

## **FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE, RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND THE NEIGHBORS: WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT?**

Transcript of the *Triialogue* Club International Meeting

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### **Dmitri Trenin, Director, Carnegie Moscow Center:**

Thank you Vladimir, good morning everybody. And, regarding the “brilliant” article in the New York Times, there was “brilliant” headline there, “Why Russia Will Not Interfere”. And, as you know, editors write headlines, not authors. And the main idea of the article, which was written on the 22 of February, is that Russia – and this point is different from what was written in Western mass media – behaved quite passively in Ukraine. And I tried, successfully or not successfully, to deal with the myths that Yanukovych was Putin’s puppet or that there were battalions of FSB troops around Kiev. But when I was writing that article, Russian policy changed dramatically. From a defensive policy, a policy of great tolerance for what was going on, Russia made a transition to action. Well, maybe this is the Russian nature – to wait patiently for a long time, to be very tolerant, and then to act swiftly, decisively, and all the way. What happened during the night from the 21 to the 22 of February changed Russian policy – the relations of Russia and the West, and to a large extent, it changed international relations. In what happened, to sum it up quickly, Russia stopped its geopolitical retreat, and also its international policy as a whole. Vladimir mentioned empires here, but there was no comparable period of such bloodless exit from empire with a minimum of blood as happened in 1991, when, overnight, Russia agreed to such change in the borders as well as in its foreign policy and geopolitical...it was unprecedented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And I would say that Russian elite and Russian people, most of all Russian people, actually showed their great nature, and it was such a good-faith move. This good-faith tolerance to elites and peoples of other countries, as well as to our former rivals, that medal had another side. That other side was represented by the fact that 25 million ethnic Russians remained outside of Russia. And in fact, that highly important issue was somewhat outside the boundaries of practical policy implemented by Russia. In the mainstream expert community, people preferred to not discuss it at all. It was considered that to mention it would be 19<sup>th</sup>-century style behavior, or, even worse, 1930s-style behavior of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and people thought that they wouldn’t raise this issue and that somehow it would be dealt with satisfactorily. Maybe that’s exactly what would have happened many years after the Cold War if Russia would have closed its cooperative partnerships and relationships with the West. It was not just wishful thinking of political scientists, but was the practical policy of all Russian presidents. On a regular basis, every 10 years, a Russian president suggested to the US and the West in general, to include Russia in the Western community. In 1992, President Yeltsin suggested to President Bush to have an alliance treaty with Russia, and Bush

answered that the Cold War was over and that there was no need for alliances any longer. About 10 years after that, President Putin, in very serious talks with NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, discussed the strong desire to join NATO. After 9/11, Russia *de facto* tried to become the most valuable ally of the US in the world. But the George W. Bush administration had some other goals and objectives and turned away from that offer. In 2010, so 10 years after that, President Medvedev, of course with Mr. Putin's strong support, suggested to NATO to have a joint anti-missile defense, which is a military union without calling it a military union. Attempt number 3 was the last attempt in this list, and maybe the last attempt in this cycle. I may be mistaken, but I believe that the night from the 21 to the 22 of February was the end of the period between two cold wars. What we called the "Post-Cold War Period" future historians will most likely call "The Period Between Cold Wars". To make an analogy to the World Wars, there were lots of unsolved fundamental problems and a lot of unfair things after WWI that occurred in Versailles, so all of that unfairness led to the Second World War. The most important mistake was the fact that after WWI, the world order did not include Germany. Several years ago, a group of wise men, great personalities, one of them is present here – General Trubnikov – met with the representatives of Russia, US and Europe and tried to discuss a model that would exclude the possibility of returning to a cold war, and this was the model of a new Euro-Atlantic security and safety community. We almost got there; there was the concept of a strategic partnership between Russia and NATO as well as one of missile defense, but as Churchill mentioned, regarding some other matters, "we came very close to the coast, but we sank". I don't want to take too much of your attention; I have been talking for a long time, and I don't want to create the impression that there was a terrible catastrophe, but what we have is a new international mode, and we are going to work within the conditions of this new international mode, and I don't say that it's a direct replication of the Cold War mode, but from my professional, personal point of view, this situation is such that, in relations with US, there will be more rivalry than cooperation, more competition. Any partnership is not just cooperation, there is some element of rivalry and competition, but what's important here is the balance, and that balance has shifted. Regarding Russia, yesterday the President of the Russian Federation gave a very important interview, and I listened to it and heard very important things. Russia is making a transition from its passive or reactive approach in its relations with the West, to the policy of protection of Russia's interests. For the first time since 1989, the first time in 25 years, Russia became an active player in Eastern Europe. I am not going to discuss specific issues, – I believe my colleagues will do this – but now, relations of Russia and the US are not of utmost importance because Russia has its independent relationship with Europe, with several countries in Europe, with other influential countries in Asia, the world is different, and the Cold War will not be replicated. It's not clear what the result will be, the passivity era is over and Russia will become much more active in the international field, and, being active, Russia will not be afraid of conflict with a leading world country. It's going to be hard for everyone; it will be hard for Russia. There will be challenges and risks outside as well as inside Russia, because, no, we continue living in society in countries with porous, transparent borders, which

will make this situation more interesting. But what is good, what is the best? So far, this shift happened without one single drop of blood. Of course it is highly important to not forget the military element, but we have to take into consideration everything regarding the military. But, still, every country should assess its role in this new world. Thank you.

**Armen G. Oganessian, Advisor to the Foreign Minister, Editor-in-Chief,  
*International Affairs* journal**

Thank you so much, thank you Mr. Chairman, but I am not involved in the workings of the Foreign Ministry and do not work in mass media regarding this policy, so what I will say here will be my personal point of view and does not necessarily reflect the point of view of the Foreign Ministry of Russia. Recently, I got the chance to address different audiences in Europe, my colleagues, many people of different ages, and we discussed the issues regarding greater Europe. In many different places – in Lisbon, in Prague, in London, in Berlin, some people treated this idea as a dream and some thought that it was a dream but quite pragmatic. Tolstoy has a wonderful saying that you can try to row as high up the river as you can, but the river of life will bring you down anyway. The idea of greater Europe at first was articulated by de Gaulle, and was a good dream promoted as a pragmatic dream. Then the idea was supported by Gorbachev, and then on the eve of a visit to the US, David Cameron supported the same idea, and when an Englishman supports an idea that was conceived in Paris, it is really great. Maybe you noticed when Putin talked about the Eurasian project he said that it could be a project with the idea of the future, coming closer to a Europe, that this idea would help Eurasian states economically and would bring Europe closer to the Pacific, so this is a huge scale idea. Lots of politicians, while they support this idea, in my conversation with Romanov ..., he said that this European-Eurasian cluster would help Europe deal with such existing challenges such as the recession, or the challenges of Asian countries like China. So you can ask me what the relationship of all this is to Ukraine. Unfortunately or fortunately, there is a direct link. There is this dual assessment of the situation, but then the development of the situation will show how we can look to the future idea of a greater Europe, which is not written off by events in Ukraine. Why is it important? Because only the grand funeral of this idea could be the signal that this is the beginning of some stage of Cold War, or of a return to Cold War. When we hear the rhetoric today from Washington we can see the great gap between the position of the US and the position of Europe regarding sanctions and other measures. Neither Lithuania, Greece, Spain, moreover Germany, will not follow Washington's lead. It is reminiscent of the situation with Iraq, but is somewhat more complicated. It is impossible to have the political, diplomatic or economic isolation of Russia, or that is just a propaganda slogan. And it is so far from real policy that it doesn't even require serious comment if you want to discuss it, so it can be discussed in the newspapers, in radio programs, and such. It's not just the fact that Russia is not Iran and not North Korea, but Russia is so intrinsic in the system of economic and

financial links that it's impossible to exclude it. The question could be asked differently: could the world, well, not the world, but part of the world—the US and the West—isolate themselves from Russia? This is how the question could be asked. I believe that, due to objective reasons, it is impossible. Regarding Ukraine and economic consequences, we are talking about European investment in Russia. It's not just energy, well, with energy it is easier, but we could be talking about the interests of any American company, regarding the Russian consumer market as well as titanium supplies for airplane manufacturing, etc. Regarding Ukraine, Mr. Kerry promised \$1 billion, and we have to take into consideration, long-term short-term debt of Ukraine is \$30 billion plus \$32 billion, so all in all, it is \$62 billion, so of course \$1 billion is not going to save the Ukrainian economy from collapse. And the question is: is it possible for the Ukrainian economy to survive without Russia? Some facts of the turnover of the US and Ukraine: \$300 billion; of Russia and Ukraine: \$42 billion. Who can compensate or substitute this volume of turnover, economic interest of the Ukraine in Russia? Russia doesn't even have to introduce any sanctions because if Ukraine is left by Russia it will be a very heavy burden on the shoulders of Europe. And Europe, with its recession and other issues, is not ready for that weight. Regarding the connection with greater Europe, what could be, although it may sound unrealistic, Ukraine could be the nerve that unites Europe and Russia via the economic salvation of that country and the Ukrainian people. Now we should focus on the fate of these people, not on legal intricacies, not on propaganda, but on the future of the Ukrainian people. At the initial stage of the crisis, Russia suggested to Europe to work together on the situation that was developing at that time in Ukraine. Now we hear the same kinds of urges for direct negotiations, also with the participation of the US and Europe, but at the time when we asked for it, when Yanukovich asked for it, when Moscow asked for it, it was not accepted and they tried to squeeze Russia out. Shuttle visits were made by foreign ministers of different countries; they tried to just deal with the situation manually and they failed dramatically. They could say that everything failed because of Russia's stubborn position, but there must be some kind of political intuition, which is part of the diplomatic focus. You cannot just look at the isolated Ukrainian platform, you must look around. How can one think that Russia would remain uninvolved when Russia did not do so with the situation in Ossetia, and here Russia and Ukraine are much more compatriots, we have many more cultural and spiritual roots. It's practically political blindness. Why does it happen this way? I believe that Kissinger is right; he says that we get carried away with our own laboratory analysis and forget about the metrics of the development of different cultures and civilizations. We don't look at real countries and people around us but just look at our own, lab-made analysis. And today a lot is said about Putin becoming an expansionist, showing imperial thinking, imperial treatment of the situation, but the Russian people wouldn't forgive him if he acted otherwise. He would just fail as a politician. How can a country that has survived World War II look at politicians, the portraits of such leaders as Bandera, and one of the political slogans is "Russians go to Russia". That's what we hear in different parts of Western Ukraine. Or those people who talk about the collaboration of the Second World War almost as heroes. They destroyed the monuments, and I'm not talking about

the monuments to Lenin – I don't like Lenin –but the monuments to Kutuzov. They also seized temples and churches, went to Western Ukraine, found people whose relatives were in Russia and demanded that those family members return to Ukraine and threaten to use physical violence. You can travel to Western Ukraine and, if your Russian is impeccable, you can pretend that you're from Moscow and just say "I love Moscow; Moscow is a great city", just don't talk about politics. I wouldn't recommend that because you can anticipate a very hostile reaction. I would like to say that, personally, I believe that Russia and Europe together are capable of dealing with what we call the Ukrainian Crisis, because there is this historic understanding of the metrics that have complicated relations. Also, European countries understand the facts of life; for instance, such papers as *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* write about the West not noticing the emerging radical and neo-Nazi movements on time. So, they are talking about adjustment of approaches and finding some common denominators, and we shouldn't talk a lot about the Cold War, or a Cold War revival, but should think about a constructive effort to deal with this situation.

**Andrey I. Suzdaltsev, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs,  
Higher School of Economics**

Thank you. The issues that I will discuss are going to be somewhat more boring than the previous presentations, as well as less emotional. I will discuss the internal and international reasons regarding Ukraine. We now have a new Master's program with three special courses, and every course is going to take about 6 months, so you can just imagine how much information we have regarding Ukraine. The crisis that we are witnessing in Ukraine is highly controversial and complicated and is not just a conflict of different elites. The foundation of the crisis is the amalgamation of social, economic and political problems that no one has solved for many years. We must recognize the fact that most of the Ukrainian population supported Maidan—notwithstanding where these people live, their faith, and cultural background—, because of economic problems. Because people live in poverty and are fed up with criminal gangs controlling the economy of Ukraine, it all created the roots for the support of Maidan in the west and it was also the cause of the silence in the east of the country. The major moves in business in Ukraine were related to the government of Yanukovych. Ukraine is just like an oasis, where the riches people of Europe live. First, Yanukovych provided support to the country's oligarch clans, but then the situation changed. A new elite emerged, and connected with Yanukovych's family as well as those of his sons. The criminal business left Yanukovych without the support of the oligarchs, and at that part, all the issues regarding faith, culture, ethnicity...the oligarchs in the background. And the political opposition, the highly ambitious political opposition, realized that that was their window of opportunity to grab power. It's never one-sided when we are dealing with political forces. First, Maidan was a major instrument of the EU and the US on Yanukovych, and at the same time it was the tool used to deal with internal political problems. After November 30, it became clear that the Euro integration issue was just

a cover for dealing with power. There were external international players; the attention was shifted from one to another, and they all just distracted attention. Maidan is the unique creation of the masses of people and it was an ever-moving, ever-changing force, which was this live mechanism of changing the political situation in the country. We must understand that at the initial stage, Maidan was the Ukrainian community's place for the manifestation of moods of protest. Maidan is not just an indicator of the level of Ukrainian democracy, but is also an indicator of the weakness of the Ukrainian state system. Maidan proved that traditional democratic instruments, such as rallies, one-person rallies working in the parliament, protests, were not working in Ukraine's situation. Is Maidan a destructive force? No, it is not a destructive force of the Ukrainian state system, but is a force of survival and the attempt to create some kind of state system in this very diverse country in the center of Europe. One might notice that Maidan is always giving the elites the chance to change their wording; first it was Presidential Parliamentary Republic, then it was Parliamentary Representative Republic, then Division of Powers, now the rewriting of the Constitution. So it's a non-stop search for the right wording. In this system, we can witness a built-in cancer. For example, the new president will emerge on the 25 of May, and again, the new Maidan may not accept this president, which is a trend. And if you look at Maidan, it is not just nationalism and the nationalists, but national socialists—there is a lot of socialist rhetoric there. We can see that Maidan is getting more and more radical by the ambitions of the three present-day leaders of Ukraine. The situation doesn't allow them to keep Maidan under control and it doesn't even help to create one single leader of modern Ukraine. Now, just like in the French Revolution, Maidan is getting to the stage of socialist radicalism and is now supported by representatives of the Western regions of Ukraine. We can ask whether or not the right forces could evolve like this without the support of the former leader, Yanukovich; they could not. The right sector, is actually, to a large extent, the brainchild and the creation of the Ukrainian special services. They tried to create those right-wing groups; they nurtured them, cherished them, and showed them as a potential threat to Russia, like we are the last-ditch effort to keep them under control. Also, Maidan was sued by Yanukovich because, having this situation, this nationalist group in the Ukrainian capital, used it as his story in Beijing, in Sochi, in Moscow. We can say that one of Maidan's foundations is real animal hatred of Russia and anti-Russian sentiment, and we shouldn't have any bad feelings regarding this. And it was clear that political forces in charge of it were trying to make Kiev a place of conflict of East and West. That had to be expected, and now we also have the expected stage where they try to find some compromises and try to find out who is to blame for what happened, and of course they'll try to find a third party, and would like to name Russia as the party to blame for the situation. Now, we are coming to the second stage of the modern Ukrainian crisis and the situation is such that Ukraine became a *de facto* federation. And with Maidan's victory, all of the representatives of the east and south of Ukraine lost their representation in Kiev, and it is not to be restored. The problem is that the winners, the representatives of the winners, are real passionate representatives of the nationalist ideology, that leaves no room for different views. And this is the internal conflict which is growing; we are witnessing it and can see the Russian signs

of it. Local elites in Ukraine traditionally were very strong, not just in Crimea, but in other places. Yanukovych was imposing; businessmen from Donetsk were influential there, and now they are squeezed away. Unfortunately, Kiev is also to blame for this because authorities there hysterically asked the West for assistance, which showed Kiev as weak, and, thus, the local regions realized that they had to find their way out independently. Regarding the Crimea, Kiev and the Crimea... Simferopol, you must understand that both parties are interested in the escalation of the conflict. In Simferopol you can find many subsidiaries of different enterprises from Moscow, which have their own original ambitions. Regarding the referendum, it should be there, and when we are looking at the Crimea, there is a problem, and quite often the parties are deadlocked, so a normal referendum is needed to understand the situation. A couple of words about the influence of the political crisis in Ukraine on the neighboring post-Soviet countries. We must say that the conflict with Maidan created much confusion amongst the authorities in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Maidan created a huge, large-scale, anti-authoritarian charge, and it was felt very strongly. Measures were taken in order to deal with the possible foundation of Maidan-type activities, other political forces were analyzed, new leaders were discovered, and the role of the EU and the US in the regions was assessed. And it's no big secret that in Maidan you can find representatives of the special services of all post-Soviet countries. What were they doing there? They studied the tactics Maidan's activities, and discovered the citizens of their countries that were participating. And Maidan's victory in Kiev made such countries as Belarus and Armenia look at their role in the Eastern Partnership. And this Eastern Partnership started to be treated as a trap for totalitarian leaders. However, none of the allies of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, provided a clear assessment of political supporters of Putin in this. The Higher Eurasian Council, which is going to meet, is somehow going to deal with this situation. Also in the materials you have you can read about Belarus and its special position. But the leaders of post-Soviet countries are looking for ways to survive in this situation.