

Transcription of the National Conversation:
Putin's Return and the US-Russian Reset

[simultaneous speaking]

Michael Van Dusen:

Good afternoon. Welcome to the Woodrow Wilson Center. And I also want to welcome those that are in the online audience. I'm Mike Van Dusen, executive vice president of the Woodrow Wilson Center. Jane Harman, the Center's president and CEO, is in Cairo, Egypt today observing the presidential elections there and regrets very much that she could not be here to attend this important national conversation. I want to acknowledge the presence of Ambassador Joseph Gildenhorn, chair of the Woodrow Wilson Center's board of trustees, and his wife Alma Gildenhorn. Wilson Council president Sam Donaldson, who I believe was in the back. And, Sam, we can -- [laughs] -- come on -- Sam, come on up front and we'll find a seat for you here momentarily. There's one right up here. And former trustees of the Center, I believe Bill Coleman and maybe Iggy Sanchez [spelled phonetically]. As a living memorial to the 28th president of the United States, the Wilson Center tackles critical global challenges by providing a central bridge between policymaking and practical ideas drawn from the world's finest research analysis and honest non-partisan dialogue.

Today's national conversation, the 10th in this Center's signature series, will take a close look at U.S.-Russian relations. The Wilson Center's Kennan Institute provides extraordinary leadership on issues dealing with Russia, thus making this a natural place for convening this meeting. It has been two weeks since Vladimir Putin was inaugurated for his third term as President of the Russian Federation. Whatever else can be said about Russia's presidential election this past March or its parliamentary elections last December, the least we can say is that they were not free or fair. There is -- this is hardly news. Russia has not had many, if any, free or fair elections by Western standards since the dissolution of the Soviet Union just over two decades ago. What is news is that the elections -- these elections were followed by mass protest demonstrations by tens of thousands of Russia's emerging professional middle class. It is encouraging that these protests were peaceful and it is even more encouraging that

they were allowed to go forward at the time, though more recent protests have met with less tolerance. It remains to be seen whether this pressure by Russian society on its government will translate into concrete progress, such as lowering the prohibitive barriers that prevent opposition parties from registering for elections or even restoring the direct election of Russian governors. Former Wilson Center scholar, Anders Aslund wrote this week that Prime Minister Medvedev's new cabinet has the potential to push through badly-needed reforms and, in quote, he suggests, "A much greater and more positive political change is in the offing than one could have hoped for" -- "may be in the offing than one had hoped for." But even if positive political change does not pan out in Russia it is clear that President Putin will not quite have the unchallenged control in his third term that he enjoyed in the last decade. From the administration's perspective, one of President Obama's priorities upon entering office was the reset of U.S.-Russian relations. That effort paid off in some areas, such as the passage of the New START Treaty and securing now-vital supply routes to our forces in Afghanistan. I am sure our panel will discuss the implications of Russia's invitation to join the WTO and the implications that accession will have on American policy and those companies active in the Russian market. Whether or not the reset continues, there remain areas, such as missile defense, where Russia, the United States simply disagree. The responsible thing to do is to keep negotiating, minimize those disagreements as much as possible while building on areas of mutual interest, and there are no shortage of those.

I will close with one such example. Senator Mikhail Margelov, the chairman of Russia Federation's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Senator John Kerry's Russian counterpart, spoke eloquently from this very stage last November about U.S.-Russian transition from the Cold War rivalry to cooperation in Asia -- in Africa and the Middle East. The most significant outcome of this cooperation to date has been the mergence with Russian and American assistance of the new state of South Sudan. He noted that Russia and the United States also coordinated, if not always agreeing, on developments in the Middle East over the last year. We need that dialogue, better still cooperation, to continue in the weeks and months ahead, especially on Syria and Iran. So while the U.S.-Russian relationship is complex, it also abounds with promise, unrealized expectations, and

disappointments. Today the Wilson Center is privileged to convene one of America's greatest political scientists and strategists, Dr. Brzezinski, to deliver remarks, after which Susan Glasser, the editor in chief of Foreign Policy Magazine and former co-bureau chief for The Washington Post to Moscow, will moderate a first-rate group of experts as we explore Putin's return and the U.S.-Russian reset in greater detail. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski. Dr. Brzezinski, of course, served as national security advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981. During his term of office he managed the normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China and the severing of diplomatic ties with the Republic of China, the signing of a second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, SALT II, the brokering of the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, the transition of Iran from an important U.S. client state to an anti-Western Islamic Republic, the encouragement of dissidence in Eastern Europe, and emphasizing certain human rights in order to undermine the influence of the Soviet Union. He is currently the Robert E. Osgood professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies here in Washington in addition to being a scholar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a member of various boards and councils. Dr. Brzezinski, we are honored to have you here today and grateful that you agreed to take part in this discussion and open it up. The floor is yours.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm delighted to participate in this panel and I look forward to a constructive and hopefully informative discussion. I would like to begin by just citing a little event that took place just very recently. The chief of the Russian General Staff, in the course of the conference dealing with security issues in Europe, made the following statement. "Taking into account a missile defense system's destabilizing nature, that is the creation of an illusion that a disarming strike can be launched with impunity, a decision on preemptive use of the attack weapons available will be made when the situation worsens." It's an interesting statement and I'm sure some of you have noted it, although it wasn't highlighted very much. In effect it said preemptive attack. What was the U.S. response to it? It was rather interesting. There was practically no response. Now what does that tell you? Well, that at

least tells me, and this is something which I want to use as the theme for some of my comments, is that the American-Russian relationship today confronts rather significant dilemmas of asymmetry. Here was a threat being made, which was politely ignored. It wasn't ignored, however, out of politeness. It was ignored out of certain subjective and objective realities. And these subjective and objective realities do create the dilemmas inherent in the contemporary American-Russian relationship. And that particularly applies to someone like President Putin, who is a man of strong feelings and strong views, and of rather, should we say, subjective perspectives on world affairs. For Putin, the United States on the subjective level is really the focus of his historical and international ambitions and resentments. He defines his goals very much in relationship to the balance of power and to the prospective futures of the United States and of Russia. He sees the United States as in effect capitalizing on an unfortunate historical development which produced the collapse of the Soviet Union. I'm sure most of you remember his famous statement to the effect that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the greatest calamity of the 20th century. It's a statement worth pondering in terms of its meaning. "Greatest calamity of the 20th century," which had World War I in which millions perished and the map of Europe was altered fundamentally, World War II which was the most massive destruction of humanity experienced in the course of humanity's entire history culminating in two transcendently remarkable, if not desirable, developments, namely the use of nuclear weapons against two cities full of civilians and, of course, the Holocaust. And it was followed by a 40-year-long debilitating and potentially very dangerous Cold War in which we all faced, together, the possibility of a nuclear war, which if it had erupted would have probably consumed in the first eight hours of the conflict about 85 million human lives.

Yet the disintegration of the Soviet Union, according to him, overshadows that in its deplorable character. That tells you something. He also is deeply aware of the fact that today's Russia is neither the Soviet Union nor imperial Russia, and he doesn't hide his regret that this is so, and he does indicate, in fact, in a serious fashion that he would like to alter that reality. Now that stands in rather dramatic contrast to the American attitude towards the rest of the world for what it is worth. Not

always perfect, in recent years sometimes badly unilateralist, occasionally involving the use of force on dubious assumptions, but which nonetheless involves the United States in an ongoing and enduring relationship that is constructive with Europe, with China, with Japan, and in which Russia does not appear as the first on that list, but at best probably third or fourth. That is in itself a significant asymmetry in perspective. And of course it is expressed tangibly on several levels. Putin must be aware, and if he's not his advisors we know are aware, of the fact that the Russian economy today is highly unbalanced, unbalanced in a fashion sadly reminiscent of Nigeria, for example. That is to say, a country which achieves enormous economic benefits from a one-sided economic undertaking which involves the export of a very valuable resource the world needs but without commensurate social benefit on other aspects of social and economic development. It is an unbalanced economy and many Russians are aware of it and are worried by it. It is also an economy which inherently produces enormous inequalities of wealth, and that condition is made worse by the fact that many of the beneficiaries of that unbalanced distribution of wealth exploit the opportunity to export their wealth to the West, and thus it is not invested in Russia's own development. He's aware of the fact, certainly, because he has indicated this, that politically Russia is not in a very favorable position. Its relationship with the West is mixed and tenuous, but certainly not free of tensions and anxieties, particularly insofar as Russia's Western neighbors are concerned. In the East it is an ambivalent relationship with a power that is rising at the fastest rate of growth in human history and is reaching unprecedented levels of modernization, capitalization, transformation. Namely, China. And China, highly overpopulated, is right on the edge of the least populated part of this huge Russian territory which suffers from uneven economic development, which suffers from a demographic decline from internal movement of people from the east to the west, all of which, of course, has geopolitical consequences. These are the kinds of concerns that Putin must be sharing with some of his associates and must galvanize his perspective on the world and on the United States. What is his remedy? What is the remedy that he's currently propounding most energetically? A Eurasian union, a Eurasian union which in some respects is meant to be eventually something comparable perhaps to the European Union, hopefully free of some of the internal tensions of that European Union,

something that will elevate Russian again to what disappeared as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The problem with a Eurasian union, however, is that there are no evident candidates yearning for membership in such a union. The leaders of some of the countries have no choice but to pay lip service and indicate a willingness to participate in this venture but with an evident lack of enthusiasm. The most important candidate for membership is obviously ambivalent, Ukraine, maneuvering as best as it can to avoid anything that ties it down and limits its national independence. So the Eurasian union does not hold too much attraction for its would-be candidates. And, in addition to that, of course on the edges of contemporary Russia there are countries regarding which Putin really harbors serious reservations and personal animus for its leaders, and that's particularly applicable to Georgia. In brief, you have a geopolitical setting of ambiguity, uncertainty, high expectations, but low probability of success of their achievement. On the other side of the ledger, particularly with his preoccupation with the United States. The other country which has serious economic problems, but in-system problems which it is possible to anticipate a constructive resolution, provided the country pulls itself together, overcomes its political gridlock, deals with some of the problems that have surfaced, none of which are trivial but all of which are susceptible to resolution in the event of an intelligent national policy and a great deal of political will at the top. The issue is not resolved, but in any case it is not a situation in any way comparable to that which the Soviet Union faced or which contemporary Russian confronts.

It is also a country which, in spite of the loss of some of its legitimacy in the last 10 to 15 years on the international scene particularly in the wake of, in my judgment, the unfortunate U.S. initiative vis-à-vis Iraq war initiated on the base of false assumptions in 2003, is still a country which musters a great deal of international support. The United States has solid relationships with Europe precisely to the west of Russia. It is seeking an ambiguous partnership with China, which nonetheless commands the interest of both elites because of their respective realization that each benefits from a good relationship with the other and it is a country that can muster coalitions when needed. NATO, in spite of its many ambiguities and weaknesses, stood together in relationship to the war in Afghanistan and just the other day a

conference was concluded in Chicago which Putin chose not to attend, but which much of the players on the world scene actively participated in. It didn't make much play on the international scene, but it is rather interesting to note that no less than some 67 countries chose to participate in this event at a high level and they issued a declaration of 65 long paragraphs dealing with various aspects of the international scene, none of which made sensational news, but many of which reaffirmed fundamental geostrategic goals of the United States. For example, it wasn't much noted that one of the statements in it affirmed the intention of NATO to include Georgia in its membership and affirmed it very explicitly. It stated once again the interest of the alliance in promoting a missile defense system. It expressed the hope for positive relationship of cooperation with Russia but without too much excess or exaggerated expectations. It was a statement which in effect reaffirmed the collective interest of NATO members, 27, all of whom attended, and of the 30 other countries represented at the meeting at a high level in an alliance which America leads and which provides the sinews of international stability and security.

The contrast in that setting with the situation in which Putin finds himself is striking, and it is developing a debate in Russia, a debate which is first of all significant regarding the issue itself, because it addresses a key question, "What kind of a Russia should be on the global scene? What Russia should be seeking on the global scene?" but it also reflects the fact that there is an increasing public opinion in Russia that beings to articulate itself even if it doesn't exercise decisive power. In connection with Putin's project for a Eurasian union, I read, for example, the text of a debate between two Russians who had views on the subject and whose views I'm sure most of the members of the panel are familiar with, and probably many of you, as well. One is Dmitry Drennin [spelled phonetically], who commenting to the Russian press on this notion of Putin and was quite explicit in saying that empires are costly and futile projects, that Russia is in no position to be seeking it. It has to bear in mind the fact that it only accounts for about 2 percent of the global GNP and which, he says, is way below the economic weight of the European Union, the United States, or China. And he goes on to say, "Russia is not able to attract more support from others. The ability to attract others is what counts nowadays, not the ability

to destroy them." A very pertinent allusion to the fact that Russia is a world power in one dimension only. Of course, military power. Nuclear weapons. But it is not a dimension that can be used effectively for political objectives. It is a last resort capacity which makes others pay attention to you, and this is why the United States does pay attention to Russia. But it doesn't give you the ability to mobilize, to influence, to change political conditions.

So it's a residual last resort power. But if the other aspects of power are missing, then the prospects of achieving grand objectives are very limited. But, to be sure, Putin does have support. In the same publication, which was *Conversant* -- I believe that's Berezovsky's [spelled phonetically] paper, I think. Isn't it? You know, *Conversant*, whatever it is, it's rather respectable and widely read. And another Russian scholar appeared in support of Putin's point, and his argument was rather interesting. He said that "the imperial project is the only endeavor that will enable Russia to survive." And he argues, "Most Russians will definitely go for it and that this eventually will have an appeal." It is a statement which on the one hand affirms the reality of isolation and therefore the necessity of seeking something grand, but then reaches levels of ambition which really are quite unrealistic. This particular supporter of Putin's, who was matched against Drennin, goes to say that "Russia eventually will create a Eurasian union." The geographic scope he doesn't explain but he defines precisely. "A Eurasian union from Scotland to New Zealand." Which is, I think, a good way of summarizing a project which is ultimately not particularly realistic. Well, this asymmetry of both objective and subjective realities affects very directly the nature of the American-Russian relationship. For Russia it is inevitably the central relationship. It is a central relationship infused with a great deal of envy, resentment, but also realism that there is no choice but to work with the United States if the United States also prepared respectfully and responsibly to work with Russia, but it is a relationship which defines the largest scope of Putin's perspective on the world.

For the United States that relationship has been well summarized by the word *reset*, which is not a particular clear definition of content but does give you the sense of its essentially tactical nature. *Reset* comes from

computers. You reset the computer not as an act of great strategic significance but as a tactic of necessity to make the computer responsive. You reset the American-Russian relationship in a fashion in which it is possible to increase the scope of cooperative undertakings which meet the respective interests of each of the two countries. But you do not attempt any overarching relationship which would define the two countries as engaged in a central strategic relationship of genuinely global significance. So the reset arrangement pertains, for example, on routes of access to the war in Afghanistan, which is important and helpful. Trains passing through the Soviet Union with equipment for the American and NATO forces. In Afghanistan, the use of Russian airbases, collaboration with the Russians in the process, perhaps benefiting also from some additional Russian experience. It means dealing, if possible, with the problem of Iran in a larger international setting in which Russia plays an important role as a veto-wielding member of the United Nations and residually, in the background always, as a major military power because of its nuclear weapons. But not a decisive role. It's one in which its influence is importance, as great as China, perhaps individually greater than of Germany, France, and Britain, though perhaps not collectively, and of course it involves a relationship with the United States.

One can think of many other such examples, and that is all to the good because it means, at least from the American point of view, the relationship with Russia is not viewed as one of grand rivalry for global power, nor as driven by some otherwise unrealistic aspirations. It is a realistic approach to the situation as it is today, and it is premised on the longer range hope that the situation in Russia will in fact evolve, thereby permitting a qualitatively different relationship to emerge over time. And I happen to be one of those who believes that in the short run, while Putin's domination of Russian policy in some respects involves a counterproductive set of consequences, though not destructive in any grand scale, in the longer run Putin's influence on the future course of Russia will perhaps not be quite as great as it would appear today on the surface given the centralization of power in his hands, given the grand scope of his ambitions.

Putinism may in fact be already by now a form of anachronism, an idea and style of leadership associated

with the past, not particularly relevant either to global conditions or to the specifics of Russia's own condition. It is also quite -- to be perfectly frank, also somewhat handicapped by a curiously unserious set of attributes which it manifests. There is a comical posturing aspect to it that somehow lowers its seriousness. And one of the interesting symptoms of the emerging political life in Russia is that these aspects are becoming the object of political satire. And political satire is a major symptom of the existence of an authentic political life. The fact that Putin likes to appear in dramatic postures such as riding a horse bare-chested and so forth, swimming the butterfly style, refueling himself, his car, on the opened new highway in Siberia, which the Russian press thereafter shortly revealed that his refueling his own car by hand at the gas station was essentially a false photograph because the gas station had no gasoline. But it generated a photograph. All of that makes one wonder how much historical depth and seriousness there is to its leadership. I was watching his inaugural. Perhaps some of you watched it on television. The scenes with these two seven-foot-tall soldiers dressed in theatrical uniforms going back to the 18th century -- 17th century -- with Putin's marching in between them, looking very small but very tough. All of that makes me think of a European political leader whose style at one point was similar personally, and whose primary emphasis was on nationalism and historical glory. Who am I thinking of?

[simultaneous speaking]

Mussolini. Exactly. Mussolini. Including even the preference for black shirts. When Putin meets with his nationalistic supporters he oftentimes dresses completely in black, which I don't think he realizes has certain historical connotations. All of that leads me to the view that in one way or another the phenomenon that we're now observing and today discussing is not going to be an enduring one. It's not going to be a repetition of a prolonged phase of established leadership, not to mention Stalin but even Khrushchev, even Brezhnev, will, in my judgment, have served longer than Putin will dominate the scene. And that is due, in my judgment, to the fact that underneath this superficial political phenomenon that Putin has projected and dominates the scene, a process of change is taking place in Russia and it involves, most important of all, the emergence of a new middle class in the large

cities. Not too many cities, but the key large cities particularly.

A new middle class which has a new sense of identity very different from what might be called the traditional middle class in Russia. It is an identity which is international in outlook and in personal experience. Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Russians travel abroad regularly as a matter of routine by now. Scores of thousands study abroad and go back to Russia. Thousands make a great deal of money which they invest in the West mostly, in addition to some ostentatious spending. It is a different type of community from what has been traditionally the middle class in Russia. Professional, technologically oriented, either apolitical or deeply camouflaged political views because of prevailing authoritarian exigencies. This new middle class is gaining self confidence and is willing increasingly to assert itself, and that too is a very important aspect of change. What strikes me today about a great deal of what I observe is Russia in the course even of some short visits, but looking at it on a continuing basis from outside, is the fact that for the first time in Russian political history the element of fear, of individual fear, is gone. And that is new. That is new. Because while Russia historically, culturally, artistically, philosophically is a part of the West, it was never a part of the West politically in any genuinely enduring fashion. Fear was the dominant characteristic of the political processes in Russia, hierarchy and subordination its self expressions. Today that fear is gone. When a young man can go to the Red Square and stand in the middle of it holding up a placard on a stick in which there are prison bars drawn and behind them is the face of Putin is telling us something of really great significance. That the sense of political jeopardy is now relatively minimal. Yes, you can be arrested. Yes, you might even get beaten up. Yes, you might get a sentence of some weeks or even a month, but that doesn't alter your life. It doesn't deprive you of your life, as would have been the case not such a long time ago. And that means that with passage of time the kind of narrow-minded and unrealistic nationalism that Putin has embraced is not likely to be an enduring condition. And that facilitates on the part of the West, in particular the United States, policies which should be designed, ought to be designed, and to some extent are designed to facilitate closer contacts with Russia. To facilitate the possibility of Russia's own evolution, which facilitates the

recognition by Russia that the best prospects for the development of this huge and potentially wealthy territory, especially in the face of the challenge from the East, are if Russia itself becomes increasingly part of the West. And here there is a particularly important geostrategic relationship between change in Russia itself and change in Ukraine. I have always supported an independent Ukraine because it was my deep conviction that without Ukraine Russia cannot be an empire. But I do not support nor promote Ukraine and Russian hostility. On the contrary, I think Ukraine and Russian accommodation, but of an independent Ukraine in it is the best way to encourage Russia itself to move to the West. If Russia were to confront a hostile, pro-West, West-integrated Ukraine it'll be much less likely to do so. I do not believe that there is much possibility anymore of Russia reintegrating Ukraine into a single state or some sort of a union. There are too many Ukrainians who are committed to independence, who enjoy their independence, who identify their own personal wellbeing with independence to make that possible. And hence Ukraine is an important link in any possible change in Russia in the course of the next couple decades. Putin theoretically could be in office for 12 years. I'm not sure that he will endure that long. If he endures, perhaps he'll have to change dramatically, and that is not to be entirely excluded. But I think Putinism, with its deep negative reactions to the asymmetries in the American-Russian relationship and with its preoccupation with these asymmetries is not likely to be an enduring and successful political leader, hence my optimism about the future of the relationship and indeed about the future of Russia. Thank you.

[applause]

Susan Glasser:

Dr. Brzezinski, I think we could have listened to you describe the future to us with such incredible clarity for a few more hours. So [laughs] forgive us --

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Don't frighten the audience.

Susan Glasser:

[laughs] Well, thank you very much. I'm going to quickly introduce a very distinguished group of panelists because there's so much I think that Dr. Brzezinski gave us to

unpack and to discuss in this conversation. Just going in order here, we have Blair Ruble, who is the director of the Kennan Institute here at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a longtime expert and author on all of these subjects, so I think that'll be a great perspective to have. Nina Khrushcheva, a wonderful friend of mine, a great writer and thinker on these subjects, as well as the great-granddaughter of Nikita Khrushchev. She is an author and a professor in her own right at the New School and she is a longtime contributor of ours and I'm delighted to see her here in person, so thank you. And David Kramer, another good friend, who is the president of Freedom House as well as a former senior U.S. official dealing with these issues very intimately on both sides of the fence. So I can't imagine a better group of people to have a conversation and there really is so much to unpack in what I would say ended in a surprisingly optimistic note after, you know, a very profound tour of the horizon of Russia as it is today and really describing a society that in many ways has been in decline for the two decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and yet right now clearly is entering a moment of transition, if not of enormous change. So I thought that's where we would start our discussion today, which is Putin anachronism. That is sort of the thesis that Dr. Brzezinski's put on the table for us here today and I'm just wondering what everybody else thinks of that. You know, Blair, what do you think?

Blair Ruble:

Well, it's hard to argue with the notion that Putin is an anachronism, but I think there's another question. Is Putin a symptom or a cause? And I think the characteristics that Putin demonstrates reveals an inability of the Russian state for a very long time to come to terms with the challenges of statecraft in the modern era in which you have complex societies which need to -- in which different interests need to be managed, not overcome. And what I seriously wonder is whether or not -- when I say Putin is a symptom not a cause, even if Putin were to leave the scene, how much evidence is there of any movement in the understanding of Russian political elite of the flawed nature of their statecraft? Would the notion of a tribute state in which those in power get to assume the wealth of the country -- would that abate? This notion of unserious posturing, would that leave the scene? Would there be an acceptance of the diversity of interests in Russian society? And most importantly, and this goes to the

imperial project, the imperial project has flaws in a kind of networked, post-imperial world both internationally and domestically. Russia is made up of people who aren't just Russians. So I agree with everything that was -- that you said. It's hard not to agree with that, but I wonder which way the causal arrows go and whether or not there might be deeper historical challenges which still aren't being confronted, not just by Putin but by the elite.

Susan Glasser:

So, David, if Putin is an anachronism, what's to stop him from a much more full-throated backlash against the forces of modernity and the emergence of an urban middle class, as Dr. Brzezinski said, that's willing to take to the streets? What if we don't go in the direction of political liberalization but backlash?

David Kramer:

Well, first, Susan, if I can, thanks to Woodrow Wilson and Blair and Kennan and Dr. Brzezinski. Great set of remarks. I really enjoyed listening to them. I think Putin is a hostage of his own system. I think, all things considered, if he could he'd like to go live next to Roman Abramovich in London and enjoy the --

Susan Glasser:

Could he afford it I think is the question.

David Kramer:

I think he could very easily afford it. I don't think there's any doubt about that. I'll cite a public source, which -- The Sunday Times a couple weeks ago said that Putin was worth \$130 billion. Billion dollars. Last I checked, that's bigger than --

Male Speaker:

\$130 billion?

David Kramer:

130.

Male Speaker:

They show how?

David Kramer:

They didn't show how. At least as far as I --

Susan Glasser:

There was no chart that --

David Kramer:

I don't think he can show how. It's more than you and I make.

Male Speaker:

Yes.

[laughter]

David Kramer:

And so the problem is that the system that's in place -- and I think we do have to distinguish between Russia as the country and the population and the leadership. The system that the leadership has created is a thoroughly corrupt, rotten, and rotting system. It's a system that combines a dangerous combination of arrogance, assertiveness, cockiness, confidence, but also paranoia, hypersensitivity, and insecurity. And the -- Putin needs to stay in power. He can't afford to give up power if you oversee such a corrupt system, and I think that's where the dilemma's really going to come because so much is at stake that there really is great concern about relinquishing not only the power but the wealth that has been accumulated over the years and risking having a new system come in that might take a look at the system in the past.

Susan Glasser:

So I'm not going to put you down in the optimist column, then.

David Kramer:

Not yet.

Susan Glasser:

[laughs] Nina.

Nina Khrushcheva:

Well, I'm somewhere in the middle. The greatest thing about Russia is that it has been around for so long and it's so big. Now we have artificial 11 -- nine time zones versus 11, but basically it's 11. So whatever you say about Russia, you can almost never get it wrong because it would be he's a hostage, he's a cause, he's a problem, he will continue, he can't leave. All these things work

through. I want to thank Dr. Brzezinski. It was such a poetic speech on politics, that -- very, very beautiful and very well set forward the problems. I actually, after listening to you, have discovered that I'm an optimist, too, which is very surprising to me because being a Russian and all --

[laughter]

I am --

Susan Glasser:

This is not a famous truth.

Nina Khrushcheva:

This is really not what happening to us. But it is -- I mean, he is that naked king that -- as of, you know, last two years with -- I mean, Russia has discovered the Byzantium project did not work out. I mean, those of you who visited remember that even a couple of years ago you would walk around Moscow and you would feel that it is -- "Yes, it is Byzantium with the Mercedes and supermarkets," because the grandeur -- the feeling of grandeur was everywhere. And it's really subsiding, and I think I absolutely agree that that ultimately is going to did Putin in because as -- I don't know if you followed -- you remember when he was running for president in March 2012, he really insisted on a symbolic tank. He really wanted to be on the tank. He wanted to stand on the tank. I mean, that symbol speaks to him, and we do know that those countries that really make it are the countries that exercise soft power, not hard power. So it is a question of basically outliving his potential, which he has. The slight danger there, as optimistic as I am, is that Russia can not only function with Putin, cannot function with that system. That system does need to reform and there is a question to be addressed. But, frankly, I -- as an optimist, or a pessimist I guess, I'm not a believer that Russia can function territorially the way it has set up. I think the system is the territory. I mean, it is really a geographical oxymoron that, in modern terms, really is a dysfunctional entity. I mean, you mention China, that it pushing from the east and, in fact, on the border the Chinese really did take over. I mean, they have kindergartens, they have things that the Russian system, the hard power system, doesn't provide. There is a question of Chechnya which is a continuous question. And,

just to conclude, I absolutely agree that Russia's future is with Ukraine much smaller, Russia is something that was the Kievan Russia type in the 10th century. I think that's when Russia may start moving forward.

Susan Glasser:

So just to go back to our two optimists, then, in the group, if I can keep calling them that just for a second. I was struck, in talking with some high level visitors from Russia right after the inauguration, and, you know, here in Washington, right, hope springs eternal when it comes in some ways to our dealings with the Russians. And so this was a group that was very eager to hear how is things going to be different from the Medvedev government? What about the new cabinet? What about this? And, you know, these Russian visitors really were quite frustrated with this line of questioning and they just said, "Listen, this is a system with one man. He's in charge. It doesn't matter. Why do you keep asking us about Medvedev? Why do you keep asking about this? There's one guy and his direction that he's turned is back. He's turned back to the USSR." And so I guess my question is, how long of a view is it in terms of your optimism about where political liberalization in Russia is headed? How much do you foresee the potential for a serious retrenchment before that comes?

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Well, I've just published a book, in fact, in which I do outline what I call a strategic vision for us in terms of both the Far East and the West. And in the Western part I talk very specifically about trying to get Russia -- draw Russia into the West very deliberately and to do so via Ukraine, also do so towards Turkey. And I think there are some interesting parallels, as well differences, between Russia and Turkey. Both of them have been undergoing a revolution from above for 100 years. It so happens the Turkish one is much more successful and less bloody, less costly in human terms. The Communist Revolution in Russia, ambitious, was extraordinarily conscious in human blood and particularly in human intelligence, some of which is absolutely, I'm sure, inconceivable to any American and probably most of you will think I'm inventing it. But, I'm sure you know, there are these archives now which are open of the secret police. And the archive of 1937 is particularly interesting because that's the year in which instructions went out from Moscow to the provinces, to the different oblasts, Leningrad all the way to Vladivostok,

specifying the number of enemies of the people that should be taken care of in these different regions by a certain date, literally in how many thousands, and indicating what proportion of them should be subject to the supreme penalty, which is death. So these were verdicts of death sent out to local public officials indicating how many in their areas of responsibility should be liquidated and how many should be shot. And it's interesting to get the returns, the responses from them. They all respond, of course, very affirmatively. They all report fulfillment of plan, but some complain that the figures given them are too low, that more should be executed. The total number killed in that year, just Soviet citizens and largely Russians, was 750,000. In one year. You just think of that.

Nina Khrushcheva:

You talk about '37.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Yeah. Yezhovshchina. Yezhovshchina. This was a terribly bloody, destructive period of time, and I think Russia is still paying the price for it. In that setting, Putin's power rests to some respect on residual intimidation, on rising nationalism among some less-educated members of society in smaller towns, and on two or three major political power pillars. The army, which is still invested very much with the idea of a supreme, powerful Russia, like General Makarov, you know, who makes threats of nuclear war. The oligarchs, who are the beneficiaries of the wealth, particularly from extracting industries. And secret police. Well that gives them a certain amount of continuity, but it's without social foundations anymore. The revolutionary élan is gone. There is a sense of -- kind of accommodation to reality, compromise, maybe some intimidation, but with it, as others here have said, there is that change in society. So I think at some point he will either have to adjust or it will crumble. I had some meetings with Medvedev and at one time, I have to confess, I had the illusion that maybe there was more to him than just verbiage. But he certainly talked a good story and I met a lot of people in Moscow in the think tanks who were all for him and wanted that change. So there is a residual counter-elite mushrooming in Russia, which is not only being destroyed like in 1937 in mass executions. And thus I wouldn't be at all surprised if there was some serious economic difficulty that really begins to hit Russia again. There may be upheavals. And the last question to which I

was asked, of course there's no answer to it, might Putin then flip? He might be just intelligent enough to do that, but I wouldn't bet on it personally. I think he's too wedded to a mindset, to an attitude, and I think it's gone to his head. I mean, some of the manifestations of his personal conduct in the exercise of his leadership really show a kind of fascination with himself that literally is, to me, strongly reminiscent of Mussolini. A kind of unreality of power that becomes self-destructive.

Susan Glasser:

Well, I must admit that our slideshow of President Putin in his many guises that Dr. Brzezinski has described is, you know, incredibly popular because there are so many different poses that he -- I mean, you know, you gave us just a brief snapshot of the incredible number of situations that he has manufactured. Photographs of himself. I know Nina wanted to jump in, and then I want to --

Nina Khrushcheva:

I just wanted to say that, you know, trust Russia. Putin is not going to flip. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Also he had a facelift.

[laughter]

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Yes, that's -- you're absolutely right.

Nina Khrushcheva:

Exactly. In 2010, and that really did him in.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

It's really [inaudible] --

Nina Khrushcheva:

Because you really cannot carry that strong --

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Botox.

Nina Khrushcheva:

No, no, he had a serious facelift with a whole circle. I mean, I don't know the terminology.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

I talked to someone. I don't know, I'm not disputing you, but I talked to someone who sat next to him just the other day. That person told me his face is just totally kind of pulled back.

Nina Khrushcheva:

It's totally -- yeah. I'm so jealous. I mean --

[laughter]

I'm telling you.

Susan Glasser:

I think this is also from the Italian dictator playbook, I think.

Nina Khrushcheva:

Oh, of course.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Could be Berlusconi, yes.

Nina Khrushcheva:

Berlusconi, in fact --

Susan Glasser:

Who was at the inauguration.

Nina Khrushcheva:

And he suggested it to him, incidentally, because they both vacation in Sardinia and so Berlusconi said, "Look, man, you're not getting any younger." And so Putin does have that. And, you know, you really cannot carry a strong man persona when you are as vain as Elizabeth Taylor. So -- but, you know, there's a certain type of vanity. Whatever works in Sardinia really doesn't work in Siberia so I think that quite --

[laughter]

They did him in a bit, so he's not going to flip. And Medvedev is an empty symbol. His name speaks for itself. You know, the symbol of Russia is the bear, medved, and so we have a tiny little thing -- is a symbol. So I think it's going to be -- I'm glad that you mentioned the cabinet which Putin -- he couldn't even make it to, as you know, to Camp David, he was so busy with shuffling his empty chairs

on the Titanic, moving ministers to his assistants and whatnot, which is very Brezhnev-like. It really was very Soviet-like when you flip culture and every culture as if one culture just makes it all acceptable. So that is not going to happen. And -- but I think what is going to happen is that the situation -- I mean, oil goes down or some other economic problems would really hit the Sochi -- the Olympics -- the coveted Olympics that Russia got is going to go badly, they're not going to win, or something. And I would give Putin probably about two more years, two-and-a-half more years, and then it would be the pressure from down, from all the protests that I know are going to subside, because we are very slow in getting to the streets, but once we do, we just kind of stay there and in also from his own [unintelligible] guards, from his own KGB, military, you know, Sergei Prikhodko, all those people who now are loyal, but Putin is a KGB Soviet system, and as those of you who studied the Soviet Union, there is no such thing as loyalty among thieves, so loyalty among those who really run the Kremlin. So I think ultimately he's just going to get squished and move out.

Susan Glasser:

David, in two years?

David Kramer:

Oh, I don't, I'm not good at making predictions like that, but I would just say two things. For those who got excited about the cabinet, they just needed to wait 24 hours, and then the positive feelings disappeared, when they saw the people who weren't kept in the cabinet were being brought over to the Kremlin. So the power has shifted, as one, I think, should have expected, it goes where Putin goes. Putin, I would describe as the chairman of the board; he does need the other members of the board to go along with him. And I think, while he's the most powerful man in the country, there is a tendency to exaggerate his strength. Yes, the Pew poll that came out shows that there's a 72 percent favorability rating for him, but at the end of the day he can't control the country. He has to send people from Moscow to rein in protesters out in the Far East who are protesting against duties on foreign cars; he has to bring in forces from the Caucasus in case the situation in Moscow gets out of control. He can't rely on the people in Moscow, and in Moscow, his numbers are way below 50 percent, so he's, I think, in a pretty fragile situation, but just in terms of whether he can flip or not, I would

just look at his appointment of presidential envoy for the Urals. He picked a guy who was a plant manager in a tank factory, who called in to his talk show, call-in show last December, saying he would bring his buddies to control the situation in Moscow last December. That's his qualification for the job. And I think it sums up what Putin views as the most important criteria for positions in the government, and that's loyalty. Loyalty to him, and it doesn't matter if confident, or free of corruption.

Susan Glasser:
So, Blair.

Blair Ruble:
Yeah, I just wanted to say, this is one of the fundamental problems, how serious is a guy who appoints somebody, that to me is also a real marker which people here didn't pay any attention to maybe because the position isn't that important. And this gets into the whole challenge of tossing around terms of optimism and pessimism. Nina was optimistic in that she just said, well Putin's going to leave in two years, maybe that's the source of the optimism. But it, if you enter Russia through Russian society, there's every reason to be optimistic. It's dynamic, it's full of really smart people, Russian theater is going through a renaissance, it's maybe the most interesting theater in the world right now, all of this is true, it's also true that Alexander Garrison [spelled phonetically] wrote beautiful ideas in the early part of the 19th century. The Russian problem is somehow connecting all that one can be optimistic about with a political system which has never demonstrated the capacity to connect without that social and cultural wealth in a society. And for all the reasons that we have had, my other colleagues have mentioned, it's difficult to see Putin playing that role. And then if he really is Mussolini, well that didn't particularly end well either.

[laughter]

And so, how do you get from here to a brighter future, and this goes back, I just want to underscore something that Professor Brzezinski pointed to. The legacy of Stalinism and the violence that was inflicted on that society is something which people here really can't grasp. We're going around accusing different American political figures of being communists and socialists. We don't have a clue

what that really means, and the lasting destruction to that society in that period, and until and unless Russians get serious about their own history, I don't see how you begin to find a stable way forward.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

That's a very important point. And, you know, the interesting difference between Germany and Russia is very much related to that. For better or worse, the Germans have internalized and accepted the fact of some sort of mysterious collective historical responsibility for the crimes of Nazism. It's a very painful thing to do for any people. The Germans have done it. And they're deeply aware of what happened, factually. And as a result, the German democracy is quite strong. That has not yet happened in Russia. Stalin has been denounced formalistically, although he is still buried in the wall of the Kremlin. Would you ever think Germany was a democracy, would you ever go to Germany feeling you're visiting a democratic country if in the middle of Berlin there was a mausoleum to Hitler? There is a mausoleum to Lenin, who started that process in which literally millions of Russians and others were killed. There has been this kind of psychological lid on that experience, almost as if fear was transmitted by grandparents to their children, to their grandchildren. People prefer not to talk about it. There's no desire to find out who did what. There is not even a list of the leading criminals, other than of course, you know, Stalin, Beria, and a few others. There is just not awareness of it. It's just, you know these horrible things happened, but it's kind of pervasive in the society and intangible. I think one of the signs of change would be when really historiography in Russia touches fully when the documents are opened up, when the archives are opened up fully. And that hasn't happened yet.

Susan Glasser:

And in fact the living memory is going to fade. Really, the next few years are key in terms of --

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

That's true too.

Susan Glasser:

-- you know, people being able to look in the eye of this.

David Kramer:

Susan, can I just very quickly mention --

Susan Glasser:
Yeah.

David Kramer:
-- I just think along the lines of what Zbigniew and Blair has talked about, you know, we shouldn't automatically assume that the alternative to Putin is going to be something, from our perspective --

Susan Glasser:
Better.

David Kramer:
-- be better. I'm worried about somebody like Dmitry Rogozin. And the nationalists, and by nationalists, I mean ultra-nationalists streak, which is xenophobic, racist in Russia. We can't rule out that that kind of scenario may come to power, instead of something more Western-oriented and liberal-minded. I certainly hope that won't be the case.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:
Or it could be a transitional phase, in other words, Putin's lack of success leads to more intensified nationalist leadership, which then later evolves or fragments into something more democratic.

Susan Glasser:
So, I want to make sure that we leave time to get to the audience's questions. But just quickly I want to go around our panel and ask about something else. Dr. Brzezinski, I think, made an important connection between Putinism and its need to identify as a rival of the United States, if not an enemy, that it's very much connected with this outward-looking questions about Russia's great power status, that it's very much connected and obsessed with the United States in a way that we here in the United States actually have moved on very significantly over the last two decades. So what are the consequences of that, do we think, in terms of U.S. policy towards Russia? You know, we've just come out of this reset period, nobody's sure whether that tactic is a one-time only use of the computer's reset button, or whether it applies in the new Putin era. We have a Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, who has -- clearly disagrees with Dr.

Brzezinski and thinks that Russia is the greatest geopolitical threat the United States faces right now. Just very quickly, I'd love a survey of our panel on this, and then we'll get to your questions.

Male Speaker:

I think we have to be careful not to inflate Russia's importance. We come across as needing this relationship much more than they do. I think we did that on the arms control negotiation, I wasn't opposed to the agreement, but we came across as needing it more than they did. We came across as wanting Russia to join WTO more than they did. And as a result, President Obama, I think has spoken to and met with Medvedev more times than any other world leader. I think that's disproportionate to where he should be focusing his energies and efforts. Have there been payoffs in the reset? Absolutely. I would not stand up here, or sit up here, and say it's been a total failure. But I think the administration has oversold the successes of it, and I think that they have inflated the importance of Russia in an unhealthy way, to the point where there was so much invested in the Obama-Medvedev relationship, now we're looking at the Obama-Putin relationship, and we saw what happened at Camp David. Putin decided it wasn't worth his time to come.

Susan Glasser:

And so, you're calling it a relationship. They have to meet before it can be a relationship, I think. Nina, what do you think?

Nina Khrushcheva:

I think, I think that actually what would really rile Putin is that he knows, with all his posturing, he wants Russia to be important -- he know it's not as important as it was, and certainly not the fourth or fifth or whatever part of the agenda. And that's why he clings to the old formal symbols, because he remembers that at the time of Stalin, they -- these things matter, that's why Russia's size matters, because only this way it can really make an argument, make it useful or not useful. So, I really, I mean, I honestly, my hope is, my hope was the dissolution of the Soviet Union in '91, which was as -- equally for Putin was a huge calamity. I actually think that for Russia to move forward, the way it functions now, the way it exists now geographically, politically, systemically, whatnot, it's not, we're going to be sitting here 10 years

from now discussing the same thing, regardless of whether Putin, democrat, I mean, liberal reform, or non-liberal reform, I think Russia's future is not only reforming its system, not only reforming its psychology, but it's also reforming its geography.

Male Speaker:

I think we've just witnessed an outburst of almost pathological anti-Americanism during the campaign, which wasn't just in pronouncements, but actually, I think anybody, Americans who are engaged in Russia on a daily basis felt it as well. And that's a signal where, we are a problem. And we need to watch, protect our interests, but also perhaps back off a little bit and recognize that Russia has to come to terms with its place in the world, and with our place in the world as at some level we did too.

Susan Glasser:

Dr. Brzezinski, do you see Russia as a campaign issue?

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Well, it's a campaign issue because it's been made a campaign issue, particularly by Romney, but it doesn't have too much bite. I think the disparities in the asymmetries are so obvious that most Americans are not excited about Russia. And I don't think they really were particularly taken by Romney's definition of Russia as the number one geopolitical enemy of the United States. I agree with David's formulation of our sort of posture towards Russia. It should be one, we want a good relationship. This relationship, in fact, is more needed by you than by us. Though on some specifics, it has to be based on equitable shares of commitment, such as, for example, Afghanistan. The Russians are obviously helping us. But if they don't help us, Afghanistan will come to Russia. In other words, it will spread from Afghanistan in central Asia, there's 30 million miles Muslims in Russia, so there's a Russian interest. I think the way he defined the relationship is just right. I would just maybe add one more to it. I think we do need to articulate occasionally a kind of longer range of vision of Russia in the future. That is to say, a Russia that does become democratic. Russia then becomes, in part, in some fashion, of the European Union. Not necessarily as a full member right away, but of the European Union, in which you are part of a larger society in which you can travel freely, and in which you can work

freely, a society which then can help Russia populate the Far East. I can envisage in that context a situation in which 30 years from now, there'll be a lot of Spaniards, or Englishmen, or Germans, or Poles living in Vladivostok. Still a Russian city, but a cosmopolitan city. I can envisage the positive consequences this would have for Europe. Remember, America had a lot of dynamism because of the "Go West" vision. The opportunity, the unlimited opportunities in the West. The same would be true for Europe, with Russia in Europe. And beneficial to Russia. One has to offer that more explicitly, so that the Russians begin to understand that a good relationship with the West doesn't mean the dismemberment of Russia. It means the inclusion of Russia. There was one point that you made earlier though, on the time zones, which sort of add this relationship to centralize Russia, which also is important in my own mind. I have said this many times and I have been accused by the Russians, therefore, of wanting to dismember Russia. I once had an article in Foreign Affairs, in which I had three sort of major units for Russia, Far Eastern, Central, and Western. My point was very simply this: Moscow, historically, has been a parasitic elite city for Russia, dominated by foreigners. Most rulers of Russia have been foreigners and not Russians. And most of the elites of Russia have been non-Russian; Prussian, Boltic, Polish, Latvian, Jewish, Caucasian, Caucasus and so forth. And I think the decentralization of Russia, so that the Far East can benefit from its proximity to Korea, to Japan, to China, similarly for the West, Scandinavia in the West, et ceteram the center [unintelligible] and maybe towards the South, towards India and the Indian Ocean. There's opportunities for development. It's not dismemberment of Russia, this is opening up Russia to diversity and it's creating opportunity for Russian talent to really be explored. Today you cannot, for example, build anything in Vladivostok without permission from Moscow. And the elite living in Moscow is a parasitic class that lives infinitely better than most Russians, on the average, because it gets all the benefit of centralization and none of it costs. The costs are paid by the people in provinces. And that, I think, is crucial structurally. And again, that's something we can talk to the Russians intelligently now because there are more and more Russians that are beginning to understand that. I meet periodically with groups of Russian students that come to this country. And of late, I ask them, something I used to ask them, before for which

they wouldn't give me an answer, how did you vote? They all tell me individually in front of each other how they vote. And I ask them, what do you think about centralization in Russia? They are beginning to understand that [unintelligible] related to the American experience. If you tell them California wouldn't be what it is today if it couldn't make decisions about itself and the Pacific, and the East Coast wouldn't be what it is today if it couldn't do so towards Europe, and Miami wouldn't be the same if it couldn't orient itself toward Latin America, they begin to understand how Russia can, should, and I hope will transform itself.

Male Speaker:

You're describing this big Russia that needs to be founded in rule of law and respect for human rights, and the current leadership shows utter disdain for both of those things --

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Right. Right. Well --

Male Speaker:

And as long as it does, our ability to develop a strategic relationship will be inhibited, will null --

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

I agree with that, I agree with that, but we have to foster --

Male Speaker:

Foster a vision. No, I agree -- we are in violent agreement.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Yeah, in which that becomes something that, something that's Russian.

Susan Glasser:

Okay, we have time probably for one or two quick questions, we have a microphone here, somewhere. Andrei, and then we'll get someone, here in the front.

Male Speaker:

Thank you. One short comment and one question. A comment concerning this phrase about this greatest calamity of the 20th century that have been mentioned by both Dr. Brzezinski

and Nina Khrushcheva. Just for objectivity, the real author of this phrase is not Mr. Putin.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:
I'm sorry?

Male Speaker:

The real author of this phrase is not Mr. Putin. It's just, for him, it's just repetition, or you, if you like plagiarism. The real author of this phrase is Yegor Gaidar, who has written this work nine years before that, and who has informed because he viewed Mr. Putin, and Mr. Putin repeated this statement and this phrase in his Union of the Russia, Russia Address in the year 2005. Just, it would give you slightly, some kind of wider understanding that it is not only the problem of one person, regardless of how strange or special he is, but of a group of people who have very similar views of Russia and view the world around Russia. And about the people who are truly running the country as a corporation for the last two delegates. But my question is slightly different. Just a lot has been said about legitimacy or illegitimacy of Mr. Putin being, for the third time, as the president of the country. Not much, or actually nothing has been said about the legality, or more correctly, the illegality, because according to the Russian Constitution, the third term is illegal for the president. So, it's not a question about what the Russians view the situation, but what the distinguished members of the panel will think U.S. political elite or the U.S. administration should deal with the person who is being illegally in the position of the Russian president.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Well, let me just make one point, on the latter point. On the former, I don't really care whether Putin thought of the idea himself, or whether he was repeating someone else's idea, I still think it was a stupid comment. And so, you know, you can share it with someone else, it doesn't diminish it in terms of him. And so far as illegality, I don't think you're right. The Russian Constitution says that you cannot have more than two consecutive terms. But it doesn't preclude another term. Am I wrong in that?

Male Speaker:

This article 81.3 of the Russian Constitution that clearly says that one person cannot lead more than two consecutive terms as the president.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:
Yes, right.

Male Speaker:
And it has a very clear understanding in a Constitutional court in his decision, in this decision, in 1998 said very clearly, only two terms, that's all. Supreme Court of Russia in the year 2001 has confirmed that this was a correct interpretation of the Russian procedures of law. Now about, some kind of two dozens of the countries of the worlds have the same provision. Two consecutive terms, and that's all. In all countries, this provision is interpreted like two terms, and that's all. So that is why the universal understanding of this provision, and that is why from the point of view of the Russian Constitution law, as well as the point of view of the constitution laws of other countries, it is illegal.

Male Speaker:
Andrei, take it to a Russian court.

Susan Glasser:
Yeah, I'm afraid that we've already recognized this.

Male Speaker:
[unintelligible] responsible to Russian -- my question is not about the Russian courts. My question about the attitudes of the U.S. political elite. The U.S. politicians --

Susan Glasser:
You know, I'd love to give someone else, I think I'd love to give someone else a chance to ask a question, because we only have a minute or two here. Do we have any other questions in the audience? Okay, we have two in the back there, and I'm going to ask you both to ask them so that we can try to get our panelists to answer. Yes, and can you identify yourselves as well?

Male Speaker:
Okay, my name is [unintelligible], correspondent of Serbian National News Agency. My question is on U.S.-Russia relations, but regarding Balkan area. Three days ago,

Thomas Danikovich [spelled phonetically], nationalist candidate, won Serbian presidential elections, and the first of world leaders who congratulated him was Vladimir Putin. He said yesterday that his first visit will be at Moscow. What do you think this one will be on the, how this one can implicate U.S.-Russia's relations, and how this one can implicate on stability of the Balkan area? Thank you.

Susan Glasser:

Okay, great, and we'll take one more question, and then we'll go to our panelists. This young woman in the back here. In the orange.

Mary Kate Evan:

Thank you, I'm Mary Kate Evan [spelled phonetically] from General Electric. I was wondering if the panel could reflect on trade policies specifically, PNTR in particular. I was wondering your thoughts on whether Russian importance to the U.S. is inflated this case as well. Thank you.

Susan Glasser:

Thank you very much. It's about permanent --

Male Speaker:

PNTR, the Jackson-Vanik --

[talking simultaneously]

Susan Glasser:

Okay, so we're going to wrap up, and I'm going to ask each of our panelists both if they have any responses to those questions, and then if they have one or two final thoughts for the day.

Male Speaker:

Maybe I'll respond to the PNTR question. I actually think that the continuation of our, well, we're realistically at a point where if we don't do something about rescinding Jackson-Vanik, we're hurting ourselves. Russia's in the World Trade Organization, it's a done deal. And I think that --

Male Speaker:

It will be.

Male Speaker:

It will be, but it essentially is. And we're now talking about inflicting damage on ourself. I also think that we have done grave harm to our reputation in Russia by continuing to circle the wagons around a provision where even the authors of the bill have said all the, the problem is meant to address that's been solved. And finally, if we really want to encourage the kind of modern developments we've been talking about in Russia, this does in a small way empower some of those forces by having Russia, something to an international regime, legal regime, trade regime, so think we, this is a problem for us to get on with.

Susan Glasser:

Nina, do you have any closing thoughts?

Nina Khrushcheva:

Closing thoughts. I think the question of Serbia is a very important one because that really, they can form their Asian Union with Pan-Slavic flair to it. It's going to pass, we know that, but the fact that it's still there, it's very disturbing. I just want to talk, I want, I still want to stay on that geographical Byzantium or sort of imperial project, I think Dr. Brzezinski was very correct in saying that whole geography setup is an empire, and unless it is set up this way, the future is very icky. And to your point on the Ural super governor now, the one who makes tanks, actually is a very important region, because that is the division of Russia between East and West. And putting their man who makes tanks rather than somebody who can actually develop a good ski resort, that is your European project. Can you imagine, it beats the Alps, hands down. That, I think this discussion is going to continue and probably pretty much will take the same shape years from now, I think that is what we should be looking at.

Male Speaker:

I'll sort of close by answering the question about PNTR, because I mean trade with Russia is miniscule in relative terms, it's \$10 billion, Peterson did a study that if we granted PNTR, trade might double over five years, who knows. The biggest impediment to U.S. investment in Russia is lack of rule of law, and lack of contract sanctity and independent judicial processes to resolve business disputes. But I too favor lifting Jackson-Vanik, I have for years. I did when I was in the government, we tried to

get it done in 2002, 2003, and then the Bush leg wars broke out over chicken parts. And it's, so lifting Jackson-Vanik is fine, but I'll use this in quotes, by getting on my hobby horse, which is, I want to replace it with the Sergei Magnitsky Act. I want legislation that addresses current-day Russia's gross human rights abuses, and now in both the Senate and the House, there is legislation to do that, to go after Russian officials guilty of gross human rights abuses, including the murder of Sergei Magnitsky, the 37-year-old lawyer for Hermitage Capital, who was denied treatment in a prison and left to die and then beaten right before he died. It would deny Visas, and impose an asset freeze on these officials. And the reason this is important is because, and you said this earlier, Russians, Russian officials don't keep their ill-gotten gains in Russia. Capital flight last year was \$84 billion, already \$42 billion this year through April. It means that Russians put their money where they know it's safe, and it's not prone to corruption and thievery inside Russia. That means they're vulnerable to this kind of legislation. And that's why you see people like Lavrov and Ambassador Kesilac [spelled phonetically] and others fly off the handle about this, threaten it's going to destroy the reset. Well, their defense essentially boils down to coming to the defense of murderers and human rights abusers. If that's what they want to stake the U.S. relationship on, I'm more than happy to meet them halfway.

Susan Glasser:
Dr. Brzezinski.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:
I'm just fine.

[laughter].

Susan Glasser:
Well, I'd like to thank all of you in the audience, and especially, not only our panelists, but Dr. Brzezinski, I have to say that, having thought a lot about Russia over the past decade, I've learned a lot and I'll be buying real estate in Vladivostok.

[laughter]

[applause]

Susan Glasser:

That was great, that was really terrific.

Zbigniew Brzezinski:

I enjoyed it.

[end of transcript]