

The West Must View Russia in Realistic not Romantic Terms

By Don Sutherland

Before, during, and after the Soviet era, Russia has been a destabilizing force in Eurasia. For example, the August 8, 1859 issue of the *London Standard* referred to the "constant aggression of Russia on her neighbor's territory; her opposition to every liberal effort of Prussia, her encroachments upon the dominions of the Porte [Ottoman Empire] and upon Sweden, her efforts in the creation of an independent Greek kingdom to serve her own purposes."

Today, one sees vast similarities to Russia's historic experience. Only the names and countries have changed. Putin demands that Ukraine be deprived of its territorial integrity, stripped of its democracy/democratic government, and deprived of its sovereign authority.

Russia is trapped in its dark history, in large part due to its President Vladimir Putin's revanchist view and his Tsarist delusions. Until Russia breaks free of a history that feeds its pathological insecurity, burning desire to subjugate its neighbors, and insatiable thirst for empire, the West should recognize Russia as it is.

The West must not view Russia as it wishes it were or as it wants it to become. Russia under Putin is unreliable. It is dangerous. It is brutal. Policy should be based on reality.

That means: (1) Doing what is necessary so that Ukraine wins a clear victory. Even a partial Russian victory would nourish Russia's worst impulses and lay the foundation for its next war; (2) NATO membership for Ukraine/other European states that seek it; (3) Unrelenting public diplomacy aimed at spreading the messages of freedom, human rights, and democracy, for global and Russian audiences; (4) Generous post-war reconstruction investment in Ukraine (a "Marshall Plan" for Ukraine); and, (5) a rapid scaling up of renewable energy to end reliance on Russian energy.

Ukraine has made an enormous investment in the defense of freedom and democracy with its tremendous sacrifices. The West needs a bold policy that assures Ukrainian victory and safeguards freedom and democracy afterward. Doing so will lead to greater security, regardless of angry Russian saber-rattling. Doing less will increase the risk of an even larger war.