

# GREAT DECISIONS

## **GDTV 2010: Moscow's Long Reach**

### **Show Transcript**

>> IN THE SUMMER OF 2008, GEORGIAN TROOPS INVADED THE BREAKAWAY PROVINCE OF SOUTH OSSETIA, PROVOKING A STRONG AND HIGHLY CRITICIZED MILITARY RESPONSE FROM RUSSIA. THE SITUATION HEIGHTENED TENSIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST. HOW WILL RUSSIA'S INTERACTIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AFFECT U.S. CALLS TO RESET RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW?

>> RUSSIA WILL NOT BE A SUCCESS IF IT DELUDES ITSELF INTO THINKING THAT IT CAN RECONSTRUCT ITS FORMER EMPIRE.

>> AS FORMER SOVIET SATELLITE COUNTRIES MOVE CLOSER TO THE WEST, IS RUSSIA AIMING TO START A NEW CHAPTER IN WHAT WAS ONCE CALLED, "THE GREAT GAME"? NEXT, ON GREAT DECISIONS.

>> IN A DEMOCRACY AGREEMENT IS NOT ESSENTIAL, BUT PARTICIPATION IS. JOIN US AS WE DISCUSS TODAY'S MOST CRITICAL GLOBAL ISSUES. JOIN US FOR GREAT DECISIONS.

>> GREAT DECISIONS IS PRODUCED BY THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION-INSPIRING AMERICANS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WORLD. FUNDING FOR GREAT DECISIONS IS PROVIDED BY THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK, THE STARR FOUNDATION, SHELL INTERNATIONAL, AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION. GREAT DECISIONS IS PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE.

>> AND NOW FROM OUR STUDIOS, HERE IS RALPH BEGLEITER.

>> WELCOME TO GREAT DECISIONS. I'M RALPH BEGLEITER. JOINING US TO DISCUSS RUSSIA AND ITS NEIGHBORS ARE NINA KRUSCHEVA, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT THE NEW SCHOOL UNIVERSITY. AND WILLIAM SWEET, A JOURNALIST AT THE IEEE SPECTRUM AND GREAT DECISIONS 2010 BRIEFING BOOK AUTHOR. THANKS TO BOTH OF YOU FOR BEING WITH US.

>> THANK YOU.

>> YOU KNOW, FOR DECADES AFTER THE END OF THE COLD-- AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II, THE THEME OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WAS MOSCOW VERSUS WASHINGTON. AND HERE IN THE UNITED STATES THESE DAYS, I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE FORGET RUSSIA EVEN EXISTS. IS THAT ONE OF THE REASONS

THAT RUSSIA IS TRYING TO REASSERT ITSELF INTERNATIONALLY, NINA?

>> I THINK IT CERTAINLY IS ONE OF THE REASONS, ALTHOUGH I WOULD DISAGREE WITH YOU THAT RUSSIA BARELY EXISTS. I FIND THAT UH, IN THE AMERICAN NEWS CYCLE, OR NEWS AND POLITICS, IT ACTUALLY OCCUPIES A MUCH LARGER POSITION, WHICH IS A LARGER POSITION THAN I THINK IT SHOULD. BUT AS FAR AS RUSSIA IS CONCERNED, IT'S NOT ENOUGH. AND THEREFORE, RUSSIA REALLY TRIES TO BE PRESENT ON THE WORLD STAGE.

>> SO YOU REALLY THINK IT SHOULDN'T BE AS DOMINANT IN THE MEDIA AS YOU SEE IT IS.

>> I THINK IT'S ONE OF THE COUNTRIES NOW, IT'S NO LONGER A SUPER-POWER AND THE FACT THAT VLADIMIR PUTIN, FORMER PRESIDENT AND NOW UH, PRIME MINISTER, WANTS TO MAKE IT BACK INTO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE, UH, I THINK THAT'S THE REASON, BUT I DON'T THINK THE REALITY REALLY, UH, IN RUSSIA'S PRESENT CAPABILITIES REALLY SHOULD ASSURE THAT.

>> BILL, WHY DO YOU THINK RUSSIA'S TRYING TO REASSERT ITSELF.

>> I THINK RUSSIA ITSELF IS STRUGGLING UH, WITH ITS OWN SELF-CONCEPTION, IN A SENSE. YOU KNOW, WHEN THE COLD WAR ENDED AND SUDDENLY WE WERE ABLE TO GET IN AND TAKE A LOOK IN RUSSIA, A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE STARTLED AT HOW POOR THE COUNTRY WAS ECONOMICALLY AND HOW POOR SOCIAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS WERE, IN GENERAL. AND YOU WOULD HEAR PEOPLE SAY, GOSH, IT'S NOT REALLY NOT AN ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL COUNTRY AT ALL. IT'S REALLY JUST A THIRD-WORLD COUNTRY THAT HAPPENS TO HAVE A HUGE NUCLEAR ARSENAL. UH, AND SO, IT THINK THAT RUSSIA ITSELF HAS BEEN UH, HAVING TROUBLE COMING TO GRIPS TO WHAT IT, YOU KNOW, HOW STRONG IT CAN REALLY BE, HOW STRONG IT IS, WHAT DIRECTION IT SHOULD TAKE. AND UH, I SHOULD THINK SOME OF THIS ASSERTIVENESS COMES OUT OF UH, OUT OF SOME INSECURITY ISSUES SUGGESTED, BUT ALSO SOME REAL RATIONAL EFFORT, IF YOU WILL, UH, TO TRY TO GET THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE. AND I THINK THAT RUSSIANS FEEL THAT PROBABLY HAVE FALLEN FURTHER IN THE ESTIMATION OF THE WORLD THAN THEY REALLY DESERVE AND THEY WANT MORE RESPECT.

>> NINA, SHOULD AMERICANS BE FEARFUL OF RUSSIA?

>> ABSOLUTELY NOT. NO, THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR. I MEAN, AMERICA IS UH, RUSSIA IS AMERICAN BOOGY-- FAVORITE AMERICAN BOOGY-MAN, I BELIEVE, BECAUSE RUSSIA IS AN ENEMY THAT IS FAMILIAR, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF IT. UH, IT'S REALLY NOT A THREAT, UH, BUT IT'S A GREAT REFERENCE POINT. SO WHATEVER IS HAPPENING, BLAME RUSSIA, OR MAKE REFERENCE TO RUSSIA. SO NO, AMERICANS SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID OF RUSSIA. BUT UH, IT CERTAINLY HAS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE COUNTRIES ON THE WORLD STAGE. UH, AND I THINK ACTUALLY, BARACK OBAMA IS DOING A REALLY GOOD JOB UH, BECAUSE WHAT UH, WHAT HIS UM, HIS INTEREST IN RUSSIA SUGGESTED WAS THAT IT'S ONE OF THE MANY COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD. AND

WE DEAL WITH THEM THE WAY THEY DESERVE TO BE DEALT WITH. IT'S NOT THE FAVORITE OF UH, AMERICA, AS IT WAS DURING-- NOT THE FAVORITE, BUT IT'S NOT THE UH, THE VERY IMPORTANT REFERENCE POINT AS DURING THE CLINTON YEARS. BUT ALSO, IT WAS NOT THE HORROR STORY THAT DICK CHENEY AND GEORGE BUSH WAS TRYING--WERE TRYING TO TELL US. AND I THINK HE, UH, BARACK OBAMA, REALLY, AND HIS POLICIES OF RESET, UH, REALLY PUT RUSSIA BACK INTO PERSPECTIVE THAT IT DESERVES. SO WE DEAL WITH THEM ON CERTAIN ISSUES, WE DON'T DEAL WITH THEM ON OTHERS.

>> WE'LL COME BACK TO THAT IN A MINUTE. BUT LET'S--WE SPOKE TO SOME OTHER EXPERTS AS WELL. LET'S SEE WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT THE QUESTION OF WHY RUSSIA'S TRYING TO REASSERT ITSELF.

>> UNDER ITS CZAR, UNDER STALIN, UNDER BREZHNEV, THE RUSSIAN ECONOMY WAS ALWAYS A CRIPPLE. AND YET, THEY WERE A MAJOR GLOBAL POWER, UH, FEARSOME AND TERRIFYING. AND THE REASON IS BECAUSE IN RUSSIA, THE ECONOMY IS DOMINATED BY THE ONLY INSTITUTION THAT EFFICIENTLY WORKS, THE KGB, THE NKVD, AND SO ON. AND THEY'RE ABLE, THEREFORE, THROUGH THE USE OF FORCE AND TERROR, TO TRANSFER FROM THE ECONOMY TO THE MILITARY ECONOMY ANY RESOURCES THAT THEY WANT. AND SO YOU HAVE AN ASYMMETRY IN RUSSIA, A WEAK ECONOMY AND A VERY STRONG MILITARY. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE PUTIN AND MEDVEDEV ARE GOING AGAIN.

>> YOU CERTAINLY SAW IN THE SUMMER OF 2008, A COUNTRY THAT WAS FEELING EXTREMELY CONFIDENT. OIL PRICES WERE AT AN ALL TIME HIGH. UH, THEY WERE FEELING AS THOUGH THEY WERE BACK ON THE WORLD STAGE, THAT THEY NEEDED TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, THAT MAJOR ISSUES OF WORLD POLITICS COULDN'T BE RESOLVED WITHOUT RUSSIA. AND UH, THEN YOU HAD THE FINANCIAL CRISIS. AND IT HAS SHOWN THAT UH, IT HAS MORE LIMITATIONS THAN PERHAPS IT FELT PREVIOUSLY, CERTAINLY AS IT WENT INTO ITS WAR WITH GEORGIA.

>> OUR TASK HAS TO BE TO ENGAGE RUSSIA IN SUCH A FASHION THAT RUSSIA ITSELF SHEDS ITS IMPERIAL NOSTALGIA.

>> IMPERIAL NOSTALGIA. IT'S GOTTA BE MORE THAN THAT. IT CAN'T JUST BE THAT RUSSIA'S LOOKING BACK AT THE GOOD OLD DAYS WHEN IT WAS A SUPER-POWER. NINA, LET'S TALK FOR A MINUTE ABOUT THE WAYS IN WHICH RUSSIA IS EXPRESSING ITS ATTEMPT AT CONTINUING POWER. HOW IS IT DOING THIS? IS IT THREATENING MILITARILY ITS FORMER SOVIET NATIONS AND ITS NEIGHBORS? IS IT THREATENING ENERGY SUPPLIES FOR EUROPE? WHAT ARE THE WAYS ITS CHOOSING TO EXERCISE THAT POWER?

>> WELL, IT CERTAINLY DOES ALL OF IT. IT CERTAINLY UH, THREATENS THE NEIGHBORS MILITARILY, ALTHOUGH UH, THE WAR IN GEORGIA IN THE FALL OF LAST YEAR, 2009, UH, U.N. COMMISSION REPORT UM, CAME OUT AND IT SUGGESTED THAT IN FACT, UH, THE WAR IN GEORGIA IN THE SUMMER OF 2008 WAS STARTED BY GEORGIA, ALTHOUGH, OF COURSE, RUSSIA IS TO BLAME

BECAUSE THE RESPONSE WAS OUT OF PROPORTION. UM, SO IT DOES DO THAT. IT MAY NOT NECESSARILY, IN ATTACKING FIRST, BUT NONETHELESS, IN SHOWING THAT ANYBODY WHO THREATENS RUSSIA, IN THE NEAR ABROAD ACTUALLY WOULD PAY FOR IT. UH, THERE ARE ISSUES WITH UKRAINE ON UH, OIL AND GAS ALL THE TIME, AND RUSSIA ALWAYS THREATENS TO TURN OFF THE PIPE, AND IT DOES SO ONCE IN A WHILE. UH, THERE ARE ISSUES WITH MOLDOVA, THERE ARE ISSUES WITH BELORUSSIA, THERE ARE ISSUES WITH A LOT OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, AND I THINK THIS IS THE MOST THREAT THAT RUSSIA CAN PRESENT. I JUST DON'T BELIEVE THAT RUSSIA REALLY HAS GREAT CAPABILITY TO EXERCISE, ULTIMATELY. I MEAN, IT'S EASY WITH UH, SMALL GEORGIA, WHICH I THINK HAS SIX MILLION PEOPLE AND NOT ENTIRELY VERY WELL-TRAINED ARMY, ALTHOUGH IT WAS TRAINED BY THE UNITED STATES. BUT RUSSIA IS ALSO RATHER PRAGMATIC, AND VLADIMIR PUTIN, ALL MY PROBLEMS WITH HIM IS A REASONABLE, REASONABLY PRAGMATIC LEADER WHO WANTS, WHO WANTS TO ASSERT RUSSIA, BUT ALSO DOES NOT WANT TO DO IT AT THE EXPENSE AT HIS WESTERN CONNECTIONS. I MEAN, IN MANY WAYS, I WOULD SAY THAT HE IS THE CZAR OF THE THIRD-WORLD, BECAUSE HE HAS ONE FOOT IN THE WEST AND ANOTHER ONE, ANOTHER FOOT, WITH HUGO CHAVEZ AND YOU KNOW, WITH HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN AND WHATNOT. AND I THINK FOR HIM, IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO KEEP THIS BALANCE.

>> ONE OF THE THINGS I'VE WONDERED ABOUT A LONG TIME, SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR IS, WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES RUSSIA FEEL THREATENED BY COUNTRIES LIKE UKRAINE OR BELORUSSIA OR MOLDOVA OR UZBEKISTAN? THOSE COUNTRIES COULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO RUSSIA OF ANY GREAT SIGNIFICANCE. WHY IS IT THAT RUSSIA FEELS THE NEED TO KEEP, WHAT I THINK YOU REFERRED TO A MINUTE AGO, NINA, AS THE NEAR ABROAD WITHIN ITS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE?

>> PERHAPS THE MOST OBVIOUS REASON WHY THEY WANT TO KEEP VERY FIRM CONTROL OVER MANY OF THOSE COUNTRIES IS BECAUSE PUTIN HAS REALLY BEEN RUSSIA QUITE SELF-CONSCIOUSLY, LIKE A GIANT OIL AND GAS COMPANY SINCE HE TOOK OFFICE. YOU PROBABLY KNOW THE STORY OF HOW, BEFORE HE TOOK POWER, HE WROTE IT ACTUALLY SOMETHING LIKE A DISSERTATION, WHICH HE BASICALLY PROPOSED THAT THIS IS HOW RUSSIA SHOULD BE RUN, AND HAVING TAKEN POWER, THAT'S HOW HE'S RUNNING IT. AND SO, HE'S VERY DETERMINED TO KEEP FULL CONTROL OVER RUSSIA'S COMPLETE OIL AND GAS EXPORT PIPELINE NETWORK, MUCH OF WHICH GOES THROUGH THESE SATELLITE COUNTRIES ON VARIOUS POINTS ALONG THE PERIPHERY.

>> AND BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE PORTS...

>> NOW, HE DOESN'T WANT THOSE COUNTRIES TO BE ABLE TO EXERCISE ANY KIND OF INDEPENDENT POLICY, WITH RESPECT TO OIL AND GAS EXPORTS AND IMPORTS.

>> WE ASKED OUR OTHER EXPERTS ABOUT RUSSIA'S MILITARY AND POLITICAL PRESSURE ON ITS NEAR NEIGHBORS. LET'S SEE WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY.

>> VERY FRANKLY, IN THE UKRAINE AND IN THE CAUCUSES, RUSSIA'S THE PREEMINENT POWER. GLOBALLY, IT ISN'T. BUT REGIONALLY, WITHIN THESE AREAS, THEY HAVE FAR MORE INFLUENCE THAN THE UNITED STATES. THEREFORE, IN CONTINUING TO PUSH THE POSITION THAT RUSSIA SHOULD NOT BE PREEMINENT IN THESE COUNTRIES, UH, IT'S A VERY INTERESTING POSITION; IT'S NOT A VERY PRACTICAL ONE.

>> WELL, FOR RUSSIA, CERTAINLY UNDER PRESIDENT AND THEN PRIME MINISTER PUTIN, THEIR MAJOR HALLMARK OF RUSSIAN POLICY HAS BEEN CONTROL. CONTROL OVER RUSSIA AND ENSURING THAT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BREAKAWAY REGIONS, CONTROL OVER THE STATES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION. AND THE NORTH CAUCUSES IS JUST THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE FOR RUSSIA. IT'S THE PLACE FOR THE MOST POTENTIAL FOR BREAKAWAY REGIONS, SUCCESSIONIST MOVEMENTS, LOTS OF VIOLENCE, AND SO IT'S AREA THAT'S GOING TO CONTINUE TO GIVE RUSSIA TROUBLE.

>> THE AGE OF IMPERIALISM IS OVER. RUSSIA WILL NOT BE A SUCCESS IF IT DELUDES ITSELF INTO THINKING THAT IT CAN RECONSTRUCT ITS FORMER EMPIRE.

>> LET ME ASK YOU ABOUT THAT IDEA OF DELUDING ITSELF INTO THINKING IT CAN RECONSTRUCT ITS FORMER EMPIRE, AND ASK YOU ABOUT ANOTHER THING THAT NEITHER ONE OF YOU HAS MENTIONED SO FAR. RUSSIA STILL HAS A VETO AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNSEL. DO YOU CONSIDER THAT AN ANACHRONISM? IS IT SOMETHING THAT THEY DON'T DESERVE TO HAVE? AND IF THEY LOST IT, WOULD THEY ALLOW THEMSELVES TO GIVE IT UP, AND IF THEY LOST IT, WOULD RUSSIA BECOME SORT OF IRRELEVANT IN THE WORLD? NINA?

>> UH, WELL, I THINK THAT A LOT OF THOSE THINGS, A LOT OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT WERE DESIGNED DURING THE COLD WAR, A LOT OF THEM HAVE, IF NOT THEMSELVES AN ANACHRONISM, CERTAINLY HAVE UM, PARTS THAT ARE VERY OUTDATED. AND I MEAN, IF WE TALK ABOUT NATO, THERE'S A HUGE PROBLEM THERE, UH, WITH THE SECURITY COUNSEL. I DON'T KNOW. IS IT AN ANACHRONISM? MAYBE, BUT THEN THE WHOLE UNITED NATIONS HAS TO BE RESTRUCTURED IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.

>> LET'S TALK ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST FOR A MOMENT. DURING THE COLD WAR, UH, RUSSIA TOOK THE OTHER SIDE. WHATEVER THE U.S. DID, BASICALLY RUSSIA TOOK THE OTHER SIDE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. IS THAT STILL ON RUSSIA'S, ON PUTIN'S, AGENDA? DOES HE STILL WANT TO BE SEEN AS THE OPPOSITE OF THE U.S. IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

>> I THINK UH, IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME WE WERE TALKING ABOUT EARLIER OF RUSSIA MOST CERTAINLY WANTING TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A RESPECTED PLAYER ON THE WORLD STAGE, RUSSIA WOULD LIKE TO BE SEEN AS PART OF THE EQUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WHATEVER THAT IS. BUT I DON'T THINK THERE IS THAT REFLEXIVE, WHATEVER SIDE YOU'RE ON, WE'RE ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE, BUSINESS ANYMORE. I THINK THAT'S A THING OF THE PAST, REALLY.

>> NINA, YOU WANNA COME IN THAT?

>> I ABSOLUTELY AGREE WITH THAT. I THINK THAT RUSSIA, IN MANY WAYS, DOES LOOK FOR ITS OWN INTERESTS, RATHER THAN THE INTERESTS OF SAYING, WELL, THE UNITED STATES: A, AND SO WE'RE GONNA SAY: B. AND THAT MAKES THE POLITICS A LITTLE MORE PREDICTABLE AND A LITTLE BIT MORE RATIONAL. ON THE OTHER HAND, I WOULD NEVER DISREGARD RUSSIA'S DESIRE TO BE VERY IMPORTANT, EVEN AT IT'S OWN EXPENSE.

>> SO, IN THAT CONTEXT, HAVING JUST SAID THAT, WHAT ABOUT RUSSIA'S ROLE WITH IRAN? THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN TRYING TO GET IRAN TO STOP MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF A NUCLEAR WEAPON. UM, IS RUSSIA BEING COOPERATIVE ON THAT SCORE?

>> I THINK IT'S BECOMING COOPERATIVE. ONCE AGAIN, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE RESULTS OF THE NEW COOPERATION WOULD BE, BUT RUSSIA HAD A GREAT EXCUSE WHEN THE MISSILE DEFENSE SHEILD WAS BEING PLACED IN UH, IN POLAND, IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC. OF COURSE, RUSSIA HAD ALL THE EXCUSES IT NEEDED TO SAY, WE'RE NOT GOING TO DO IT BECAUSE YOU'RE AGAINST US. BUT NOW WHEN--AND THAT WAS MY EARLIER REFERENCE TO GOOD POLICIES OF BARACK OBAMA-- NOW WHEN IT'S TAKEN AWAY FROM THE TABLE, RUSSIA HAS TO COOPERATE. IT CANNOT NOT COOPERATE. AND I DON'T HOW FAR WE'LL GO WITH THE SANCTIONS, BUT YET, IF YOU NOTICE, THE LANGUAGE OF COOPERATION HAS CHANGED, THE LANGUAGE IN IRAN CHANGED. AND IN FACT, I THINK DMITRY MEDVEDEV SPOKE IN THE FALL AROUND THE UNITED NATIONS MEETING IN SEPTEMBER, TALKING ABOUT THE FACT THAT IRAN HAS TO BE RESPONSIBLE AND WE REALLY HAVE TO-- IT HAS TO BE GIVING THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS THE WAY TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON AND WHATNOT. SO I ACTUALLY THAT THEY'RE WELCOMING THE NEW RESET AND UH, PROBABLY TRYING. BUT THEN, OF COURSE, THE DUAL POWER BETWEEN PUTIN AND MEDVEDEV, MAY PREVENT IT FROM GOOD RESULTS.

>> ALRIGHT, YOU BROUGHT UP A COUPLE THINGS I WANT TO COME BACK TO. I DON'T WANT TO LET SLIP BY SO CASUALLY, THE DECISION BY THE UNITED STATES TO STOP ITS PLAN TO INSTALL MEDIUM RANGE MISSILES IN POLAND AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC. THAT WAS A BIG REVERSAL OF AN AMERICAN POLICY THAT JUST OCCURRED. AND YOU'RE SUGGESTING THAT THAT WAS SEEN IN A BIG WAY IN RUSSIA, THAT THERE'S GOING TO BE SOME POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THAT.

>> I HOPE THERE WILL BE, YES.

>> IN WHAT WAY DO YOU THINK THAT COULD COME ABOUT? WE TALKED ABOUT IRAN JUST NOW, BUT IN WHAT OTHER WAYS, IF ANY?

>> WELL, I MEAN, THAT, UH--RUSSIA, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THAT DECISION, RUSSIA IMMEDIATELY DECLARED THAT ITS EARLIER THREAT THAT IF UH, IF THE MISSILES ARE GOING TO BE PLACED AND THEN THE SHIELD IS GOING TO BE PLACED IN POLAND, RUSSIA WILL MOVE ITS OWN TROOPS ON THE BORDER

WITH POLAND, AND THAT'S HOW IT'S GOING TO PREVENT, THAT'S HOW IT'S GOING TO PREVENT A POSSIBLE ATTACK AGAINST RUSSIA. SO NOW THEY DECLARE THAT'S OFF THE TABLE. THAT'S OFF THE TABLE. AND THE LANGUAGE ON IRAN CHANGED, AND I THINK THAT IS A VERY IMPORTANT ONE. UH, AND UH, THERE'S APPARENTLY MORE COOPERATION ON AFGHANISTAN AND THE WAR, ALTHOUGH RUSSIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY COOPERATIVE, I MUST SAY, ON THE SUBJECT. SO WE'LL SEE. I HONESTLY THINK THAT RUSSIA CAN, IF IT'S TREATED WELL, THAT RUSSIA CAN SURPRISE YOU. ON THE OTHER HAND-- POSITIVELY. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT CAN ALSO SURPRISE YOU VERY NEGATIVELY, AND YOU NEVER KNOW.

>> BILL, MIGHT THERE BE SOME ENERGY PAYOFFS FOR THE UNITED STATES IN THAT DECISION ON THE MISSILE SHIELD?

>> THE FIRST PLACE WE'RE SEEING THE DIFFERENCE IS ON IRAN, WHERE RUSSIA'S INTERESTS ARE A LITTLE BIT COMPLEX, BECAUSE ON THE ONE HAND, I DON'T THINK THEY HAVE ANY MORE INTEREST THAN WE DO IN SEEING IRAN BECOME A NUCLEAR ARMED NATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, IRAN IS ALSO A VERY MAJOR EXPORTER OF OIL AND GAS, AND THEY HAVE A VERY BIG INTEREST IN WORKING COOPERATIVELY WITH IRAN IN OIL AND GAS MARKETS.

>> ARE THERE OTHER WAYS IN WHICH THE RESET POLICY THAT YOU MADE REFERENCE TO, PRESIDENT OBAMA'S DECISION TO RESET RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW, COULD HAVE PAYOFFS? WHAT ELSE ABOUT RESET, BESIDES THE REVERSAL OF THE MISSILE SHEILD DECISION?

>> WELL, THERE IS A NEW NATO COOPERATION. I MEAN, IMMEDIATELY AFTER, THERE WAS AGAIN THE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN UH, BETWEEN RUSSIA AND NATO COUNTRIES ON UH, THE JOINT NATO RELATIONS, THAT THEIR RELATIONS WOULD CONTINUE IN A POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE WAY, AND WHATNOT. SO THIS IS SOMETHING, AND THIS IS SOMETHING THAT ACTUALLY CAN BENEFIT NOT ONLY NATO COUNTRIES AND RUSSIA, BECAUSE, YOU KNOW, GOING AGAINST NATO REALLY DOESN'T PAY OFF FOR RUSSIA IN ANY WAY. BUT ALSO, THOSE COUNTRIES THAT UH, THAT UM, THAT WOULD LIKE TO BECOME NATO MEMBERS, MAYBE WITH THIS RESET, MAYBE THAT RUSSIA'S SCREAMING HELL ABOUT UKRAINE OR GEORGIA, JOINING NATO WOULD BE LESS SCREAMING, OR MAYBE THEY WOULD, WHETHER THEY WOULD SET UP SOME POLICY AND SOME PROCEDURE IN WHICH IT COULD BE DONE WITH LESS, IN A LESS HYSTERICAL MANNER, WHICH I THINK IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF POSSIBLE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES.

>> NOW, I GOTTA FOLLOW UP ON THAT AND AN EARLIER COMMENT YOU MADE, PUT TWO THINGS TOGETHER HERE. DO YOU THINK THERE'S EVER A POSSIBILITY THAT RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES MIGHT COOPERATE MILITARILY IN AFGHANISTAN, AS A RESULT OF THE CHANGES ON NATO THAT YOU JUST TALKED ABOUT? THE RESET POLICY AND YOUR EARLIER MENTION OF FAIRLY GOOD COOPERATION OF THE U.S. ON AFGHANISTAN?

>> I THINK PUTIN WANTED TO. I HONESTLY THINK THAT WHEN PUTIN UM, UH,

WHEN THE WAR STARTED AND PUTIN WAS THE FIRST TO CALL, AS YOU REMEMBER, AFTER 911, FOR OTHER REASONS THAN PROBABLY GREAT INTEREST-- GREAT SYMPATHY ABOUT THAT. AND UH, I THINK HE REALLY WANTED TO. I THINK HE WANTED TO BE THAT INCREDIBLE PLAYER UH, BEING A MODERATOR BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SAY, FRANCE AND GERMANY. AND HE WAS SUCCEEDING, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT. BUT THEN, UNFORTUNATELY, UM, YOU KNOW, THEIR COLD WAR FEARS KICKED IN, AND I'M NOT EVEN SURE ON THE RUSSIAN SIDE. I ACTUALLY THINK IT'S DICK CHENEY WHO WAS MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT AMERICANS COOPERATING WITH THE RUSSIANS, BECAUSE AS YOU KNOW, HE DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT COMMUNISTS REFORM ALL TOGETHER. UM, AND SO THAT WENT AWAY. BUT I ALSO, WHAT I KNOW OF RUSSIAN POLITICS AND PEOPLE I TALK TO, AT THE TIME IN THE EARLY 2000'S UM, PUTIN WANTED TO. SO I THINK IT'S UP TO AMERICA OR MAYBE PRESIDENT MEDVEDEV TO AGREE AND DO SOMETHING, SOMETHING TOGETHER.

>> WE ASKED OUR EXPERTS ALSO ABOUT THIS QUESTION OF THE RESET AND HOW THAT'S BEING PERCEIVED IN RUSSIA AND IN THE UNITED STATES.

>> THE VISION THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS OF PERIOD 1990 TO 2004, WAS THIS WAS A PRETTY GOOD TIME IN THE U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS. THAT'S NOT THE RUSSIAN PERCEPTION. SO THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION COULD NOT HAVE DELIVERED A WORSE MESSAGE TO THE RUSSIANS THAN TO SAY, LET'S GO BACK TO BORIS YELTSIN, LET'S GO BACK TO THE EARLY DAYS OF THE PUTIN ERA. THERE'S NO RESET TO THIS, BECAUSE THE ENTIRE RUSSIAN STRATEGY IS TO NEVER GO BACK THERE AGAIN.

>> TO THE RUSSIANS, RESET MEANS THE U.S. WILL ACCEPT EVERYTHING THE RUSSIANS HAVE SAID ABOUT U.S. POLICY OVER THE LAST 15-PLUS YEARS, AND THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING IT'S DOING, AND THEN U.S. RUSSIAN RELATIONS CAN BE BETTER. AND THAT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS IN MIND, SO THERE'S STILL QUITE A DIFFERENCE OF VIEW ON HOW TO MOVE FORWARD IN THE U.S. RELATIONSHIP.

>> OUR TASK IS TO DEAL WITH THEM IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE ABSORB THEM, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME HELP THEM TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES. IF YOU ASK ME HOW TO THAT, THEN YOU KNOW, GIVE ME SEVERAL HOURS AND I'LL READ YOU A MEMORANDUM WITH OPTIONS IN IT, BUT IT WOULD HAVE TO BE AT LEAST 50 PAGES LONG.

>> NINA, I GUESS YOU WOULD DISAGREE WITH THE CONCLUSION THAT RUSSIANS DON'T SEE THE RESET POSITIVELY.

>> I WOULD. I WOULD DISAGREE. I WOULD ACTUALLY AGREE WITH BRZIZINSKI, WHICH IS VERY INTERESTING, BECAUSE NOT OFTEN I DO. UM, BUT YET, I WOULD AGREE WITH EVERYTHING HE SAID. UM, YES, I THINK THAT, I MEAN, RUSSIANS ARE VERY, RUSSIANS ARE VERY SUSPICIOUS OF THE UNITED STATES' MOTIVES. THEY DO NOT THAT THE CLINTON-YELTSIN ERA WAS SUCH A GREAT ERA, BUT I ALSO DON'T THINK THAT THEY THINK THAT THE RESET MEANS GOING BACK TO THAT ERA. I THINK THE RESET MEANS, LET'S LISTEN TO THEM, LET'S LOOK AT

THEIR INTERESTS, LET'S CONSIDER WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER, RATHER THAN WHAT WE CAN DO AGAINST THEM OR TO PUT THEM DOWN.

>> SPEAKING OF A NEW PRESIDENT, WHAT DO BOTH OF YOU THINK ABOUT INTERNAL POLITICS IN RUSSIA RIGHT NOW? IT'S AN ODD SITUATION WITH PRESIDENT MEDVEDEV, BUT PRIME MINISTER, MR. PUTIN, CLEARLY BEING IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT THERE. WOULD YOU STILL CONSIDER RUSSIA TO BE A DEMOCRACY WITH THIS SITUATION, BILL?

>> UH, NO I WOULD NOT. UH, YOU KNOW, I THINK THIS, IF YOU ASK THIS QUESTION OF WHY THE RUSSIANS WERE MADE SO SUSPICIOUS BY THE RESET TERM, THIS IS VERY GERMANE, UH, THAT THE TERM WAS DELIBERATELY AMBIGUOUS, I THINK. IT SORT OF COMMUNICATED, WELL, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH RUSSIA, BUT THERE ARE ALSO SOME THINGS THAT HAVE US SERIOUSLY CONCERNED HERE, WHEN WE CONTEMPLATE RUSSIA AND WHAT RUSSIA IS. AND CERTAINLY, THE DOMESTIC SITUATION, AND RUSSIA IS ONE OF THEM, THE FACT THAT UH, THE PUTIN-MEDVEDEV REGIME HAS, YOU KNOW, MANIPULATED ELECTIONS TO GUARANTEE THAT NO REAL OPPOSITION CAN EVER EMERGE HAS KIND OF WINKED ITS EYE AT OPPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS BEING KNOCKED OFF, FRANKLY. UH, THE FACT THAT THE JUDICIARY IS STILL VERY NON-INDEPENDENT. THE FACT THAT THE PRESS IS REALLY QUITE UN-FREE AS A WHOLE, ESPECIALLY THE MOST IMPORTANT TELEVISION PRESS, UH, WHICH HAS BEEN COMPLETELY MULED. UH, AND SO, UH, WE'RE CERTAINLY NOT DEALING WITH A DEMOCRACY WHEN WE DEAL WITH RUSSIA, AND ARGUABLY, UH, WE'RE DEALING WITH A REGIME WHICH IS NOT ONLY HEAVILY DOMINATED BY FORMER AND CURRENT INTELLIGENCE AGENCY ELEMENTS, WE'RE REALLY DEALING WITH A REGIME THAT HAS A SLIGHTLY GANGSTER CAST TO IT. AND UH, I DON'T THINK ANYBODY IN THE WEST NOW, UH, INCLUDING ALL THE EUROPEAN LEADERS, FEELS VERY COMFORTABLE WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF RUSSIA AND THE KIND OF REGIME THAT HAS EMERGED IN RUSSIA IN THE LAST FIVE, SIX, SEVEN YEARS.

>> NINA, YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERNAL POLITICS THERE? IS IT A DEMOCRACY? AND ABOUT THE MEDIA, YOU WRITE ABOUT THE MEDIA AS WELL, SO.

>> RIGHT, NO, THE MEDIA UH, I WOULD AGREE WITH BILL ON THE MEDIA ASSESSMENT. I ACTUALLY WOULD NOT NECESSARILY AGREE THAT IT'S NO LONGER A DEMOCRACY BECAUSE THERE IS A PUTIN-MEDVEDEV REGIME. I THINK THAT, YOU KNOW, I'M QUESTIONING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA ALTOGETHER. A DEMOCRACY MEANS ELECTIONS, THAT'S FINE. I MEAN, WE'RE FINE. WE'RE DOING, WE'RE DOING OKAY. BUT UH, EVEN 1996, THE ELECTIONS OF BORIS YELTSIN WERE NOT DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS. ELECTIONS OF VLADIMIR PUTIN, SUPPOSEDLY AFTER YELTSIN'S DEMOCRACY IN 2000, WERE NOT DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS. THIS WAS, UH, FROM THEN, FROM THAT TIME UNTIL TODAY, THEY WERE THE ELECTIONS OF A PERSON WHO'S INSTILLED BY THE POWER. UH, AND UH, CONTINUES ON IN THIS SORT OF SHAM, UH, ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY. SO I WOULD NOT EVEN CALL IT A

DEMOCRACY. I WOULD SAY SOMETHING LIKE, RUSSIA, INC. AND AS FOR THE GANGSTERISM, I THINK THE YELTSIN REGIME WAS ALSO PRETTY GANGSTER-LIKE. SO, BUT HIS GANGSTERS WERE THE OLIGARCHS AND PUTIN'S GANGSTERS ARE THE KGB. THEN LET'S JUST DISCUSS WHICH ONES ARE MORE DANGEROUS. I MEAN, I WOULD SAY KGB IS MORE DANGEROUS, BUT THE FACT THAT MEDVEDEV IS A PRESIDENT AND PUTIN IS A PRIME MINISTER REALLY DOESN'T MAKE ME FEEL THAT IT'S LESS OF A DEMOCRACY THAN IT WAS BEFORE, BECAUSE IT WAS NEVER A DEMOCRACY THE WAY WE HEAR AND UNDERSTAND IN THE UNITED STATES.

>> NINA KRUSCHEVA, THE PROFESSOR AT THE NEW SCHOOL TEACHING INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND UH, INTERNATIONAL MEDIA. AND BILL SWEET, A JOURNALIST AT THE IEEE SPECTRUM, AND GREAT DECISIONS 2010 BRIEFING BOOK AUTHOR. THANK YOU BOTH FOR BEING WITH US ON GREAT DECISIONS. AND THANK YOU AS WELL FOR WATCHING THIS WEEK. WE'LL SEE YOU NEXT WEEK, I'M RALPH BEGLEITER.

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