

## Unitarian Talk

Talk given to the Unitarian church on 8 February 2015

The news from Ukraine remains grim. In order to understand where events may take us in the future, it is worth reviewing what has led to the present struggle between Russia and Ukraine.

What lies at the root of the contest was described in a talk given in August 2013 by Ruslan Pukhov, author of an authoritative study of the new Russian Military Doctrine, and the head of a think tank associated with the Ministry of Defence. He stated that, under the Russian national strategy, Russia's renaissance as a great power requires the restoration of its dominance over other former Soviet republics.

Let us look at the reasons that have pushed Russia to launch its campaign to regain great power status:

One is that Russia has failed to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic political, security, and economic systems, and instead has faced the Euro-Atlantic world encroaching on its turf,

The other is that Vladimir Putin, who was in danger of losing public support, has recovered it by pursuing a nationalist course.

Let us first  
and boxed in. After the end of the Cold war and the break-up of the Soviet Union, it was the general assumption in both Russia and the West that Russia would become fully democratic and eventually join Western institutions. Russia, however, moved away from democracy. Moreover, mistrust and conflicting aspirations allowed for only limited progress towards integration.

NATO refused to accept Russia as a member, because it was not a democracy, and membership would have given Russia a veto. The NATO-Russia Council was however established in 2002 to co-operate on re-establishing a democratic

1994. Only limited progress was made in giving substance to the  
that of Freedom,  
Security and Justice, External Security, and finally the domain of  
Research, Education, Culture, In additionally it took up to 2012 to qualify to  
join the WTO.

While NATO and the EU were not prepared to make membership  
available to Russia, they gradually offered it to the other East European

Revolutions, but also at the danger that the contagion of democracy might spread to Russia.

In response, the Russians proposed in 2008 a European Security Treaty  
nization, military  
alliance or coalition, shall be implemented with due regard to security  
interests of all other Parties The Russian initiative would have had the  
effect of:

- blocking the expansion of NATO and possibly the EU,
- preventing Ukraine from joining Western organizations, and
- devaluing existing security arrangements, notably the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the OSCE.

The Russian proposal would notably have dropped OSCE principles that had the effect of protecting other East European states against Russia pressure, notably:

- the non-interference in internal affairs,
- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and

- the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

Adding to Western suspicion of Russian intentions were two of the five principles of Russian foreign policy that President Medvedev announced in the same year - the Russian claim to a sphere of influence in its neighbourhood, and to a right to intervene abroad in the defence of Russian citizens.

Russia also proposed in 2008 to the EU a bilateral Union of Europe between Russia and the EU as equals, giving Russia a veto. The Union would have formed a single energy complex, which could have prevented Europe from diversifying it-

institute a trade boycott and might support secessionist movements in Ukraine if Ukraine signed the Association Agreement.

Putin took this position also because he wanted to see Ukraine in Eurasian Economic Union, which was formed on 1 January 2015.

The Eurasian Economic Union is intended to be a counter-weight to the EU and perhaps eventually to serve as a response to NATO. Its formal structures are modelled on those of the EU. In practice, it may work differently.

partners in the Eurasian Economic Union would be no more than semi-sovereign entities without autonomy in foreign policy or in some aspects of domestic policy.



Various Russians have described the desired type of federation as similar to that in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or between Greenland and Denmark. Such an arrangement would be, in fact, a loosely jointed confederation. Bosnia is barely a state, and Greenland is on the verge of independence.

the Ukrainians are incapable of equalling, have rolled across the Russian border in increasing numbers. The so-called Prime Minister of Donetsk has announced his intention of conquering all of the Donbas. The Rebels now hold about 40%. A recent issue of the Economist quotes Sergei Markov, the informal Kremlin voice, as saying that Russia needs to topple the government in Kyiv and occupy Odessa and Kharkiv. Only then, he writes, "will sanctions be lifted, the junta driven out of power and Ukraine become democratic and federal - in exchange for not taking Kiev."

first decade of the new century had been founded on two factors: the stability that he brought to Russia and a rising standard of living fuelled by the increasing prices on hydro-carbons. Russia enjoyed an average annual growth of over 5% of the GDP. By 2013 the growth had, however, slowed to about one and a half percent. The decline in economic growth, a consequent drop in support in public opinion polls, resulted in massive demonstrations in Moscow and St. Petersburg that lasted from late fall until early May of 2012 against his return to office as President.

The policy of aggressive nationalism is intended, according to Lilia

has sho

Russia is seeking to destroy a nascent Ukrainian democracy. The subjugation of Ukraine could lead to increased Russian pressure in Central Europe, the Balkans and the Black Sea. It would likely produce a humanitarian disaster and send Ukrainian refugees streaming into Western Europe. It might also invite further Russian adventures.

Under the circumstances, the West would be well advised to continue its support for Ukrainian independence.

A compromise could likely be found, if Putin is prepared to accept Ukrainian sovereignty and independence:

Ukraine might, instead of seeking NATO membership, formally reassert its neutrality. Ukraine has little to lose. NATO has in effect twice rejected its application.

The EU has offered free trade with the Eurasian Economic Union. The EU might therefore amend the Association Agreement with Ukraine so as to allow the country to have free trade with both the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Putin appears to have revived the Russian proposals of 2008 for East-West security treaties. Perhaps the West should respond with counter-proposals of our own. It was out of initially strongly opposed viewpoints that were negotiated the Helsinki Accords of 1975, which marked a major step towards eventually ending the Cold War.