

# CARNEGIE COUNCIL *for Ethics in International Affairs*

## Beyond a New Cold War? International Security and the Need for U.S.-Russia Cooperation

U.S. Global Engagement

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### Transcript

#### Introduction

**DAVID SPEEDIE:** Good evening. I'm David Speedie, director of the program on U.S. Global Engagement here at the Carnegie Council.

We like to think of every event here at the Council as special. This one is special for a number of reasons, not least because of our remarkable panel, but also because it's a co-sponsorship with two other organizations, the [Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia](#) at New York University, with whom we have partnered before, and also the [American Committee for East-West Accord](#), of which more just in a moment.

Our meeting is on Russia and I want to acknowledge immediately for support of our work on Russia, the [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#), and on U.S.-Russia relations, which are probably best summarized at the moment as not good and getting worse.

A couple of years ago, of course, it was over [Ukraine](#) that things began to go sour. Now the headline grabber is [Syria](#), where there is not only a sharp difference on how to end a [civil war](#) but the real threat of armed confrontation between Russia and the NATO ally, namely Turkey.

The gravity of the situation, I think, was amply and starkly underscored last week at the [52nd Munich Security Conference](#). First, Russian Prime Minister [Medvedev](#) evoked memories of World War II, it seemed, by [saying](#) that the world had "stumbled" into a new [Cold War](#). Then, U.S. Secretary of State [Kerry](#) raised the stakes vis-à-vis Russia by [announcing](#) a fourfold upgrade in U.S. defense spending on the [European Reassurance Initiative](#)—in other words, massive redeployment of defense resources to Europe.

Finally, as [reported](#) in today's *Financial Times*, under what must be the understated headline of the year, "NATO-Russia Ties Face Erosion," the secretary general of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, [Lamberto Zannier](#), said that "We are losing the tools and the kind of logic that we had during the Cold War. Everything is unstructured."

I think it's probably a question of searching for good tools and sensible logic that defines the American Committee for East-West Accord, defines the mission and purpose. It is, and I quote, "a nonpartisan organization of American citizens from different professions—business, academia, government service, science, law, and others—who are deeply concerned about the possibility of a new, potentially even more dangerous Cold War between the United States/Europe and Russia. Our fundamental premise is that no real or lasting American, European, or international security generally is possible without essential kinds of stable cooperation with Russia."

We are privileged to have tonight a truly blue-ribbon panel of representatives of the American Committee for East-West Accord. I'll just briefly introduce them in the order in which they will speak.

Jack Matlock is an old friend of the Council. He has been here several times. He is a career diplomat who served on the front lines of American diplomacy during the Cold War as ambassador to Czechoslovakia and then as ambassador to the Soviet Union when the Cold War ended. He has written extensively on the Cold War's end and the lessons to be learned from that. Currently he is on a teaching assignment at Duke University. Jack, we're delighted and truly honored to have you come all the way from Durham to speak with us.

Steve Cohen is professor emeritus of Russian studies, history, and politics at New York University and Princeton University. He is a contributing editor to *The Nation* magazine, represented by [Katrina vanden Heuvel](#) this evening and a regular commentator in other media. He has written extensively on the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia.

To his right is John Pepper, also a member of the founding board of the American Committee for East-West Accord, like the other gentlemen here. He is a former chairman and CEO of the Procter & Gamble Company, former chairman of the Walt Disney Company, and of the Yale Corporation. He is the author of two books, *What Really Matters* and *Russian Tide: Procter & Gamble Enters Russia*.

Finally, our cleanup hitter is Ambassador William vanden Heuvel. Ambassador vanden Heuvel is founder of the [Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute](#). He had previously been U.S. ambassador to the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva and deputy ambassador to the United Nations during the [Carter presidential administration](#). Among many other posts, he also served as president of the International Rescue Committee.

Each of these gentlemen will speak for about 10 to 12 minutes, and then of course welcome questions from the audience. I've asked them to think about both how we came to this pass, the situation today, and, to the extent possible, what might be done to ameliorate the dangerous decline in U.S.-Russia relations.

Jack, would you lead us off, please?

## Remarks

**JACK MATLOCK:** Thanks very much.

You know, many people are talking about a new Cold War. And indeed, the rhetoric we hear from our government and from the Russian government, the arguments and so on, are very reminiscent of the Cold War at its height. But when I think about it, I find some very fundamental differences to the relationship now and the relationship during the period that we now call the Cold War.

During the Cold War, there was a worldwide confrontation of the Soviet Union and its allies—some of them forced allies—and the United States and its allies, and much of the battleground was in what we called the Third World, where both sides were competing for influence. It was marked not only by that geopolitical competition, but what lay behind it was a deep ideological fissure. After all, the Soviet Union had been formed as the result of a [Bolshevik Revolution](#), a [Marxist](#) revolution, with the ostensible goal of leading a world revolution and creating a proletarian state, a socialist state, that would evolve into a communist state. So you had a profound difference, and one that applied worldwide.

Behind that we had the developing geopolitical competition of competing alliances and, most dangerously, an absolutely insane arms race. At the height of the Cold War, I think it was calculated

that both sides had something like 60,000 nuclear weapons—40,000 to 60,000 each—and that this was enough, if used, to destroy civilization on Earth not once but maybe seven times. One wonders, after you do it once, why do you want to do it again? Obviously, there was something behind it, of course. The idea was that we were not going to use these things but we had to make sure the other side didn't have an advantage or they might use them against us.

We [ended that](#), very quickly in historical terms, in negotiations over about a three- or four-year period in the late 1980s.

You know, looking back, one of the key things that I think lay behind our ability to negotiate an end to that arms race, and indeed an end to the Cold War itself, was an agreement that few people paid so much attention to that President [Reagan](#) and then General Secretary [Gorbachev](#) made in their [first meeting](#) in November 1985. That was the simple statement that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, which means there can be no war between us. This allowed our negotiators, notably [George Shultz](#), the secretary of state at the time, to go to his counterpart, Foreign Minister [Shevardnadze](#), and to Gorbachev and say, "Look, we are robbing our people in this arms race. Obviously we are not going to use them. It would be suicide. Why are we doing this? Let's cut them drastically."

You know, both Gorbachev and his then foreign minister say in their memoirs this was the most powerful argument. Once they were convinced that we were serious, with great rapidity we were able to end the arms race and also to negotiate an end to the confrontations, in the process of which Gorbachev officially abandoned the Marxist philosophy which had lay behind the controversy and the whole Cold War.

Now, when I today think about our differences, they're simply not comparable.

Syria: Actually, the interests of Russia and the interests of the United States in Syria are almost identical, and why we have come to see each other as enemies in that—obviously, there's a difference of opinion about the tactics, but the basic interest is the same. The idea that Russia doesn't have a legitimate interest in Syria, I don't know how a person could hold that if they take one look at the map as to where Syria is situated.

And then, we are hearing now about Russian belligerence, Russian aggression, and we must begin to bolster our military deployments in Eastern Europe. You know, that, I'm afraid, is going to start us—for no good reason at all because I don't see any Russian threats to Eastern Europe—on another of these insane arms races.

I think one of the things that lies behind the attitudes and what has developed has been the fact that both sides have developed narratives justifying their action, completely different narratives, both of which are wrong.

Let's start with the end of the Cold War. Did we win it? Well, yes. But they did too. The fact is it was not comparable to a victory of one side over the other. We negotiated an end in the interests of everybody, including the Soviet Union. Did the Cold War bring the end of the Soviet Union? No. The Cold War ended at least two years before the Soviet Union [broke up](#). The Soviet Union would not have broken up if the Cold War had continued. It broke up from internal pressures.

Actually, the American government at the time didn't want it to happen. President [Bush](#) gave a [speech](#) in Kiev August 1, 1991, advising the Ukrainians and the other non-Baltic, non-Russian republics to adhere to Gorbachev's [Union Treaty](#). He also warned against "suicidal nationalism"—he was then thinking of Georgia, not Ukraine, although one could think of Ukraine today—and he made the important statement, which most people ignored: "Freedom and independence are not synonymous.

Choose freedom."

Well, they made a different choice, not being forced by the West to break up the Soviet Union, but because the elected Russian leader led the others in breaking up the Soviet Union. So actually the Soviet Union broke up after the Cold War ended, and probably would not have broken up if there had been pressure from the outside.

Now, from that, however, we suddenly began to say, "We won the Cold War, and we won it by military and economic pressure on the Soviet Union. Look, they broke up. We won. This means that anytime we want to remove a regime, then all we have to do is to bring sufficient pressure to bear."

Then we talked about being the sole superpower, not giving much thought to what it means to be a superpower. We said there used to be two. Well, there were these two countries that could destroy civilization. There are still two countries that can destroy civilization, if that's important.

But does that power give you the power to transform other societies? Does that power give you the ability to police the world? No. I think we should have learned, after the misadventures in [Iraq](#) and [Libya](#), that using that power to try to coerce other societies to become normal peace-loving societies or democratic societies just doesn't work.

On the Russian side—and I will conclude with this—they have used the steps that we took based on that misunderstanding of history as directed at them—in expanding NATO; in walking out of arms control agreements, such as the [Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty](#) (ABM Treaty); and invading other countries against their advice and those of our allies, many of them, [as we did in Iraq](#), step after step—and then seeming to wish to bring countries that were once part of the Soviet Union into NATO and an alliance against them.

This has become a feeling that U.S. policy is trying to encircle them. What we are seeing, and people are calling aggression now, is really a pushback from that. I think others will discuss many aspects of this.

But the attitudes on both sides go back, I believe, to a total misunderstanding of how we ended the Cold War and the significance of that. Some of the things we are doing today risk taking us back over that road that created the Cold War in the first place.

**STEPHEN COHEN:** What Ambassador Matlock has done is give us a reminder and a needed lesson on the importance of thinking historically. That's what's missing in the United States in policy debates as much as anything. You have to think historically or you won't understand the present or the future.

All of us here are members of the board of the American Committee for East-West Accord. Our sole mission, as David Speedie said, is to encourage public discussion of Russian-American relations—not support a candidate, or even support committee-specific policies.

Therefore, it's important for me to say that I speak now only for myself, not for the committee, because there are disagreements among us, but not enough to keep us apart. I am going to do that in my 10 minutes or so by making four very large points or generalizations, in the hope that we might, those of us up here and with you all out there, discuss them.

Point one, we are in a new Cold War. Whether we wish to call it that or not may be a semantic issue. But the important thing is this Cold War is much more dangerous than the preceding one for various reasons—partly because it's on Russia's borders, not in Berlin, the epicenter; partly because there are absolutely no rules of conduct of the kind that were formed by Moscow and Washington after the [Cuban Missile Crisis](#); and partly because proponents of the new Cold War scarcely exist in the United

States. That is very different from the old Cold War, when proponents of the time were quite strong.

There is also, but it's a separate question, the simply crazy demonization of Russia's leader, [Putin](#), who is accused of everything from murder, to pedophilia, to every imaginable thing, all with virtually no evidence. This pollutes the discussion of American policy in a way that makes it very difficult to advocate any position that might also be held by Moscow.

Many important figures deny that we are in a new Cold War. They do so partly because they don't understand the historical meaning of "cold war." There were cold wars in history before the American-Soviet Cold War. A cold war is a certain kind of relationship.

But mainly, I think, as I observe their biographies, they do not want to admit their complicity in the coming of a new Cold War after they promised us in 1991 that there would certainly be a strategic partnership, even a friendship, with post-Soviet Russia. Therefore, by denying the existence of a new Cold War, they do two bad things. They preclude rethinking American policy since 1991, which we desperately need. Secondly, they close off to us the kinds of lessons that we might learn from the history of the preceding 40-year Cold War that might keep us safe today—for example, the rules of conduct that were enacted at that time and are now entirely absent.

Second point: *Kto Vinovat?* [who is to blame, in Russian], who is responsible for the new Cold War? The American political/media establishment of course says, "Putin, Moscow only; we have no complicity in this."

I see the primary responsibility, thinking historically, not in Moscow but in Washington. Remember, the new Cold War did not begin when Putin came to power in 2000, or with the American-Russian proxy war in [Georgia in 2008](#), or with the [eruption](#) of the Ukrainian crisis in November of 2013.

It began with the [Clinton administration](#) in the 1990s, which instead of treating post-Soviet Russia as a potential strategic partner—I don't believe in friendships between nations or between leaders; I believe in partnerships—but instead of treating Russia as a potential strategic partner, it saw post-Soviet Russia as weak, with no real legitimate interests abroad, and actually without full sovereignty at home. We went to remake Russia as we saw fit. It was called "democracy promotion." So the Clinton administration adopted a triumphalist "winner-take-all" approach toward a temporarily—anyone could have told them it was temporary—weak Russia.

Those unwise policies you know. It was expanding NATO eastward; it was thereby excluding Russia from the post-Cold War security arrangements in Europe. It was refusing to negotiate on missile defense and even cooperate. It was continuing so-called democracy promotion intrusions into Russia's internal politics. And it was an array of outright broken promises to the Russian leadership. This American "winner-take-all," as I call it, approach has continued through every presidency and every American Congress since the Clinton administration—from Clinton, to [Bush](#), to President [Obama](#) today.

The Putin that is so irrationally demonized in America today—not only in Washington but in popular culture, on television, in novels, movies—this Putin is the almost inevitable result of these unwise American policies. He is the effect, not the cause.

Third, there have been many lost opportunities along the way. None of this was inevitable. There were forks in the road, alternative policies proposed after the Soviet Union ended in 1991; after [9/11](#), when, if you recall, Putin did more to save American lives in Afghanistan during the American war against the [Taliban](#) than any member of NATO; there were opportunities even with [Obama's](#) ill-conceived so-called "reset" in 2009; and surely there were opportunities after [Paris](#) last year—surely that was a crossroad, and the right road wasn't taken. All of these opportunities were lost—not by God, not by history, but by



decision-makers, primarily in Washington and Brussels.

Today, as we talk, there are two more opportunities to diminish this new Cold War—maybe even end it, but at least diminish it—by enacting a new détente with Moscow. One opportunity is the [Minsk accords](#), designed by Chancellor [Merkel](#) and President [Hollande](#), as you know, to negotiate an end to what is certainly a [civil war](#) in Ukraine, but also an American-Russian proxy war.

The other opportunity was first proposed by Hollande, his grand coalition, and then by Putin, which called for an American-Russian/Russian-American coalition to fight the [Islamic State](#) (ISIS, ISIL), not only in Syria but also in Iraq and Libya and North Africa, where it is spreading.

I believe Secretary of State Kerry was compelled to say what he said at Munich, because he didn't make that policy. That policy of quadrupling our military forces on Russia's borders was made by Secretary of Defense [Carter](#), and obviously endorsed by Obama. Kerry clearly was opposed to it, but he had to say that.

Secretary Kerry has vigorously, so far as I can tell, pursued these opportunities, both in Ukraine and Syria. He has met not only with [Lavrov](#) more often than I see my wife, but he has met with Putin twice for four hours. Each time he has been undermined by powerful forces in Washington—I would say even stabbed in the back. If we had a parliamentary system, he would be compelled to resign his office.

This brings me to my last point. As was the case—and, alas, all of us here and some of you in the room, are old enough to remember this—as was the case during the preceding 40-year Cold War, both in Washington—and I want to emphasize both—both in Washington and in Moscow, we are now witnessing a fateful struggle between pro-détente and pro-Cold War political forces. The difference is this time the American pro-détente camp is tiny, weak, un-united, deprived of a voice in the mainstream media, and leaderless. That was not the case in the 1970s and 1980s, or late 1960s.

The pro-détente camp stands a chance in America today only with a pro-détente president—there is no other chance—a pro-détente president of the kind that President Reagan became—maybe he was earlier; I don't know—but became from 1985 to 1988, guided and inspired, I'm sure, by Ambassador Matlock, not only George Shultz.

I believe—and this may seem unenlightened and uniformed—that a pro-détente Kremlin partner is still waiting for us, waiting for such an American president. Putin did not start this Cold War. He has fought it far more ably than all our American experts predicted. He may even be winning it, though nobody wins a Cold War if it turns hot, as it might. Putin didn't start the new Cold War, he didn't want it, and he wants to end it, for his own reasons, for his own historical mission as Russia's leader.

Where President Obama stands today is unclear to me. Either, like [Elvis](#), he has left the foreign policy building, or he is in fact in his own way the Cold-Warrior-in-Chief.

As for all the others who aspire to be president now, that's another story and not a happy one.

Thank you.

**JOHN PEPPER:** Good evening. Thank you all for being here.

I'm here amidst people, obviously, with historical knowledge and diplomatic knowledge that makes it probably surprising to some of you that I'm even here.

I'm here as a retired businessman. But, more importantly, I wouldn't be here if it weren't for another factor. We're very concerned, as I'm sure many of you are, about the threats this nation and this world

face right now, which, as I think we have already been hearing, are the greatest, I feel, we faced in my adult life. Those threats are very related: terrorism, failed states, civil wars that are out of control, and nuclear proliferation, and a state of discussion between the countries being most important. It's abysmal and erratic, even though, I suspect, under the surface in the military area and some of what Kerry's doing, it is better than we might imagine.

I come here absolutely convinced that these threats cannot—will not—be resolved if there is not extensive collaboration, respectful collaboration, between the Federation of Russia and the United States, bringing along with it many other countries who look to those two countries for leadership.

A word on the business front, if I might. I spent about a quarter of a century, starting in 1990, one way or another in Russia from a business standpoint with Procter & Gamble and seven years with the Walt Disney Company with its involvement in Russia.

We went there. Our first trip was February of 1990. We were visiting five capitals of then Eastern and Central Europe within a week. We had taken plenty of advice on where we should go. We were told, go quickly to Czechoslovakia, we should go quickly to Hungary, get into East Germany when it unites with West Germany, go slow in Poland, and don't even bother to go to Moscow.

Well, we went to Moscow. We decided in that visit, despite some crazy, crazy meetings, that we would create a business. We did so in partnership, the only time we ever did so as a company, with the University of St. Petersburg, which then became a close ally.

We, thanks to Russian and some non-Russian employees, built a great business, became the fifth largest in the total Procter & Gamble world. Those metrics change when the ruble goes from 35 to 80 [to the dollar]. But it's an extraordinarily successful business, with 3,000 or 4,000 employees. The Walt Disney business, while younger, remains the same, very successful. We've had no difficulties combatting corruption in this business. While every country presents its own challenges, doing business in Russia for us has been very, very manageable.

We face another big [financial crisis](#), as we all know; 1998 is now being redone. In some ways, it's tougher for the Russian people, because many had become used to living at a middle-income level and nobody expected this.

I think the reaction of the Russian government has been absolutely consistent in reinforcing the importance of international investment. While FDI (foreign direct investment) is down two-thirds this past year, while the markets that we are in are down 10 to 15 percent, while inflation is in double digits, and it is very tough and will continue to be tough for the Russian people, companies like ours—and they represent the great mass of companies—are staying in Russia for the same reason we came, because of the population base, because of the education of that population base, because of its importance in every respect a country can be important.

We believe that being there has been helpful. We are told it has been. And it has certainly allowed us, like myself, who have been blessed by getting to know Russian people, to learn that the desires of Russian men and women are exactly the same as American men and women. They want peace, they want safety for their families, they want an economic lifestyle that allows them to grow.

Perhaps the biggest risk right now, I think, for Russia will be an intellectual human capital exit, as has happened in places like Portugal. I'm not too pessimistic on that, given the belief in Russia, but it is a risk.

But we'll carry on. There are some companies investing more. None of the big ones are leaving, and they won't. I think the control of the capital markets, allowing the currency to go as it has, has shown

great discipline, not evident in many, many other countries that I have been part of that have gone through the economic challenges.

On the geopolitical front, I really defer to the folks who are here. I would say simply two things.

One, it is crystal clear that we face humongous challenges today in terrorism, in failed states. You know, "[Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall](#)." Putting Syria back together again and Ukraine back together again, what we are going to do in [Libya](#), is a gargantuan challenge. Anybody who thinks that is going to get done without Russia and the United States, and Russia bringing Iran along in Syria, is out of their mind.

When I hear stuff as I heard in the [Republican debate](#), where we ought to attack both [Assad](#) and ISIS at the same time, I shake my head and hope that [individual](#) will learn something or doesn't become the president of the United States. It just makes no sense. We have to be able to pull this together.

I'll just make some other quick comments on what I've observed.

We've all seen this in our life, the danger of self-fulfilling prophecies built, as Ambassador Matlock said, on false narratives. There is a real danger in self-fulfilling prophecies if they aren't corrected. We've got a lot of bad prophecies going on right now that we cannot allow to be self-fulfilled. Putting ourselves in other people's shoes—we have a hard time doing that as human beings personally, even in our own families sometimes. We're doing a really bad job of putting ourselves in other nations' shoes when it comes to Russia in the United States.

And Putin is involved in the same thing. Lots has happened that could get him really enraged, just as Gorbachev was enraged when we did the [SDI](#) (Strategic Defense Initiative). He said, "What do you think we are, idiots?" at one point. But, you know, that can be turned into paranoia.

On the other side, there are those who are seeing Russia and Putin as reestablishing Soviet influence, go into the Baltics, take over Ukraine. You know, he says that would be crazy. He's right, that would be crazy, and he knows it would be crazy, and he won't do it. People who start to believe that he'd do it are failing to do one thing that any businessperson has to assess about a competitor, and that is, what is their real strategic intent based on their own interests?

In my view, the strategic intent of Putin, the Russian Federation, is to have an economically thriving country, carrying its role in the world as it ought to have, with very good relationships with adjacent countries, like Ukraine, just as we would insist on with Mexico and Canada.

That's all I'll say.

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** I find it hard to believe what has happened in terms of American policy. I can't imagine anything more counter to American interests than what we have done in the last two years in the context of Ukraine. First of all, nobody in the high policy echelons of government would look at Ukraine and decide to resume the Cold War without understanding the other matters that are at stake. Ukraine is very important. We'll talk about it individually.

The Syrian War—400,000 people dead, nations destroyed, in large measure due to a decision by the United States to invade the Middle East, and a war that cannot be resolved certainly without close work and attention with Russia.

The United Nations—The United Nations can't work without the United States and Russia working together as permanent members of the Security Council. And there are so many questions where working together would make such a difference.



I think of what happened two summers ago when we were talking about "[the line in the sand](#)" and everybody got excited that Obama wouldn't have the guts to keep his promise that if that line in the sand was [crossed](#) we were really going to respond.

Well, the way I recall it, the [prime minister](#) of Britain went to the Parliament to ask for forces to help join the United States in response to the line in the sand and the Parliament told him, "No, we won't participate." The president of the United States sounded out the Congress. There weren't 10 percent of the members of the Congress who wanted to go to war.

So the idea came forth—and it wasn't just from Russia, because there were American groups working on it too—let's work together and get Syria to sign the [treaty](#) on weapons of mass destruction. There were only five countries that hadn't signed it. Syria was one. That's what we did. But the Russians worked with us together to bring that accomplishment about. Not only did we get the agreement, we got Syria to [destroy](#) the inventory of weaponry that it had been involved in.

The other thing is the nuclear armory. Are we crazy? There's two countries in the world that are essentially equal with nuclear weapons. Russia is one of them. We have to work together, as my colleagues have said, to save the world from that rogue nation, or even that rogue radical person, who is going to be able to get to nuclear weapons in the next decade and perhaps use them.

We must enforce the [Non-Proliferation Treaty](#). We must work together to see to it that rogue nations do not get nuclear weapons. The destruction that's related to that is so colossal, so difficult to think about.

Those four considerations—Ukraine, Syria, the United Nations, nuclear weapons—you put those together and it's absolutely compelling that the United States and Russia work together as nations. I don't care if we're friends or if the president can't stand Putin's face—that's up to him. But his larger obligation as president of the United States is to get along in the context of these issues. Nobody is entitled to use their personal reactions to another international leader to the detriment of America, as we are now, in my judgment, facing.

Someone said to me the other day, "There's no real sovereign wars extant in the world today. All the wars are civil wars." That's probably true, and they are much more difficult to deal with in many ways.

One thing: America is at the very height of its power in the world today, capable of resisting any kind of aggression against it and defeating it. The United States, in my judgment—and I thought it was the president's objective—is to use its great power not to allow war to begin, but, instead of that, to use its great power to bring these civil situations together where new social contracts can be discussed and written.

Wars can't be won anymore. We've seen that in every conflict since the [Second World War—Vietnam](#), Iraq. These wars can't be won. Understanding that, why would the United States want to resume a hostile, negative attitude that would in fact pour liquid oil on the fires of civil wars everywhere in the world?

When I'm speaking about Russia, I always like to give two numbers. Russia, the Soviet Union, in the Second World War lost 27 million lives. The United States lost 406,000. We take it that we were the ones who made the victory possible. But everybody seems to forget [Stalingrad](#) and the extraordinary sacrifice of Russian lives. There is not a family in Russia today that isn't still deeply scarred by the costs of the war.

Why would we want to turn on a country that had suffered as it had suffered, that had gone through perhaps the most decisive civil convulsion when the Soviet Union broke up into its various independent states, and then lost its patrimony to oligarchs whom we encouraged in the name of free

enterprise? What Russia has gone through in the last 70 years perhaps is worth our at least thinking, "If we've lost our ability to sympathize with that cost and that terrible destruction, let's at least realize its reality."

I think the United States has a clear obligation. Ukraine is entitled to its freedom and to its free decisions as to how it is going to be involved. And it should, if it chooses, become part of the European Union—an event, by the way, that I think is a long ways away under the best of circumstances, just given the cost of what it is to keep Ukraine alive. Yes, that is an objective that we encourage.

But there was a time—and Ambassador Matlock remembers it certainly; I've heard Mr. Gorbachev say it—when the United States, in order to convince Russia and President Gorbachev to accept the possibility of the [reunification of Germany](#), and to allow that unified Germany into NATO, the United States agreed that it would not allow NATO to be on the borders of Russia, a promise broken almost before it was made.

We have seen now the escalation of problems and forces as NATO, seeking to find a mission that justifies its existence, has become the centerpiece of this problem in the Ukraine. Whatever happened in Ukraine two years ago, everybody made terrible mistakes—we certainly, the Russians certainly, the European Union certainly, Ukraine certainly. Our job now is to try to put that back together.

It's not going to be easy. It's not going to be easy because Ukraine is a very divided country, always on the edge of civil war. Our task is not to side with one group, and certainly not the extremes of that group, to the derogation of the possibilities of the future of the Ukraine.

I think we have to reconsider very deeply what is the mission of NATO. This past week, we announced billions of dollars of armaments that are going to be distributed to NATO countries. Against what threat? Of course they are defining the threat in only one term.

I am grateful to my friend Alfred Ross for giving me an [article](#) today saying that Russia will bring peace to Syria. The person who is saying this is a German [general](#) who was the former chairman of the NATO military committee. In other words, this is a decision that has to be rethought.

We have to use Finland as the ideal marker that we want—Finland, which is entitled to as much anger and distrust and fear of Russia as any other country—more than any other country. Finland is a member of the European Union but it is not a member of NATO.

I have no doubt that the centerpiece of the forces in NATO, besides the involvement of the clandestine forces of the United States, caused the overthrow of a duly elected government, which seems to be nobody's concern anymore. We should in fact reconsider what our position is with NATO and give Russia what it is entitled to in terms of the assurances that it is not an aggressive force. There are many things that are happening today where that could be the case.

We are Americans in the midst of a [presidential election](#) where we have lost all capacity to speak reasonably. But still our power and our force and our ideals are at stake here.

It seems to me that our greatest obligation, both to ourselves and to the world that we want to create and lead, is to find a way to work with Russia not to resume the Cold War, which would be the mortgage on the president's legacy that he will forever regret, in my judgment, but to understand that our present obligation is to bring this discussion back to reality and rationality and end this process.

**DAVID SPEEDIE:** Thank you so much.

I'm not sure which is more remarkable, the fact that we've heard so much that is so rich, and also the fact that it was all done in exactly the allocated time period by each speaker.

I'll just mention one big idea from each of you, if I may summarize, and I hope I'm not misspeaking.

First of all, Jack spoke of breaking out of our entrenched narratives, self-fulfilling, self-destructive, self-confining on both sides.

Steve, in addition to acknowledging, as you all did, that we are in a bad place, you said that there are still opportunities, as there were after 9/11, these being the Minsk accords—and, of course, there was more dramatic news from Ukraine today that we haven't perhaps have time to get into; but the Minsk accords are there—and the grand coalition against ISIL.

John Pepper—still go to Moscow, as you did many years ago, John, because it's still a place that recognizes the need to do business and is committed to international investment, be it remote or difficult to achieve at the moment.

Finally, Bill, your incredibly rich contribution there about really putting the pieces back together on a number of fronts—on Ukraine, on the whole Non-Proliferation Treaty and nonproliferation generally, and on Syria.

I'm reminded of a comment by former Secretary [Gates](#) a few weeks ago at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he actually [said](#)—and I was surprised to hear this—that on Syria we recognize that on many occasions Russia must not only be at the table but in the chair. *[Editor's note: Gates' exact words were: "[Putin] is determined that no problem will be solved without Russia being at the table, and I would say in Syria without Russia being in the chair, and as is evident also by the chemical weapons proposal that he made a couple of years ago."]*

Finally, your exhortation about working very much through the United Nations is taken very much to heart.

It's now up to you to challenge, ask for clarification, agree/disagree, whatever. Please identify yourself for the record and make it a question with a question mark at the end. Thank you.

## Questions

**QUESTION:** I'm Elliot Greenspan. I direct [Lyndon LaRouche's](#) Manhattan Project in New York. I met the gentleman several months ago.

Last night on [The Batchelor Show](#), toward the end, Professor Cohen stressed that "We're at the end of an old world order. A new order is struggling to be born. But it can't be." That was the quote that I wrote down.

Now, absolutely, we are at the end of an old world order, which is the post-[Bretton Woods](#), post-9/11, post-[Glass-Steagall](#) world system of financial speculation, which is bankrupt. We desperately need [FDR](#). We do not have [FDR](#). This has to be reorganized. It is being reorganized internationally, outside of the United States. The problem that we have is Obama has blocked it.

**STEPHEN COHEN:** Sir, can you ask a question?

**QUESTIONER:** I'm coming to it. I'm laying the basis.

You have a new order, led by President [Xi](#), President Putin, Prime Minister [Modi](#), the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) nations. Xi was [in the Middle East](#) two weeks ago—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran—proposing development of the Middle East, committing to that. That's the basis to end ISIS, in concert with what Putin has launched.

If the United States were to join that, if we became an FDR/Kennedy United States again, I think we have a future. Otherwise, we cannot avoid World War III.

My question essentially is—the comments from the panelists on the creation, the development, of a positive option. You have ably identified the danger. But if we are going to have détente, if we are going to have U.S.-Russian collaboration, there has to be a Rooseveltian program here.

My colleagues published this last year 370 pages, *The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge*. We published this last month in New York, *The U.S. Joins the New Silk Road: A Hamiltonian Vision for an Economic Renaissance*.

What I'm asking is if you can bring into the discussion the successful creation with the United States of a new economic and geostrategic order, if you can offer to the audience here and to the nation thoughts on that potential. I would suggest Glass-Steagall is a first necessary step toward that. But your comments?

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** I think you've intimidated all of us. [Laughter]

I've read your paper, your book, and I look forward to meeting you privately, as you asked me to do, and I will do that.

Maybe my colleagues here are, but I am certainly not, qualified to define in two minutes what we should be doing, although many of the things you have suggested are in that order.

But I would suggest that the spirit of Franklin Roosevelt, in terms of how he approached the world to be built out of the ruins of World War II, should be adhered to. Part of that is the [Four Freedoms](#), the guarantee of the Four Freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, and of worship, and freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

But what I see happening in the world is fear being used as an instrument of aggression today, in terms of trying to accomplish it, and I think that is most unfortunate. There are many instruments in the world that we can use to do things. The UN is one of them. I would suggest that the problems we are talking about today can be at least confronted, if not resolved, in the UN context.

**QUESTION:** I'm Ron Berenbeim.

Ambassador vanden Heuvel talked about Obama and his options. But I think we all have to agree that the question of what we do about Russia at this point ought to be left to the next president. So that brings us to the question of who that next president may be.

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** I don't agree with that.

**QUESTIONER:** You don't?

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** You may [apply that to the Supreme Court](#), but you can't apply it to the president of the United States.

**QUESTIONER:** I don't believe it's controlling with the Supreme Court either.

But in any event, who will the next president be? We don't know. But do we have any choices even among the people who are running for president as to any chance that your kind of concerns will be heard?

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** I would just quickly say that that's an important point that emphasizes

why everything should be done to use the incumbent president in the remaining months of his office to resolve this conflict with Russia. If it is left to a new administration, it could be exacerbated rather than resolved.

**STEPHEN COHEN:** There is an answer to your question, is there anyone out there who is suggesting an approach that might diminish a new Cold War and the conflict with Russia?

The reason we can't wait for President Obama to leave office is that the possibility of "hot war" with Russia is growing by the month. The decision, presumably authorized by President Obama, but one hears things that he's not interested in this anymore—I don't know. But to quadruple American NATO forces ever closer to Russia's borders, and in some cases on its borders, has, as you know, caused Russia to respond by moving its heavy stuff westward, including its tactical nuclear weapons, which it has said repeatedly it will use if the Russian state is threatened by overwhelming conditional forces.

So we are approaching a Cuban Missile Crisis situation, I believe, and I don't think we have time to wait for the next president, nor do we have any assurance that he would be wiser or more effective than President Obama.

But the short answer to your question—and this upsets my wife very much—is that if we look objectively at what the [Republican candidates](#) have said, only [Donald Trump](#)—I will not vote for him—but only Donald Trump has offered two contrary ideas.

When told on television that we cannot deal with Putin because Putin is a person who murders his political opponents and kills journalists, Trump [answered](#), as any reasonable person would, "Those are allegations, I haven't seen any evidence of it, and in the United States we still have due process."

The second thing Trump says—and I'm not sure he fully knows what it means—is "I'm a deal-maker—a deal-maker. I in fact am the greatest deal-maker in history. I make deals. That's what I do." So when he was asked about Putin, he said, "I'd sit down with him and we'd make a deal." Now, what that's called is diplomacy, and what we don't have at the moment is diplomacy.

Now, that may be like [Marx's](#) famous statement about [Ricardo](#) as an economist, that "Ricardo towered because of the barrenness of the landscape around him." In this case, we might pay attention to Donald Trump because it seems to be the most sensible thing.

The rest of them—with the exception of Senator [Sanders](#), who said a few not quite clear but promising things—the rest of them, as I see it, are nothing other than warmongers. That would include former Senator [Clinton](#), who agrees with Senator [Rubio](#). So Trump stands out. That's the answer.

**JOHN PEPPER:** Anybody else want to take that one on?

**STEPHEN COHEN:** It's not a happy answer, but it is an answer.

**JOHN PEPPER:** I'd just like to make one comment. As I think the history of Reagan so demonstrates, this is a moment that really does demand brave leadership, because putting something together on this right now is going to against so much of the tide, particularly in this political season.

I took hope from the [Iran deal](#). That took some bravery to go ahead. It is going to take a lot of bravery to get the thing finally done. I think there is enormous credit here to Secretary Kerry and the State Department. I don't know who's there with him, but whoever it is, god bless them.

But it is possible in this next year—and I agree with all the comments that we can't wait a year, with the threats that are out there—is it possible that the president of the United States could see the path to do something that Reagan did, and that's break the mold? I suspect he'd have a partner in Putin, I really



do—and that's just a guess. I think he would, and they could do it.

Certainly, the need for this is there right now in these countries. They won't wait. Waiting is hundreds of thousands of people and untold risk of it spreading out to other countries—Jordan and others. So I just hope.

The other part of the brave leadership is that people are afraid to speak up. The media is afraid to speak up. Political people who think differently on this subject are afraid to speak their honest opinions. We need people to break through and say what they think. There are a few. That wonderful [congresswoman](#) from Hawaii, she takes no prisoners; she calls it the way she sees it.

**QUESTION:** I'm Don Simmons. This is an exceptionally interesting panel discussion.

China was not mentioned. Does China not have a role in this impending Cold War; and, if not today, might it have in, say, 10 years' time?

**JACK MATLOCK:** The role of China: Well, first of all, I think it is a good thing that Russia and China have, I would say, a close relationship, and in many a ways mutually supportive relationship.

Actually, I think the Chinese have made very clever use of Russia's current problems with the West. But I think that there's no reason for us to be concerned about cooperation there.

I worry about the shift to Asia, in the sense that we seem to be interpreting it primarily in military terms and secondarily in trade negotiations. I think the military terms is going to get us into serious problems. Naturally, as China develops, it is going to insist upon a role in security of the area. For us to play the role of the world policeman, particularly over relatively insignificant matters, such as those [islands](#), I think is a mistake and will be pushing us down the wrong road.

So far as trade is concerned, I don't believe that it's in our interest to try to exclude China from the arrangements we made. I am all for trade agreements that free up trade. I am a free trader in principle. But the idea that somehow we are going to set rules that would handicap the development of China, I don't like that aspect of the negotiations.

I think we have to realize that—you know, during the Cold War we were flying, and also on the sea, surveying the whole communist bloc, including China, the Soviet Union, almost around the clock, flying along their borders, listening to everything there. With the nuclear arms race, that was not an unreasonable reaction.

We stopped none of that, so far as I know, at the end of the Cold War. We just kept doing it. You know, just a few years ago we had the incident of the surveillance plane being [forced down](#) by the Chinese.

Why are we doing that? Don't we realize what Reagan and Gorbachev realized in 1985, that any war with China is senseless? They are also a nuclear power. So why are we thinking in military terms?

Now, I think China is clearly going to be more and more focused internally. We see a slowdown in their growth, increasing problems internally. But I think to consider them a growing military threat is the wrong direction.

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** I just want to add one thing that we haven't mentioned so far and that may be the most serious shadow over the whole enterprise, the [migration in Europe](#). We have to understand that the ending of the war in Syria is related to the migration in Europe and that the migration in Europe threatens the existence of governments friendly to us and threatens the whole body politic of Europe going in a very destructive direction. It seems to me that that's one of the compelling reasons why the president has to change course and move it forward.

I think there are things going on, by the way, that we are not aware of. I think the president is in conversation with President Putin. I think [Henry Kissinger's meeting](#) with Putin last week had relevance. I think the fact that we have announced a tentative ceasefire in Syria with Russia and the United States—those are very meaningful things. And as has been said, Secretary Kerry's relationship with Foreign Minister Lavrov holds some hope for us. But time is of the essence.

**QUESTION:** My name is Suzanne Klebe. I work with the Executive Intelligence Review, with the LaRouche organization.

I want to just ask, to follow up what was said before—it seems somewhat stunning to me in listening to your presentations that you don't include the impact of the BRICS and the [One Belt, One Road](#) policies of Russia, China, India, and South Africa. I mean it's a whole new paradigm. It's a new world.

Rather than see Russia as somehow on the outside and us talk about the need for détente and letting them in at the table, actually Putin right now is running the table, particularly vis-à-vis Syria. And the most recent move to get Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the Obama administration to publicly come out and support ISIS is an astounding strategic move on Putin's part.

From our standpoint, because we have called for the impeachment of Obama, saying that these wars that are undeclared are unconstitutional, that this weakens his position. Given what you're saying, the urgency, the urgency of now, that this has to be done before the election, this question of moving on the illegitimacy of Obama's policy and impeachment, number one; number two, the whole question of what's actually happening with the shift of power away from U.S. control—we're not really calling the shots on a lot of this anymore; it has shifted into a new dynamic.

The third question is, isn't that new dynamic positive? Why don't you discuss in your presentations, when you talk about the question of a new détente and that the détente forces are not powerful—well, you have something much bigger than détente right now, which is the idea of the BRICS and the land-bridge. It goes back to saying maybe we didn't have to have a Cold War in the first place.

**STEPHEN COHEN:** I know where you're coming from. It might be quite a good place. We see each other frequently when public events occur. You all do this "two and there may be a third coming up." It's interesting. It's okay. But it's all in the language you choose.

First of all, I'm not aware that somebody asked Obama to recognize the Islamic State. I haven't heard that before. I don't know. Maybe I misunderstood you.

But this conversation partly began because of what I said on *The John Batchelor Show*, which your colleague mentioned, the other night. If you are old enough, you will know that I was echoing Marx, who famously said, "The dying old world clutches the living by the throat."

As I see it—and I fully concede the importance of the BRICS, I fully concede the importance of the new Chinese Silk Road, I think, and I fully concede the fact that Putin is not only down with this but part of it—but I see larger forces at work.

It seems to me that what has happened during the era of globalization has been to destroy any possibility that there can be a single superpower again, that it has created countries and coalitions of countries, technologies, geopolitical realities, that make the idea of one, or even two, superpowers an anachronism. It is no longer possible.

But we have a political problem, that in Washington several generations—my generation as well—were raised on the idea that America not only was but must be a superpower. Therefore, the resistance—and all of us are guilty; it's not just Obama, it's not just these Republican candidates, who

say "we're going to make America number one again."

Great economic forces—I'm not a Marxist, but Marx understood that there is invisible change, or change that's not noticed, that is transforming the world. And as [Hegel](#) said, "The owl of Minerva flies only at night when it's too late," that we come to recognize these things.

But all these people are clamoring in Washington, in both parties, "We must be number one again." It's not possible. It's not possible. Even if we want to be, it's not possible.

That I think is something that we are witnessing today, which is why I mentioned it on the *Batchelor Show*, that Putin is part of this new world that's moving.

The European Union may be dying from the refugee crisis, or not only. But if doesn't die, we see the adumbrations of this new world that have very important, legitimate political and economic power centers in BRICS nations, in China, in Russia. The European Union has its role to play. God knows we will play our role.

But pushing back against that, saying, "It can't be that way; we have to be number one," leads to regime change. That's where this idea comes from, trying to change the geopolitics of the world by assassinating leaders, as though that's going to turn back an economic process that is now in its third decade.

What we need is a leadership that will understand that American national security is not regime change but forming coalitions and alignments. I guess Kissinger's model of the way the world once was is applicable today.

To me this is the most frustrating thing. Everybody believes in this stuff. It's not only folly, it's not only impossible; it could be suicidal. This is something that universities should be talking about. This is where we get these policymakers, the schools of public affairs and international affairs. But I guarantee you not many of them are, because they're down with this superpower thing.

One final note: If we were really the superpower, an American would be the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. That was always the criterion for my generation. We haven't had a heavyweight boxing champion of the world since the Russians came out and knocked all the Americans out. If you count the [Klitschko brothers](#) in there, they were Soviets. It's over.

**DAVID SPEEDIE:** Pretty mediocre champions.

**QUESTIONER:** Good evening. Youssef Bahammi.

I'm not voting in the presidential election in the United States, even though I think Hillary Clinton has the best experience to deal with these kinds of diplomatic affairs, notwithstanding the left-left ideas of Bernie Sanders and the right-wing-liberal ideas of Donald Trump.

My question is in regard of the responsibility of NATO more than the one of the United States in what is happening in the [Crimean Crisis](#) that is indirectly creating tumult in the relationships between Russia and the United States. Didn't we reach basically the limits of expansions of the 1990s and the 2000s because territorialism has had different definitions ever since then? And is the natural lack of understanding of the Ukraine perception of the European Union creating really an impact indirectly on the relationship between the United States and Russia nowadays?

**STEPHEN COHEN:** Yes. [Laughter] And then the footnote.

You remember that this whole new confrontation between the United States and Russia, began in

November 2013 over the allegedly benign European partnership that the European Union offered the then-elected president of Ukraine, [Yanukovych](#), and he declined. People came out and protested in the streets, etc., etc., etc.

It's not clear that anybody in this country has ever read that document in full. The newspapers never reported it. But though it was a benign document in some ways, it included a clause that obliged Ukraine to adhere to—and this is what it was called—"Europe's security and military policies." The last time I read, that meant NATO. In other words, it was an attempt to bring Ukraine into NATO through the fine print.

Now, the American press may not have read it, but I guarantee you that the Russian MID, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has plenty of lawyers, well-educated, who focused on this and who knew exactly what was going on. This was not because the offer that the European Union made to Yanukovych was catastrophic economically. No president could have survived the economic terms of that agreement. This was about binding Ukraine to NATO without going through the process of NATO membership.

By the way, it remains American policy and Brussels policy that both Ukraine and Georgia should be one day members of NATO. As we talk, Brussels is busy, busy, busy in Tbilisi.

So I would put it differently. If you want to get serious talks with Russia going, you say, "NATO expansion is done," and you put it in writing.

But that Ukrainian caper in November 2013 got the attention, so far as I know, of no American foreign correspondents, editorial writers, or anybody else.

**JACK MATLOCK:** I think that it is most unlikely that Russia would have moved to take Crimea if there had not been what they considered the perceived threat of NATO expansion. This is precisely why many of us—in fact almost all of us who were in senior positions—who negotiated the end of the Cold War advised against even starting NATO expansion, saying there are other more better ways to make sure the East Europeans are protected.

Also, the economic demands, entirely aside from the implication that NATO would then in effect include Ukraine, were probably totally impossible for the Ukrainian government to accept, even this revolutionary government that came into power, saying they would have been unable in two years to carry out any significant number of them.

The basic problem in Ukraine is not Russia, though Russia has been a problem; it is Ukraine's own division and the problem that there has been no leader that could unify the country. Ukraine didn't have, unfortunately, a [Nelson Mandela](#). So you have a very divided country.

And yes, Russia has interfered; and yes, the taking of Crimea, despite the cover of a [referendum](#), was against international law and should not be recognized legally by the United States, just as we don't yet recognize legally the Turkish [invasion](#) of Cyprus and certain other changes. But what you normally do is handle it in a legal sense, rather than going in with [sanctions](#) which are insufficient to change the Russian policy but damage much else. So there are other ways to handle it.

But I think it would not have even arisen if there had not been what Russians consider the threat of NATO expansion.

**QUESTION:** My question will be a very simple one. I want to preface it. I am a retired economist, economics professor. I had nothing to do with international studies. I've only been driven to do what I'm doing now, participating in this, because of Stephen Cohen's wonderful article in *The Nation*, I think two years ago.

Now, as one who is not an expert—I'm from, not a second-rate school but not from an elite school—I've been forced to only go to elites to justify my positions. In fact, it was an Ivy League as a criterion. So I'm, unfortunately, ignoring people—not ignoring but not putting them on my list—who aren't as prestigious. Now, having said that, my colleagues have kind of isolated me—the kookiness syndrome—you know, it's very serious, which I'm sure you're aware of.

Really the question is very simple. I am not myself a doer; I'm a theorist sort of person. And yet, here, late in my life, in the latter part of my life, doing is what I have to support. I would want to know, what can the four of you perhaps do that isn't being done? The capture of the news media is really quite unsettling. Can you offer some way of furthering what you're saying here and getting it out there? Again, I love to see you four together—and, by the way, Republicans and Democrats. Amazing. Thank you.

So any comments you might have. It doesn't really require much here, but please be thinking of this possibility because we're just—

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** Well, I would say that's a reason why the Committee for East-West Accord was revived, which has been the principal effort of this group, is to have the dialogue and the discussion in the United States. It's so one-sided now that it's a very dangerous moment, it seems to me, in terms of changing, or trying to change, policy. But that's our effort. This organization today, this meeting that David has organized, is, I think, an important step forward.

**JOHN PEPPER:** Our hope always is that there are people in the audience who can reach the public in different ways, who can get op-eds or media, whatever may come up later.

We've all written op-eds. They haven't had as prominent distribution as any of us would like. But we've written them. The material is there. Jack has, Steve has, you have, I have. We encouraged *The New York Times*—to what end we don't know yet—to put more out there, including by Kissinger. But we are trying to get the word out.

Your point is well taken. Anyone here tonight—our hope always will be people here will pick up on this. There is certainly material we can get. We have op-eds and things that have been written that you could adapt or publish or change, or just disagree with for that matter.

But the lack of dialogue on this is really quite phenomenal, an issue of this importance. And you have presidential debates, and it's not coming up for any real debate because people are afraid to touch it. They're afraid if they indicate any support for Putin or getting together they'll be tarnished as softies and lose votes. That's not good.

So it takes some brave people to stand up. Kerry is stepping up. Other people have stepped up. People step up in the media. You're stepping up, Katrina, you published this material. But we need more. So any ideas you have on how to do it, please let us have them because we're after them.

**WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL:** Our [website](#) for the committee I think is really excellent.

**STEPHEN COHEN:** You know, the question you raise torments me every day, or at least every day since about two years ago, when I thought we were headed toward a Cuban missile-type crisis with Russia, and I think we are getting close to there.

It's also how you view the world. I fell among these elites accidentally. I grew up in Kentucky. I nearly failed out of public school there when there were only 48 states and Kentucky was ranked 47th, just above Mississippi. I then stumbled to Indiana University. So I'm a product of public schools and never imagined, since I wanted to be a professional golfer once, that I'd ever end up in this kind of company.



What it comes down to—and here my wife, Katrina vanden Heuvel, who edits *The Nation*, and I bore our daughter, who has since moved out partly because of it, at the dinner table—I understand that, historically speaking, people and movements make history.

But in short and urgent moments it's leaders, and that's the moment we're in now. We stand no hope, as I said, without either a president or a presidential candidate who is prepared to say: "No. We've taken wrong steps. We are equally as responsible"—they don't take my position that we're more responsible—"we are equally responsible with Moscow for this exceedingly dangerous situation. I am now going to do what Obama promised but didn't do, convene a new era of American diplomacy."

We are completely remilitarized in our thinking, the way we were during the Cold War. So I see a terrible urgency.

I see a media—and I blame the moderators. I've watched so many of [these debates](#), I keep begging my wife to tell me there are no more debates. But I guess there are two more, maybe even one tonight. There seem to be more debates than there are Jewish high holidays and Catholic ones put together. It's unbelievable.

But it's the moderators, the media, these highly paid people, who claim to be the [Dan Rather](#) and the [Peter Jennings](#) of our age, who must say that when Rubio says, "I don't know Putin but I know he's a gangster"—that the moderator says, "If you are elected president, what will you do with Putin? Will you try to get an international warrant for his arrest? Will you try to overthrow him? What will you do?"

And when Mrs. Clinton says she's completely down with excluding Russia from the coalition against the Islamic State, and she completely supports the build-up of NATO forces on Russia's borders, and, moreover, equates Putin with [Hitler](#) and adds "he has no soul," does she think that will be a disadvantage dealing with the man who controls the other super-nuclear arsenal if she's elected president? How will she walk that back?

But they don't ask. Now, John thinks they may be afraid. But what have they got to fear? They're just asking a question. The people who have the fear are the candidates. But they're not even asked.

So if you've got any influence at the network that sponsors it, and I guarantee you if—we've written a dozen letters to the presidents of the news networks asking them to have this debate. In my lifetime I don't remember an international crises of this multi-dimension when the media virtually did nothing but bumper sticker it and didn't press the candidates. I don't recall it.

Something has gone wrong. The place to start is if you know people who run these networks that are making zillions of dollars with all these viewers coming to watch Trump, use your influence to get him to have a discussion.

With regard to what John said about leaning on *The New York Times*, there has been a blacklist at *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* against anything resembling our point of view. We have sent in articles. We have been rejected. I could shock you to death when I tell you who has been rejected. They've closed it down.

So if you have influence at these newspapers, tell them that they have done prolonged media malpractice in a time of grave national security and they ought to be ashamed of themselves and historians are going to write this story one day. That's the only way to get something going. It's got to be at the top. You can mobilize—Bernie (Sanders) will mobilize 50 million people to overcome inequality, but he's not present on this subject.

That's what I think. We don't have the time to wait for historical change. We don't have time to wait on

our kids or our grandkids. That's what it comes down to.

**DAVID SPEEDIE:** I'm afraid we also don't have time for more questions. I'm terribly sorry for those who have been patiently waiting in line. The questions were interesting, provocative, the answers equally so.

Please join me in thanking all four.

### **Audio**

The United States must stop its demonization of President Putin, according to members of this distinguished panel, all with long associations with Russia, and all founding members of the American Committee for East-West Accord. Syria, Ukraine, the UN, nuclear weapons: all compelling reasons why the United States and Russia must work together.

### **Video Clips**

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