ANDREW MARR:
So is this crisis moving towards a stage where a conflict on Europe’s borders is inevitable? I’m joined by Ukraine’s Ambassador in London, Volodymyr Khandogiy. Ambassador, thank you very much for coming in.

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
I suppose my first question is: what happens if those tanks do roll over the border? Will Ukraine fight? Your fighting forces aren’t anything like able to cope with Russia’s.

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well my answer is yes.
Yes.

**VOLODYMYR KHAN DOGIY:**
I am quite confident that Ukrainian Armed Forces will fight and that should be very clear to everyone – in particular to Russians.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Can you stop the Russians taking the east of your country if they want to, however, really?

**VOLODYMYR KHAN DOGIY:**
Well that’s a hypothetical question in a way …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Sure.

**VOLODYMYR KHAN DOGIY:**
… but certainly I think Ukraine would need help from wherever it might come to stop the Russians. Certainly it would be very difficult for Ukraine alone to fight such a big country.

**ANDREW MARR:**
So what do you look for from NATO and the OSCE and the other Western organisations?

**VOLODYMYR KHAN DOGIY:**
Well first let’s say a few words about the OSCE. We think it’s very important that OSCE presence is there. I would say that let the OSCE flood the country and be everywhere to monitor what is going on.

**ANDREW MARR:**
This is the Organisation, we should explain, for Security and Cooperation in Europe …
VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Exactly, exactly.

ANDREW MARR:
… and it’s OSCE observers who I think now we believe they’re locked in a dungeon or in a basement somewhere?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Yeah, there are some … I think seven persons that have been kept by Russian … pro-Russian forces, let’s say. They’re in Eastern Ukraine and they are being kept. Those are not exactly monitors from the OSCE, but rather they are representatives of the OSCE and they’re in the country in accordance with the Vienna Document on the …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Sure. And do you know anything about the conditions in which they’re being kept or their future?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well we do not have any independent information on that.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. Now what about … We heard there was going to be a big anti-terrorist organisa… operation as you call it. You were going to take back some of the buildings that have been taken by pro-Russian forces and yet we haven’t seen much sign of that actually happening.

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well the counter-terrorist operation is ongoing. Certainly the first and foremost objective is not to harm the innocent civilians there. That’s why probably the operation is not that effective that one could have expected, but it’s going on, there are certain steps. I don’t want to comment on the military side of the operation …

ANDREW MARR:
Of course.

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
… but it is going on and I hope and I am confident that it will bring results.

ANDREW MARR:
I’m sorry to bang on about it, but if Russia does move over the border with troops, are you going to look to NATO and the West for military support?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well it’s really up to the West what kind of support they will offer to Ukraine. Certainly we will be looking for their support. We are not talking at this stage I think about any direct military involvement from the NATO countries or from the West in general, but certainly at this stage we are talking about certain material, non-lethal equipment that might be provided to Ukraine.

ANDREW MARR:
But it’s of the same sort of scale as Belgium taking on the German Empire at the beginning of the First World War. It’s a pretty unequal struggle if it’s just you and the Russians, isn’t it?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well, as any parallel, it’s a little bit funny, but Ukraine certainly is looking for international support. But coming back to square one, we are prepared and we are ready to use all the necessary means to fight the aggressor.

ANDREW MARR:
So what right now would you like the West to do that it hasn’t been doing up to now?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well I think we have to give peace a chance. We still have to continue and explore and exhaust all possible diplomatic steps; we have to talk about further economic sanctions against the aggressor. So there are instruments at the disposal of Western counties to go ahead.
ANDREW MARR:
Russia says again and again and again the government in Kiev is not legitimate; that it’s a bandit government and so on. That can…that will eventually be ended when there are elections in Ukraine.

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Exactly.

ANDREW MARR:
How long before those elections take place and you can say we have an elected legitimate government here?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
We have a legitimate government now and those allegations are ridiculous. But the elections will take …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I would say the elected “legitimate” government.

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Yeah, yeah. But the elections will take pla… The election of the President will take place on 25th May and this is something that reinforces the legitimacy … the legitimacy of the presidential office.

ANDREW MARR:
So do you think the crisis is at its most serious before that election takes place perhaps?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
I think that the immediate objective is to disrupt the elections. So what we have to do together is to ensure that the elections will take place.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you think the new sanctions will make any difference?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Yes, I think so. I think we have to think about those sanctions that are painful. Not simply nominal steps, but painful sanctions that are there, we all know them, and the issue is how to introduce. I think … I heard and I read that tomorrow there will be further negotiations on that issue.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, a strange question if I may to end on. A lot of people looking from the outside see Ukraine and they hear Ukrainian and Russian spoken in the Ukraine and they look at the Russian orthodox churches and the traditions of the Ukraine and they say really what is the difference between Ukraine and Russia, what is the essence of Ukrainian independence and national tradition?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well former President of Ukraine (Kuchma) wrote a book, and the title of that book was Russia is not Ukraine. So it’s vice versa: Ukraine is not Russia. I mean linguistically there is a difference. Even historically, culturally. Although we are very close, I have to say that. But these are two nations and two countries.

ANDREW MARR:
And would it be so disastrous if the Eastern Ukraine, which is more Russian speaking, did secede? It wouldn’t be happy for you, but could you live with it in the end do you think?

VOLODYMYR KHANDOGIY:
Well I don’t want to certainly comment on that. I still believe … I am a firm believer that nothing of that sort will happen.

ANDREW MARR:
Ambassador, for now thank you very much indeed for coming in to talk to us.
Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS