

Putin weak and bluffing say experts

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Threat: Last week Moscow received 200 Fath-360 ballistic missiles from Iran. The missiles have a range of up to 75 miles, enabling Russia to hit targets further inside Ukraine.

Is Russia collapsing? Putin is warning the West against allowing Ukraine to shoot missiles at Russian targets. Yet some think he cannot hold on to power for long.

What's happening?

Last Friday, US president Joe Biden met British prime minister Sir Keir Starmer in the **White House**. Their subject was the war in **Ukraine**.

Biden and Starmer are expected to approve the use of British **missiles** to strike at Russian military targets — although in the UK, talks were still taking place on Sunday.

Find out more

Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky says the move will help his country to victory in the war against **Russia**, which began in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine.

But Russia's leader Vladimir Putin says it would mean that **NATO** countries are at war with Russia — which would be bad news for western countries.

Yet some think that Putin is **bluffing**.

Russia's army is struggling. It lost 270 troops, 73 **artillery**, 121 vehicles and one jet in a single day of fighting last week.

The country's **economy** relies on China, after other countries stopped buying many Russian goods.

The country is also made up of 190 different groups of people with different cultures. Keeping them all together and happy is very difficult.

Others say Russia is still strong. The army is still putting huge pressure on Ukraine. Their economy is still growing. For many Russians, the war is something that happens far away.

Historian Alexander Etkind thinks the Russian **empire** will collapse. But it might take a very long time.

Is Russia collapsing?

Some say

Yes! Russia is an empire. Keeping such a huge country together whilst at the same time fighting a war is impossible.

Others think

No! Putin is still in control. And Russia is still a huge force in Ukraine. People have predicted the fall of Russia before — but they were wrong.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

"Look back over the past, with its changing empires that rose and fell, and you can foresee the future, too."

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Are you worried by the war in Ukraine? What can do you if you are worried?

Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180), Roman emperor and philosopher

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What do you think?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: How does a missile work? How does Putin keep power over Russia?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are a Russian who might be told to fight in Ukraine. What do you do?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Why do you think wars are so common in human history? Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Write a song or poem calling for an end to the war.

Glossary

White House - The official residence of the US president, in Washington DC. Burnt by British troops in 1814, it was rebuilt and painted white to hide the smoke stains.

Ukraine - A country in Eastern Europe. It was invaded by Russia in February 2022.

Missiles - Objects (e.g. a stone, arrow, artillery shell, bullet, or rocket) that are thrown, shot, or launched usually so as to strike something at a distance.

Russia - The largest country in the world by area. It has a population of 144 million people.

Nato - The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was founded in 1949 to unite Western democracies in Europe and North America against the perceived growing threat of the USSR. It now has 31 members.

Bluffing - When someone pretends they are about to do something.

Artillery - Weapons.

Economy - The way that money flows through a country, which affects wages and the cost of living.

Empire - A group of countries or states ruled by a single power — sometimes a king or queen.