

Russia and the Ukraine
Scribed by Zarina Dawood

On September 25th, Dr. Craig Nation, Professor of Strategy and the Director of Russian and Eurasian Studies at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, spoke about Russia, Ukraine, and the World. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia became a very complicated country. Russia still has one of the largest military force budgets in the world and is now part of an association called BRICS, which stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Russia's president is Vladimir Putin, who is 62 years old. Putin's main goal is to make Russia a "great world power" again. He was president for two terms, from 2000 to 2008. Later it was decided that a presidential term in Russia would last for six years instead of four, and Putin ran again. He became elected president for the third term in 2012. He will be able to run again for another six-year term in 2016. Considering his popularity, it is very likely that, as long as nothing happens to him, he will be president until 2024.

Professor Nation discussed the current crisis between Russia and the Ukraine. Last February, the Ukrainian government fell. Protests had been going on for some time in and around Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. Eventually the protests were suppressed and the Ukrainian government issued a cease-fire. After the Ukrainian president left the country for Russia, a separatist movement developed in Eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed rebels and the Ukrainian government.

In the midst of this conflict, Russia annexed mostly pro-Russian Crimea, which included a naval base and support personnel. Professor Nation discussed the history of the Crimea under Khrushchev and how it was perceived as an ill-advised gift to the Ukraine in the 1950s. The Russian perspective supported reversing this gift, and the annexation back to Russia became part of the separatist crisis. Professor Nation also pointed out that Khrushchev's son is now the Russian expert at the U. S. Naval War College in Rhode Island.

In the midst of the crisis, the United States imposed economic sanctions on Russia. The sanctions were ineffective at preventing Russia involvement in the crisis, however. The sanctions are now being used to punish Russia. Eventually a cease-fire was called by the Ukrainian government because of the devastating losses caused by Russian-backed rebels in Eastern Ukraine.

Professor Nation reminded the audience that the U.S. needs to work with Russia if we want peace. He outlined a potential outcome being a formally neutral Ukraine to show Russia that they are not a threat on Russia's doorstep of what Putin sees as an expansionist NATO alliance.

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