

# **Center for Strategic and International Studies**

## **Schieffer Series: A Conversation about Russia**

### **Speakers:**

**Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski,  
Former U.S. National Security Adviser to President Jimmy Carter;  
Counselor and Trustee, CSIS**

**Roger Cohen,  
Columnist,  
The New York Times**

**Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft (USAF-Ret.),  
Former U.S. National Security Adviser to Presidents Gerald Ford and  
George H.W. Bush;  
Counselor and Trustee, CSIS;  
President, Scowcroft Group**

### **Introduction:**

**H. Andrew Schwartz,  
Senior Vice President for External Relations,  
CSIS**

### **Moderator:**

**Bob Schieffer,  
Chief Washington Correspondent, CBS News;  
and Anchor, CBS News “Face the Nation”**

**Location: CSIS, Washington, D.C.**

**Date: Wednesday, March 19, 2014**

H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: We've got a remarkable panel lined up for tonight, and we're so glad that you've joined us for a conversation about Russia; very timely conversation.

I'd like to thank Bob Schieffer and the Bob Schieffer College of Communication at TCU for their great partnership in bringing in these dialogues to CSIS. Let's have a hand for TCU. (Applause.)

None of this would be possible without the generosity and support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. I was in New York with them yesterday, and they're just such wonderful and generous supporters of us, of ours. And we're so appreciative of them for everything they do for us.

I also want to give a special welcome to the distinguished participants of the second annual Williamsburg CSIS Forum, which concludes here with two public panels tomorrow morning. They've spent the last three days in Williamsburg – Colonial Williamsburg, of course – and discussing the future of the European Union, the latest events in Ukraine. And one of our participants tonight, Roger Cohen, is here on the stage with us, has been participating in that Williamsburg conference. So we've been working Roger pretty hard, but we really thank him for all his help.

And in addition, I want to – to the trustees who are here on our stage, I'd also like to welcome another one of our bosses, Ms. Carla Hills, and her husband, Mr. Rod Hills, who are here. I'd also like to welcome Judge Webster, who's here as well. Thank you for being here.

Now, without further ado, please join me in welcoming Bob Schieffer, who has a little show called "Face the Nation," which is number one on Sundays.

Bob. (Applause.)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, Andrew told me that they had to cut off invitations at 600 for this. This is far and away the largest group we have ever had. So thank you all. And I know why you're here. This is one of the best panels we've ever gotten in here at the same time, in the same place. So thank you all for coming.

And just to get it going, we're going to talk about Russia, obviously, with two men I'm proud to say are not just long-time friends, but at various times over the 45 years that I've been in Washington they have been very good sources for me – (laughter) – sometimes on the record, sometimes maybe not – Dr. Brzezinski and General Scowcroft.

Also with us, someone I admire greatly in joining us, a columnist and author I greatly admire, Roger Cohen of The New York Times.

This audience is certainly going to need no introduction to any of them. But in case there is a visitor here from Mars, let me say Dr. Brzezinski is a former U.S. national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter, counselor and trustee at CSIS, senior research professor at SAIS at Johns Hopkins; served in the State Department, many other prestigious foreign policy positions.

General Scowcroft, also former national security adviser. He served with President Ford and George H.W. Bush. He too is a counselor and trustee here at CSIS. He was a military assistant to Richard Nixon, was deputy assistant for national security affairs during the Ford and Nixon administrations, and that was with Henry Kissinger, right? – yep – and holds the Medal of Freedom. In 1993 Queen Elizabeth made him an honorary knight of the British empire.

And Roger Cohen has been a foreign correspondent for more than a decade at The New York Times and was foreign editor for the Times; now writes a column for the Times. He's the author of several books on foreign policy and also a biography of General Norman Schwarzkopf.

So it's hard to know where to start this discussion, but I guess let me just start with this question: Is this the new cold war? And why don't we just start with you, Dr. Brzezinski, down at your end of the table.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Well, obviously we don't know for sure, but it's beginning to look that way. It may not end up that way, but it's beginning to look that way. And, in fact, if I can just take two minutes, I would like to do something which probably most of the people here haven't done; namely, cite some excerpts from Putin's speech, because it's worth reading the speech in full. And what is worrisome – and that's relevant to your question – is what he says about Ukraine more generally.

And in that speech, he says, among other things, that Ukraine – let me get my clippings here – he says that Ukraine benefited from the Bolshevik revolution by obtaining large sections of the historical south of Russia. So he in effect posits the theme that Ukraine's territory is not valid.

Then he goes on to say that when President Kuchma of Ukraine asked that the borders be delimited, Russia agreed to it as a favor on the assumption that Ukraine would remain our good neighbor. However, this is not how the situation developed.

He also goes on to say in the same speech it is also obvious that there is no legitimate executive authority in Ukraine now – nobody. That's a rather strange thing to be saying about a neighboring country. He assures us in the speech that Russian armed forces never entered Crimea – (laughter) – which is kind of curious, because we have the impression that somebody did.

And then he goes on to say that we understand that our Western partners prefer not to be guided by international law in the practical policies but by the rule of the gun.

And we understand that what is happening is that these actions are aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration. And he also adds, let me conclude that we have already heard declarations from Kiev about Ukraine soon joining NATO.

Let me say quite frankly that it pains our hearts to see what is happening at the moment. See the people suffering under uncertainty about how to get through the day and what awaits them tomorrow. Our concerns are understandable because we are not simply close neighbors. But, as I have said many times, we are one people.

Now, what is that telling you? It suggests that if things don't get under control fairly soon, we may be seeing the next phase, which is an attempt, in a sense, to create one state for one people.

MR. SCHIEFFER: In other words, he would absorb the whole of Ukraine.

MR. BREZEZINSKI: Yeah, I think this is – this is a speech which deals allegedly with Crimea, but lays out the claim that can be asserted, if things unfold in a way which provide opportunities. And, of course, that pertains particularly to the territorial edges of Ukraine, but in effect also to Kiev itself.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So, General Scowcroft, back to the top question: Is this the beginning or resumption of a cold war? And did you have the same interpretation of Putin's speech as Dr. Brzezinski did?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Well –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Excuse me. Mine is not an interpretation. I read excerpts.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You just read excerpts. (Laughter.)

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I think this is not a return to the Cold War. I think it's a different character. We have had a scratchy relationship with Russia since the Cold War ended, and I think it will continue. But the Cold War, I think, was pretty sui generis. And it evolved philosophies about the world and struggle for men's minds. This is not that kind of thing. This is much more practical.

I think what Zbig read was very interesting, because, you know, if there's anything that makes confused reading, it's the history of Ukraine and Russia. The first state of Russia, called Rus, had its capital in Kiev in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. And they were driven up into the forests by the Mongols from Asia, who didn't like treaties and didn't go after them. So since then there's been a different relationship with Ukraine than almost any other part of Russia and/or the Soviet Union.

So I would say this is new. I think some of the things that Zbig has read are – I learned a lot about Putin from what he said the last few days in this sense, that Putin is a different person, very different person from Gorbachev, or even from Khrushchev. And

he has the outlook of someone who was KGB and who saw the Soviet Union collapse. And he's a person full of venom, because he thought that that collapse was taken advantage of by the West, especially by the United States, to humiliate Russia or to take advantage of Russia.

As a matter of fact, he says when we were flat on our backs at the end of the Cold War, you walked all over us because you could. You denounced the ABM Treaty. You pushed the borders of NATO right up and into the former Soviet Union because you could. Now we're strong again and you can't push us around anymore. And so there's that that goes through it all.

But I think to say that this is a new cold war is – we could make it one, but I don't think it's going in that direction.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Roger.

MR. COHEN: Well, I agree with General Scowcroft that clearly in this instance you don't have the ideological conflict that you had during the Cold War. On the other hand, I think that we should have taken President Putin a lot more seriously when he described the breakup of the Soviet Union as the greatest catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is a pretty memorable phrase. Because it was so extraordinary, unbelievable, I think many of us tended to laugh it away. But I think what we're seeing now is that President Putin is absolutely serious about recreating the Soviet space.

And looking at it from the perspective of what's just happened in Crimea, I think we can view the events in Georgia in 2008 as a kind of precursor; a trial run, if you'd like. Let's see if the West reacts if I recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. In that case he did not annex. And we huffed a bit and then we went back to reset, and then there were the Medvedev years when it looked like we might be able to treat Russia as a normal country.

And there's been this idea, this dream of a European space, or a Eurasian space, stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok where we could build free and liberal societies on a Western model. But this man, this President Putin, he does not want that. He is bent on something else. He is bent on proposing an alternative civilization, if you like, to the West.

And I think today, Bob, we have a highly combustible situation. I agree that this could be just the first move in Ukraine. But much more dangerous is the fact that there are Russian speakers in plenty of other states surrounding Russia, notably Estonia and Latvia. And if anything begins to stir there, we're into territory where, of course, Article 5 applies. An attack on any NATO member will be considered an attack on all.

So we're definitely into new territory. I don't think we're into a new cold war, but we're into new territory where we have to recognize that in Moscow right now we have an adversary. We do not have a potential partner.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Dr. Brzezinski, what could or should we do now?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I think we have to be concerned about what follows, what has happened. And Putin in this speech has laid out a case that could be used for asserting force directly against Ukraine and seeing how it reacts. Might it disintegrate? Might parts of Ukraine secede? And then what happens? Suppose violence breaks out? What choices do we have? How can we react?

And I think we ought to try to anticipate that possibility and certain to consider it seriously. And one way to anticipate it is to still try to somehow or other convey to Putin that it is not our intent to seduce Ukraine, to draw it into NATO, to turn it into a state that is openly, overtly hostile to Russia, and to work together in consolidating the recovery of Ukraine economically and otherwise, because Russia also has an interest in that, and so do we, and say to them we'll do it jointly. And of course Ukraine has a right to be European in spirit, but it's not going to be a member of the EU for years and years. And we can reassure you that it will not be a member of NATO.

But at the same time we have to convey to the Russians our concern that those words spoken by Putin about Ukraine are terribly reminiscent of what Hitler was saying about Austria before the Anschluss, which was then followed by the Sudetenland, and we know the rest of the history. And that could be then very serious in Europe. Either we are passive in the face of a calamitous explosion, or maybe the Ukrainians will fall apart and simply there will be a repetition of what happened in Crimea.

So we also have to talk to the Ukrainians about their response and what steps they are taking to make sure that this state remains viable and be willing to assist them if they are determined. So in this sense, an accommodation if possible, deterrence of the conflict if necessary. But I would not treat this lightly. I think there is a spirit in Putin's speech which is vengeful and triumphalist at the same time, and committed, as Mr. Cohen just said, to this notion of a new union, which actually is just a new name for a very old entity, an empire with a capital in Moscow. And that, I think, is unreal in terms of the modern age.

This is why Nazarbayev, for example, a good friend of the Russians, a former first secretary of the communist party in Kazakhstan, now president of Kazakhstan, is issuing warnings about the possibility of a threat to the independence of states in the region. And so are some of the others; Karimov of Uzbekistan openly so, and so forth.

I think these are possible, very serious dangers to stability in Europe, with consequences which could be either very defeatist or explosive – I can't predict that – but certainly collective dangerous.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Dr. Scowcroft, do you think the sanctions that the United States announced, have they had any impact?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I think we've done about the minimum we needed to do. And I think we see what happens now. I agree with much of what Zbig has just said. I misjudged Putin. As I say, he was filled with venom at the United States at the end of the Cold War. But he's not a dumb man. He's a smart man. And I thought that after he had ruled for a while and after Medvedev had had his turn at president that Putin would see Medvedev got a lot farther with sugar than he was getting with vinegar and that he would change. He hasn't. And I think that tells you more about him and we need to worry about.

Also this thing about the Soviet Union and how it – it's important to remember that in 1991, when the Soviet Union broke up, Kravchuk of Crimea – I can't remember who was head of Byelorussia – and Yeltsin of Russia broke up the Soviet Union to take Gorbachev's job away from him.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Shushkevich.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Hmm?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Shushkevich of Byelorussia.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Yeah, yeah. Shushkevich. So, you know, that fits right into Putin's sort of determination here. And I think we need to be – when you talk about sanctions we've put on, I think we need to be confident, careful, positive, but not frantic like Putin is sort of getting.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, Roger, Dr. Brzezinski said, you know, we should talk to him and explain to him, you know, how we really feel about Ukraine. Will he listen, in your view? Or has he already got an agenda here?

MR. COHEN: Well, I think, Bob, he already had a chance to listen. As far as I recall, Secretary of State Kerry flew to London just a few days ago, on the eve of all this, and had several hours of talks with foreign Minister Lavrov, and they produced precisely nothing.

I think President Putin had decided a while back on this course, and he's executed it. This is grave. This is the first act of annexation in Europe since the Second World War. And another word for annexation, of course, is Anschluss. And I think President Putin's perception of the United States and the West is of a somewhat supine and somewhat divided West and United States. Certainly pivot to Asia does not look like such a great idea right now.

And when I look down that sanctions list, you know, these are pretty much kind of second-level characters. I'm not sure there isn't a case for taking sanctions at this point right up to the very summit. And perhaps, look, if I recall correctly, the conference in Bucharest in 2008, where there was a lot of discussion of putting Georgia on a track to NATO membership, the Russians – Putin – warned that this would have serious

consequences. And as a result of that, we held back. We did not give Georgia the so-called MAP.

What happened? Three months later, despite this concession – I'm not sure this is a man who listens to concessions, who sees concessions. I think – what is his language? His language is strength. So I think unless you respond to his strength with our own form of strength, you end up losing. And that, I think, is the situation we are in today.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Then what can we really do?

MR. COHEN: Well, I think – if I may, I think the bottom line of the answer has to be enlargement; enlargement of the European Union, at least. We cannot, I think, take from Moscow a veto on whether free countries to the East of the European Union want to be members of the European Union or not.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I think our task is, one, to give Putin a sense that there's an option, a better option. That's my first point, which I've already made. There are people in Russia who are very worried about what is happening. There were 50,000 people in this setting, the brutal regime, demonstrating against this war just a few days ago. They're worried. I think we ought to convey to Putin you can have a deal that is reassuring, but it's not a victory for you.

Secondly, we have to consider seriously the possibility, in view of what he said and which I have quoted, that he will try the Crimean operation in Ukraine itself, with one very important distinction. The Crimean operation was premised on the ability of quick deniability. If something went wrong, if all of a sudden there was a lot of resistance, he could say we never attacked. These guys weren't mine. Forget it. It was some sort of local incident.

He can't do that in Ukraine. If he goes into Ukraine, either there is an engagement or there isn't. And I think we need to talk to the Ukrainians seriously and try to establish to our own satisfaction – or maybe they'll tell us or share something with us – are they really prepared to defend their territory? Because if they are, we should make it even more clear to Putin, don't plunge into that adventure because that can have escalatory consequences.

And I certainly wouldn't tell the Ukrainians, since they have already asked us for some military assistance, that what we are willing to provide are prepackaged military food.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Meals, yeah.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Meals – which we have told them.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: That is so far our contribution to their capacity for self-defense. I think we should indicate we're not going to be at war. We're not committed to war. But if you resist, and if you resist, you will certainly gain the sympathy of the West, just as Finland did in 1939 and 1940 when Stalin attacked Finland. And that creates pressure to do more, and that becomes something that Putin has to consider. Can he really undertake a war at this stage in the heart of Europe, given the state of his economy, which is really very bad, and still the relatively retarded state of his military, which is only being modernized?

If he did this 10 years from now, he might be in much better shape. But right now I don't think a serious conflict in that part of Europe is something that Putin would welcome. He would like to have a quickie – either the breakup of Ukraine or some upheaval within Ukraine. And I think we have to reassure him in a constructive fashion that that is somewhat unlikely, because we have interests too.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do you think, General Scowcroft, that the Europeans will go along with meaningful sanctions?

GEN. SCROWCROFT: I think they are more likely to now than they were when this crisis first started. But I think part of the problem has been we have both, the U.S. and the Europeans, been lazy about this whole thing. The EU made an offer for the relationship with Ukraine. It was a little bit here, a little bit there, maybe some of this, maybe some of that, and so on; didn't amount to anything.

Putin turns around and offers them a \$15 billion loan. Now, what –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Billion.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Billion. Now, what the United States could have done at that time, and I think should have done, is to say, look, Ukraine's economy is in terrible shape. Let's us, the United States, the EU and Russia put together a program of assistance to Ukraine to start them out, get them going again. I don't know if it would have worked, but we're now assuming that what we've got to do is match them belligerence by belligerence by belligerence. And that may be where we end up, but I don't think we ought to start there.

And just one other comment. You know, Ukraine is a very interesting state. It's not just a country. It's three countries; well, two if you take out Crimea now. But there's Crimea, which is Russian, for all practical purposes, in terms of its population and a few Tatars, most of whom have been driven out. Then there's East Ukraine, about the Eastern roughly half, that is primarily of Russian extraction. There is West Ukraine, which has a long history with Poland, with Lithuania, with Austria. They're very different kinds of evolutions here. And so when you say Ukraine this and Ukraine that, what is it you're talking about?

And Putin has done one thing that maybe he hasn't calculated right. There may be some votes, elections around here. He has changed the relative balance of the populations, because Crimea was Russian, period. And now that's out of the mix. So the balance between the two Russias that are left is much closer. And remember, Putin has also said, you know, that there was a coup against the president, Yanukovich, who was a Russian stooge. And – oh, I don't remember what I was going to say now. But –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: But you're right. (Laughter.) He was.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: But now, now the government is a government primarily of West Ukraine. And that's different. And Putin sees that difference. And what he says is you threw out Yanukovich and put in your fascist.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Let me just throw this out, because it's something that, you know, we're seeing a lot of in the press. Did this have anything to do with how the United States is now perceived in the world?

MR. COHEN: I think it does to some degree. I think Putin, President Putin, had the perception that he could get away with this, and that transatlanticism had become an almost quaint term. Well, well, transatlanticism, what's that for? That's so 20<sup>th</sup> century. Who cares about that? That's all over. OK, you've got the Poles, Lithuanians. They actually think Article 5's important. You know, they're fussing about NATO and they want NATO protection for some reason. Who knows why?

And I think there was a sense not only of that division, but of a United States where the operative word is retrenchment. The United States, after two painful wars, wants to look after its own for a while. And while I don't think there's any direct link, I do think it's a matter of great concern when the United States of America sets a red line, as it did in Syria on the issue of chemical weapons, and walks all the way up to the response called for by that red line and then is seen at the last minute to step back from that. I think that sends a message. You know, that registers around the world. It's not something people immediately forget.

So I'm not saying there's a direct causal link, but I think there is a sense of disunity and weakness. And on that basis, President Putin, though he's a man who, you know, whose psychology understands, above all, force, strength, brutality where necessary, I think that gave him a kind of green light.

What he did, actually, in Crimea – I covered the war in Bosnia. This is exactly what President Milosevic did in Bosnia. Serbian troops in Bosnia? No, none. What are you talking about? This attempt to get plausible deniability. You could see them. I rode on buses with them from Belgrade, you know, down into – and you still got these guys now today, these terrible photographs of the Ukrainian army and navy walking out of their barracks, you know, with their hands up. And their soldiers, you know, pointing their machine guns at them are in camouflage and no identifiable insignia. What is this?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do you think, Dr. Brzezinski, did this have anything to do with how the United States is perceived, rightly or wrongly?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, probably, up to a point, yes. And even right now, I'm a little surprised that, with all that is happening, the president of the United States hasn't spoken to the country about the problem, hasn't put it in a larger context. He gave a brief statement in the bowels of the White House regarding these minimalist sanctions and then walked out of the room; didn't say much to the American people.

So I don't think there's even that much clarity abroad yet about our position. I hope it will emerge in sharper relief.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, what would you – and I want to hear from General Scowcroft on this too. Let's say both of you, if you were advising the president, if you were the national security adviser –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, I already told you what I would do.

MR. SCHIEFFER: – what would you tell him to do right now?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I would, one, still make an attempt to see if the Russians are receptive in a larger accommodation regarding Ukraine, and a generous one and a balanced one. But I would also try to make more certain that the Ukrainians know what they are going to do and are prepared to do it and, if push comes to shove, start indicating rather heavily that we'll not be indifferent. We'll not be passive.

And on that subject, let us just not exaggerate the divisions in Ukraine. There are some Russians in Ukraine, but the Russian-speaking Ukrainians are not Russian. They're like the Swiss. The Swiss speak German or French. Neither one or the other is planning to join France or Germany. (Laughter.) It's rather important.

And look at some key people. One of the sort of new heroic figures of the Maidan is Klitschko. Do you know that he didn't speak Ukrainian three months ago? He spoke mostly just Russian, but he's picked it up in this current situation. Tymoshenko, the great enemy of Yanukovich, comes from Donetsk, I think, or Dnipropetrovsk, one or the other.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Donetsk.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: And she didn't speak much Ukrainian when she entered politics. But now, of course, she speaks Ukrainian. She spoke Russian.

This is much more of a nation than we allow. And they were denied their national identity for a long, long time, but since the 19<sup>th</sup> century started evolving and developing and acquiring a spirit of its own, and its own heroes and its own history. They, for

example, reject the notion of Kiev being Kievan Rus, meaning Russian. They emphasize it's Kievan Ruthenian, of which they're the descendant, but not Russians.

It was Greek Orthodox. It wasn't Russian Orthodox. Most people ignore that. Russian Orthodox emerged only in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century. It was Greek Orthodox. So they are asserting their own identity and claiming their own history. And there is a dispute on the subject between them and the Russians. But Putin publicly has said, not just this time but previously, Ukraine is not a nation. Russia and Ukraine are one nation. A lot of Ukrainians, the majority of Ukrainians, reject that.

MR. SCHIEFFER: What would you advise the president right now, General?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Well, as I said, I think that – I think the president ought to offer what he hasn't offered yet, which is that we put together a program for Ukraine and see if you could move away from the direction we're going back to where the problem started. I don't know if it will work. And it may be that – it may be that Putin does think we've lost our will.

I sort of doubt it, but, you know, there are a lot of indications to the contrary. But I think – and I think we need to remember we also have other things going with the Russians. You know, if there's to be some progress made in Syria, for example, it would certainly be nice if the United States and Russia were on the same page.

Iran – the Russians have been basically supportive of us on Iran. That's a very important issue too.

So it's not as if this is a cold war waiting to break out and so on. We have had not a warm relationship. They haven't been bad everywhere. And it seems to me that if we can pull this out of the fire, at least give it one more chance to see whether Putin is along or whether his language is truly the way his mind works.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You had, Roger, a really terrific piece in the Times this week about the parallels of this in World War I and all of that. How dangerous is this situation right now?

MR. COHEN: Well, I wrote that just because it's the centennial, obviously, of the outbreak of World War I. And Gavrilo Princip, who was 19 when he shot the archduke in Sarajevo, he was trying to secure the liberty of the south Slavs from an imperium, the imperium of Austro-Hungary. And, of course, President Putin is trying to revive some form of Russian imperium.

Clearly there aren't any exact parallels, but I'm sure there are young folk in Ukraine who are feeling passionately indignant and angry about what has just happened. And while it's true that there are, if you like, three Ukraines, it's also true that one Ukraine was recognized and its borders recognized by President Putin in 1994 when

Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons. And that was formal recognition of the borders that have just been trampled upon by President Putin.

I – look, I don't want to be alarmist. And I also absolutely agree that on the Iran dossier, which is a critical one, Russian help is important. So everything has to be calibrated. But this is a sea change. It is a new ballgame. And I think the situation is combustible, both within Ukraine if President Putin chooses to go any further, and potentially in the Baltic states, where feelings run very, very high about being ruled from Moscow. And I know Vice President Biden has just been there to reassure them.

But if there was any incident, you know, as we've just seen, it can take – I mean, as the outbreak of World War I illustrates, it was a 19-year-old kid who precipitated that cataclysm. In combustible situations, we don't know what the spark might be. But I think this is a far, far more dangerous situation than many people imagine.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, let's go to the audience, because – we'll just start right here. Go ahead. You, sir.

Is there a mic? Here comes a mic right here. No, that's a camera.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Right there. Right there – the mic.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: There's a mic right there.

MR. COHEN: Mic over here.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Here we are.

Q: Do you think that Snowden has assisted Putin in any way by supplying him with ways of – don't laugh – ways of collection that we have in the Ukraine and the surrounding countries that could have compromised a response?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I didn't understand that.

Q: Snowden, whether Snowden –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Oh, Snowden.

Q: He's in Moscow.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And whether he –

Q: Might have supplied the Russians with intelligence.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Did Snowden supply the Russians with some kind of intelligence that might have –

Q: Compromised our – (off mic).

MR. SCHIEFFER: Compromised us in some way in regard to –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: There's no way of answering that without knowing what he has and what he has given to the Russians. I don't know what he has.

Q: Because he's about to be – we had gathered intelligence on one country, and this had been another –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Probably more than one country.

Q: Right. But – (laughter) –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: But I don't think we know what he has and we don't know what he has given to the Russians.

MR. SCHIEFFER: OK, right here. You were next.

Q: Thank you. Paolo von Schirach, Schirach Report.

Back to what you were saying a moment ago in terms of this being a game changer, certainly Pax Americana has been the legacy of the postwar period, and it was what the – the fundamental principle was sanctity of borders. Now this principle has been blown away for reasons that all of you gentlemen have explained quite well – the history, the complexity, the old Soviet Union, Russian empire, Ukraine, this and that. We all understand. And certainly we understand that I think we can have sympathy on the fact that most of the Crimeans are Russian, ethnic Russians.

However, as you pointed out, there was a treaty sanctioned – the Treaty of Budapest, I believe it is – in which the United States, Great Britain and Russia guaranteed the Ukrainian borders. Now this principle has been blown away. I think that President Obama is trying to say wait a minute. We cannot do this and you cannot get away with it.

What – and you have explained that we don't really have that many options. But if this principle of sanctity of borders, which is at the foundation of peace in Europe, is blown away, then what? Then what will the United States be able to do to repair this? Because now we are most likely going to allow this to happen, because there's not going to be any going back, I believe. In other words, Putin is not going to give back the Crimea to the Ukraine. Then the principle of sanctity of borders has been infringed.

Is that an issue of great consequence, or we can just let this go? Thank you.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I don't think it's an issue of that great consequence. We didn't think so either with respect to Kosovo, which is a similar sort of action. As a matter of fact, we used force to try to make it happen. So I don't think that's a fundamental issue.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Dr. Brzezinski, do you want to –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, I think it could be a fundamental issue. But I agree with Brent that it isn't yet, for one very simple reason. The Ukrainians didn't resist in Crimea. Maybe they couldn't, but they didn't. And that makes it very different, because there was a kind of complacency or accommodation on their part. But I'm concerned that the issue could become much graver, especially in view of what Putin is saying, that there is going to be a challenge to the integrity and independence of Ukraine.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: That would be very different.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: And that would be very different.

MR. SCHIEFFER: The lady in the back.

Q: Thank you. Maia Kay, Voice of America Georgian Service.

My question is really simple and short. How safe might Georgia be in this given situation and new development? Can we expect Russia's further expansion, military, to the south? Thank you.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I couldn't hear that.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I didn't understand it.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And would you identify yourself again and where you're – (inaudible)?

Q: Maia Kay, Voice of America Georgian Service. Thank you.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I didn't get the – I didn't get the question.

MR. SCHIEFFER: It's very difficult for us to – the sound is a little muffled.

Q: Voice of America.

Q: Voice of America Georgian Service.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I know who she is.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Voice of America, but what was the question?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: What is the question? (Laughter.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: Maybe if you'd come up here, we could – I'm sorry to ask you to do this, but it's very difficult back there. Go ahead.

Q: Thank you. Again, Maia Kay from Voice of America Georgian Service.

My question is, can we expect Russia's further military expansion towards Georgia? How safe might Georgia be?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Has anybody got that?

Q: Thank you.

MR. COHEN: The question is how safe should Georgia feel? I think the fact is, having talked to a couple of Georgians who attended our conference, Georgians do not feel safe. They do not feel in the least bit safe. In fact, they feel threatened. And, of course, those kinds of feelings, whether rational or irrational, doesn't particularly come into it. If you're afraid, you're afraid.

And when you've already lost 20 percent of your territory, as Georgia has, and you see what's just happened in Crimea, and you see both the EU and NATO basically slamming on the brakes whenever anybody mentions any notion of Georgia coming into either the EU or NATO, then you think, well, what's our future here? You know, we've got President Putin up there eyeing us. And to the West, which is the direction we want to go in, we don't see much receptiveness. So I think that's a very disturbing situation for Georgians.

I don't expect President Putin to move on Georgia today, tomorrow or this year. But that possibility is there. And he knows it's there. That's the way – that's the way he wants it to be. And, you know, to come back to your question, I do think it's a serious change. Kosovo was not annexed. Kosovo, which is 90-plus percent ethnically Albanian, became independent after a bloody war across the former Yugoslavia that went on for a decade.

This is not the place to go into all that, but I don't think it's a precise parallel. And it's absolutely – I mean, I'm sure many of you read President Putin's long piece in my newspaper at the time of the Syrian conflict where he was saying the only thing we have between the world and the abyss is the rule of law, the sanctity of borders, the centrality of the U.N. Security Council. International law is the only basis on which to conduct human affairs. I mean, Orwellian doesn't begin to describe it.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Doyle McManus.

Q: Thank you. Doyle McManus from the Los Angeles Times.

I'd like to sharpen the question of what the United States should be prepared to do if the government of Ukraine says it's prepared to resist Russian incursion, further Russian incursion, into its territory in the East and South. It seems to me there's a bit of a chicken-and-egg problem here. Their decision of what they're prepared to do may depend on their understanding of how much support they may have.

Now, Dr. Brzezinski, you suggested that MREs don't seem quiet enough. It's a well-known menu. We can provide intelligence support. We can provide advisers and training. We can provide non-lethal equipment. We can provide lethal equipment. We can provide air cover. So I've given you the escalation you already know. Where should we be, and what should we be offering?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I think, in any case, we should engage in contingency planning for all of that in different portions, depending on circumstances. But we should couple that with a serious communication to the Russians that we would like an alternative outcome in which we can be partners, but also a reaffirmation that if the Ukrainians resist, they will not be alone. We are not going to tell the Russians in advance exactly what we're going to do. We may discuss some aspects of it with the Ukrainians. But the test of the pudding is also in the Ukrainians. They have to demonstrate that they really value their territorial integrity and are prepared to make sacrifices to protect it.

I think the Russians, the way they've operated in Crimea, as I've said before, were operating on a contingent basis. If there's a lot of resistance, we pull back. The same may very well happen in the case of Ukraine as well, particularly in those districts in which there are some Russian people living and who are demonstrating, right, in Donetsk and so forth.

So the Ukrainians themselves, first of all, have to take some clear positions regarding what they intend to do, with some degree of credibility. Otherwise, if we don't do it, then I think we really are on a path towards grievous instability in Europe, and also that spilling over to Georgia, Azerbaijan. The Russians have scores to settle with the Azerbaijanis. And it could be elsewhere as well. Certainly Riga, which has a large Russian population, could be the object of sudden explosions of popular hatred and conflicts. I mean, you open up all sorts of gates.

Our job is to reduce the scope and certainty by commitment and clarity and willingness to compromise on an intelligent level. But that also means the president has to take a visible position and speak seriously to the American people about the problem that we confront, that we and our allies confront jointly. And Mrs. Merkel's speech, I think, is a hopeful indication that more and more important Europeans are beginning to realize that we're in this together. Hollande, even though he has some personal distractions, has also spoken strongly on this subject, which, you know, given his busy schedule, is – (laughter) – a good sign.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Anybody else want to talk about that?

Back there; the lady.

Q: Thank you. A reporter from the Voice of America Chinese Service.

I have a question here for all the panelists. So are you concerned that if EU and U.S. fail to take effective measures on Russia, will China be encouraged to do the same thing in its neighborhood, and the second, whether U.S.'s rebalancing towards Asia will suffer from the Crimea crisis? Thank you.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: If I heard it – I'll start off – I think the Chinese sympathies probably lie more with the Russians on this, but they're not, I don't think, going to enter, because they are neuralgic on the issue of territories being shifted around and so on, a la Tibet. And so I don't think you'll find the Chinese standing up and shouting at the Russians on that one.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Anyone else want to – Roger, do you want to add to that?

MR. COHEN: Well, I think, in terms of the second part of your question, it's been hard to understand what exactly pivot to Asia meant. It was a phrase, and it's floated out there, and there have been meetings about it. It's not altogether clear, to me at least, what it's meant. But I think what President Putin has presented the West with is a strong case for looking again at the transatlantic alliance, looking again at defense budgets, looking again at the fact that the European neighborhood is not so safe and secure that we can simply transfer our attention elsewhere.

I think China has a very ambivalent response to what has happened; doesn't like borders changing. On the other hand – well, it abstained at the U.N. I think that's an indication of this ambivalent feeling. I don't expect any – although I threw it into my scenario of World War III, I don't actually expect some sudden Chinese move on Taiwan or something like that, no.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, right down here. Yes, sir, in the second row.

Q: Thank you. Francois Heisbourg from the IISS.

There is another country which has a common border with an EU member and with a NATO member and which has an agreement with the EU, and that's Moldova. And Moldova also has its own Crimea in the form of Transnistria, which is now asking Russia to become part of the Russian Federation. And there is a game which is beginning now between Russia and Moldova to get Moldova to go to the Eurasian agreement in exchange of Transnistria not being made part of Russia.

What, Zbig, should we be doing now to prevent that particular domino from falling? Because if it does, then you're going to have a problem for Russia of territorial continuity between Russian Transnistria and Russian Crimea. And that happens to be the

southern border lands of Ukraine. So you may not have time to prepare that package of measures which you told us about earlier on, what we should be doing now.

If I may, just one remark on the leverage which we may think that Russia has vis-à-vis us on Iran and Syria. I remember, Zbig remembers and Brent remembers, that during the Cold War we were able to speak and cooperate with the Soviet Union on issues of chemical and nuclear proliferation. And that's not going to stop simply because we're going to have a big problem with Russia otherwise. Russia has permanent interests. It is doing what it is doing on Iran not because it wants to be kind with us. And if we get into a new cold war, it is not going to stop Russia from continuing to talk with us on Iran.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, I agree with you on the Iran aspect.

As far as Moldova is concerned, there's one key factor involved here – geography. If Ukraine doesn't go the wrong way, the Russians will not be able to pull that off. And, if necessary, we and the Ukrainians can deal with it. If Ukraine falters, the problem is, of course, Moldova. But, of course, the bigger problem is Ukraine itself. This is why that is the key strategic issue right now. How will the Ukrainians play it? How will the Russians play it? What can we do to influence a positive attitude on the part of the Russians? What can we do to be clear-cut in our relationship with the Ukrainians?

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, right there.

Q: Yes. Edward Lozansky, American University Moscow.

My question to Mr. Brzezinski: What's your opinion of the neo-Nazi factor in Ukraine? Is it powerful? Is it negligible? Or is it just Russian propaganda and all of them are just Western democracy types?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: There are probably some Nazis, or neo-Nazis more accurately, in Ukraine. They're a very, very minor group, very similar in that respect to some neo-Nazis in Russia, who seem to be a little more visible, actually, and who even have a very prominent philosopher supporting them and instructing on that basis Mr. Putin as to what his vision of the world ought to be. I think you know what I'm referring to.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. We haven't called on anybody on this side over here, just because – right there. Look to your right.

Q: I'm Mark Seibel with McClatchy Newspapers.

I have two quick questions. One, I'm wondering if any of you were surprised that Putin moved into Crimea, because some people say we should have realized it all along, and others say of course we were surprised. I'm just curious what your personal situation

was. And then there's been a lot of discussion about NATO and how this finally brings NATO back around to having a purpose.

And I'm curious whether you think the initial response on behalf of NATO and the United States sending a half-dozen planes to Poland, that sort of thing, if that's muscular enough to make an impression.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Roger, why don't we start on this side?

MR. COHEN: Well, I was not surprised in the end game, if you like. I think the Germans have very good antenna in Russia, and I spoke to a senior guy I know at the foreign ministry there about, I guess, two weeks before the annexation. And he's a fairly prudent guy. And he said, you know, our impression—and Steinmeier, the foreign minister, had just been to Moscow—and his impression was he's going to go all the way. I don't think we can stop him.

And, you know, that – and I was surprised. I said really? And then I saw, you know, these moves that reminded me very much of Belgrade and what I'd witnessed in Bosnia. Of course, no parallel is exact. And so I was not surprised right at the end.

In terms of – the same question was about what NATO – the NATO response. You know, President Obama is about to go to Europe. He's going to Brussels, I believe, for the first time very soon, this month. And the one thing I would say is I think it's absolutely critical that there be a – that this trip be well-prepared and that there be a strong, united, vigorous statement about what has – about what has occurred.

And, you know, there was a mention, I think, in President Obama's statement to Article 5 of the NATO treaties. But it came well down the list. I think it could have been higher up the list, just as I think the people sanction could have been of a more significant level.

MR. SCHIEFFER: How about you two? Were you surprised?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Yes, I was surprised. I was surprised by how efficiently and essentially nonviolently the Russians were able to pull it off. It was a well-run operation, well-planned, which all possibilities of this engagement did need to be. But I was also surprised that the Ukrainians there didn't offer some resistance.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Could we, should we have known about this?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: If we'd paid attention, yes. But we weren't paying attention. You know, Ukraine has had several elections. They've gone with the Western part. They've gone with the Eastern part. Tymoshenko was put in jail by Yanukovich. So this has been a troubled country for a long, long time. But it was a backwater, and we had this little surge about Ukraine in NATO for a time. But, no, we have not paid

attention to it. And I think we probably could have avoided it had we been on top of the problem when it first started with the Ukrainians and the EU.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, I'm sorry to say we have come to the end of our program. But before you go, we have one other thing we want to take note of. Today is General Scowcroft's birthday. (Applause.) There you go. You'll have to blow out the candles. (Applause.) And there is cake for everyone. (Applause.)

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I'm sorry. I don't do birthdays anymore. (Laughter.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, there is cake for everybody here.

(END)