



Statement before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

“IMPLICATIONS OF THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE”

A Statement by:

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Mr. Chairman, Senators. My own general message is simple: a democratic, sovereign and European Ukraine is what the Ukrainian people want and deserve. Such a Ukraine will encourage Russia to become an important post-imperial partner of the West as a whole. And that's a very important strategic point. Hence, support for Ukrainian aspirations is not political warfare against Russia but is, in fact, favoring Russia's long-term interests. And we have to keep that in mind, that larger framework.

A Eurasian union, such as the one that Putin aspires to create, held together by pressure and motivated by nostalgia, is not a long-term solution for Russia's own socioeconomic and geopolitical dilemmas. Hence, sooner or later the current authoritarianism driven by imperial ambitions in Russia will fail, not only because Ukraine is hesitant and opposed; neither Kazakhstan nor Uzbekistan are eager to again become camouflaged colonies.

With that in mind, let me make just a few general suggestions. And conceivably, some of them may be redundant because I do not have access to all that is going or is being discussed within the administration.

First, my suggestion is that we should encourage all EU parliaments to pass resolutions hailing the courage and determination of this new, younger Ukrainian generation that has just shown itself to be so devoted to its new sovereignty, and we should express our strong support for it. And this should be done by other democratic assemblies as part of the historical record. It is important for the Ukrainian people to feel that they are not alone.

We should also deplore all forms of blackmail, bribery or pressure designed to limit Ukrainian sovereignty. Our admiration for the heroes of the Maidan should be clearly emphasized and they should be conscious of our identification with them. And I know that some members of this committee have been in Kiev during the most dramatic moments.

Ukrainian national patriotism is a recently reborn phenomenon, but it is fervent and it is authentic. Putin likes to say that Ukrainians are really Russians, but he overlooks one very simple fact: today's Ukraine harkens back directly to Kiev's Russia, that is to say, to Kievan Rus of one thousand years ago.

Secondly, we should encourage the emergence in Ukraine of a visible standing committee for national unity and independence, with politically and effectively defined leadership that can engage, if the opportunity arises, in an ongoing dialogue with President Yanukovich regarding Ukraine's long-term future. We know for a fact that some oligarchs who support Yanukovich would be interested in a dialogue with the opposition. Not all of the oligarchs are devoted to the idea of Ukraine being essentially a subprovince of a larger empire, and they have their own interests in promoting Ukrainian independence and closer ties with the West.

In brief, we should not strive to polarize the situation in Ukraine, but we should promote the opportunity for a serious dialogue with the political entity that authoritatively speaks for the will of the politically awakened Ukrainian nation, and we should encourage them also to prepare perhaps for the free elections in 2015, though it is not at all certain at this stage that such elections indeed will be free.

Third, the United States should use its influence, as I hope it is using it, in the IMF, in the World Bank, and in the various G-8 or G-20 assemblies to explore what could be done to help Ukraine expand its relationship with the EU while remaining Russia's good neighbor, even under the currently contrived arrangements, though not as a satellite.

And we should be exploring ways, if there are any, by which the WTO could help to expose economic intimidation, which is not in keeping with its rules, and communicate its sense of concern to the party responsible for generating it. Perhaps there could also be some steps taken to facilitate preferential access for Ukrainians seeking to study and work in Europe.

Fourth, we should keep in mind that the longer-run issue is what will Russia become as China increases its influence in the former Soviet Central Asia.

We should keep reminding the Russian people and their leaders that we respect Russia's European identity and culture and that Russia's true destiny is also to be a major European state in the larger democratic West. We should make it clear that we seek neither Russia's isolation nor fragmentation, but Russia's evolution towards a genuine democracy.

One way or another, that day will come. Putin stands in the way today with his nostalgic dream of a new empire called the Eurasian Union. But the fact is that such a prospect is not realistic. None of the would-be members of the Eurasian Union truly desire to limit their sovereignty, to cede it to Russia, or to participate in the creation of a new union which evokes memories of the recently disappeared union, not to mention the older-still Russian Empire.

In brief, and I'll conclude on this: we need a constructive, open-ended, long-term policy for Ukraine as well as a long-term option for Russia that may follow.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.