

**Diablo Valley College – POLSC 250 – International Relations (9064)  
Research Paper – Summer 2026**

**A New Cold War? Russia, America, and the Crisis in Ukraine**

**Question:** As we continue the fourth year of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (or the “special military operation” as Putin describes it), analysts are fearing that this conflict could spiral out of control and lead to a shooting war between Russia and the U.S. and possibly go nuclear. On one side of the debate are analysts who blame Russia for wanting to expand their empire westward. On the other side, are those who cite the expansion of NATO and the drive to expand Western influence eastward up to Russia’s borders. However, all sides believe that any sort of direct conflict between the two countries would be calamitous for both, and the world. Examining the 9 theories we are discussing this semester, please answer the following: Of the 9, which seems to be the most accurate in describing the ultimate reasons for the current conflict?

**Sample Outline**

(But feel free to design your outline any way you wish)

**I. Introduction / Thesis Statement** – a brief statement outlining your position or something relevant about this issue (make sure to specify which of the 9 theories you are advancing).

**II. Body** – the bulk of the paper is here, in data taken from the readings and other evidence you have found in support of your position.

1. A brief history of US / Russian foreign relations and the crisis in Ukraine in 2014.
2. An explanation of the theory you are advancing (realism, liberalism, etc.)
3. Trump and Biden’s foreign policy toward Ukraine specifically and Russia generally.

**III. Conclusion** – based on the evidence you have gathered your opinion on whether a war between the US and Russia is inevitable, necessary, or even “winnable.”

Extras:

1. Again, make sure to include a citation *every time you use a statement or an idea from the readings that I have provided, or that you found in your own independent research.* **THIS PAPER MUST BE DONE IN APA STYLE FORMAT.**

2. “A” papers will be:
  - a. *fully* documented and cited;
  - b. a *minimum* of 15 pages (including title, abstract, and reference page, meaning **12 full pages of text analysis**);
  - c. research *beyond* authors provided;
  - d. turned in *on time* (**July 15, 2026**)