. He supported "pro-democracy" movements across the Arab Spring, leading to anti-U.S. Islamists taking over formerly allied governments in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen. He went to war in Libya to protect civilians from the Moammar Gadhafi regime – which led to an Islamist takeover and eventual disaster at Benghazi.

And he won a Nobel Prize while he was just getting started.

The far-left vision of the U.S. as just another nation in the United Nations is coming to fruition. Tyrants and despots see that too. And they like what they see: Finally, a weak America that won't stand up to their power plays and desires for regional, and in some cases, world domination.

Generations of Americans have sacrificed so much throughout the Cold War to fight for the freedom agenda worldwide.

And now?

It seems Barack Obama thinks he can influence strongmen like Russia's Vladimir Putin, Iran's Ali Khamenei, Syria's Bashar Assad, North Korea's Kim Jong-Un and Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro like honest, well-intentioned business executives. That's fantasyland.

What America needs most right now is a strong leader. Russia has one. It's why Putin has taken Ukraine's Crimea without a second thought.

They are winning this latest geopolitical standoff. The White House is not.

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