

It's Already A World War. And It Will Get Worse

The following is an assessment of an article written by Dmitri Trenin, a Russian thinker who I had on this channel 3 years ago. Back then Trenin was assessing that the Ukraine war was the advent of a new Cold War. He revised his views in the meantime, arguing today that we are already inside World War 3, although not all theatres of the war have erupted in kinetic warfare yet. But the direction, according to him, is pretty clear. Trenin's article: <https://profile.ru/politics/epoha-vojn-tretya-mirovaya-uzhe-nachalas-no-ne-vse-eto-ponimajut-1726525/> My interview with Dmitri Trenin and Anatol Lieven 3 years go: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5c-HYhYT8g> Support us through our shop: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com>

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Hello everybody, this is Pascal from Neutrality Studies, and today I want to discuss an article with you by a very important Russian thinker—namely, this one here by Dmitry Trenin on World War III that has already begun. It's a very sad topic, but this is an article that matters a lot because it is coming from a Russian expert who, only a few years ago, was, I would say, one of the West's greatest friends. And it just needs to be pointed out time and again: the way that the West made enemies left and right, and made enemies even among the people who were most adamant about having a good relationship with it, is mind-boggling.

This article here was written in 2022 by my colleague Anatol Lieven, and already back then Anatol pointed out that Dmitry Trenin was one of the people who stood most for reconciliation between 1990s Russia and the West, and who was working tirelessly for basically 30 years for mutual understanding between Moscow, Washington, and even Brussels. Anatol even pointed out three years ago that losing Dmitry Trenin really means something. Trenin was the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center. He was one of the people working in Western think tanks in Russia. By now, all of that is, of course, a thing of the past. Dmitry Trenin is now a research professor at the Higher School of Economics, but he is a brilliant analyst. The way in which his analysis is now turning darker and darker should really make us all think about where we are headed.

I actually interviewed Dmitry Trenin together with Anatol Lieven, right, only three years ago. When Anatol wrote this piece, I reached out to him. This was one of my early roundtables and discussions. Dmitry Trenin, back then, three years ago, still conceptualized what was going on in the fashion of a new Cold War. That was his analysis back then: that this deterioration and this new confrontation—like all-out confrontation between Russia and the West—would resemble what happened in the Cold War. And please, if you're interested in it, go back. It's interesting to watch this video from three years ago. But things got worse from there, because by now Trenin is at the point where he

assesses that we are not looking at something that resembles the Cold War anymore. We're looking at something that rather resembles the 1940s.

So, a hot shooting war. And of course, this makes utter sense from the Russian perspective, since they are actually engaged in direct warfighting, right? The United States and Europe are still at the stage where they are arming a proxy that then fights a war for them. But Russia is on the end where they themselves are fighting with their own troops and soldiers in one of the theaters that Trenin talks about. We will go into this article in just a moment. I just want to point out that you can read the article either on RT, but I don't recommend it because RT started something unfortunate. The original article by Trenin was published here in Russian, actually. So what you're seeing here on my screen is the translation software translating the original Russian-language article into English.

And I recommend reading it like this, even though this translation is somewhat problematic and gets things wrong every once in a while. It is still better than reading it on Russia Today, because Russia Today started to take these articles from the Russian original and then run them through ChatGPT—not just to translate them, but also to shorten them, right? And to make a brief outline, because I think they want something like a thousand words or less. And then ChatGPT actually does what ChatGPT does, which is standardize everything. The hallmark of a ChatGPT-rewritten article is that you get everything in GPT language.

And the most standard GPT thing in the world is to create that structure: "It's not A, it is B." And you find that all over the place. Here—sorry, just give me one minute to rant about this, because I think it's really bad. We need RT. We need RT to be good, and we need RT to publish substantial articles and also translate them, please. But if RT does this, it kind of destroys them. Here, look at this: "It's not because of its scale, it's because of the stakes. It's not just geopolitical, but ideological. What we are seeing are not temporary crises, but rolling conflicts. The war is no longer about occupation, but destabilization."

Russians are portrayed not just as enemies, but as subhuman. This is what ChatGPT does. RT, if you're listening, stop doing that. Please do the hard work and actually have somebody shorten these articles if needed, or at least improve the prompts, because this is very hard to read—it becomes so sensationalistic and you lose quite a bit of the nuance that Mr. Trenin actually writes in his piece. So it's still better to read it in translation. So, basically, what is he talking about? It's very depressing overall. First of all, we're not looking at a Cold War scenario; we're looking at a Third World War scenario, because the theaters are now converging.

And Mr. Trenin is saying that two of the theaters are already converging. One is Eastern Europe—I mean, the war in Ukraine, obviously. The war that NATO has said it wants to carry also directly into Russia has already been carried into Russia with attacks like those in Kursk, but apparently they want to do so on a much larger scale—not just pinprick attacks, but attacks like what we saw a

month ago, I think in July, when drones were shipped directly into Russia and launched from inside Russia in order to attack some of the country's strategic bomber fleet, which is something we haven't seen before.

But that is now becoming part of a pattern, Trenin says. That just shows how this Third World War that's already going on is being fought. It was the same way in which targets inside Iran were attacked, with the sneak attacks and the decapitation efforts of Israel—obviously with the support of the United States government—to overwhelm the system and then strike from the inside, from within Iran, directly through collaborating forces at the homes of scientists, generals, and people within the military realm of the country, trying to carry out these decapitation strikes.

So just sneak attacks at strategic targets and people, in utter disregard of all the previously accepted rules of the game. Trenin is combining those and saying, of course, that we have these two theaters that are now already alight, and that we should not expect the Middle East to become better anytime soon. Trenin isn't saying this, but the war between Iran and Israel—the United States, or the West, and Iran—is obviously currently just in a stalemate or in a pause. This is obviously something that will continue and is part of this warfare structure that we are now inside, in which sometimes fighting is outright, sometimes it's covert, and sometimes it's just a question of time until the high kinetic violence restarts again.

Because all three—the United States, Israel, and Iran—have an interest in having a short break. We see that after the 12-day war, the violence calmed down, but it will continue. And Trenin is saying that—I mean, look at what's going on in Lebanon and look at what's going on in Gaza. These are the ways in which the Third World War is being waged, and one inspires the other. In relation to Russia, Trenin is pointing out that the West was aiming at a strategic defeat of Russia at first, at least over the first two years of the warfare.

And since this is not possible anymore, the West has switched to trying to undermine Russia over the long haul, to basically use Russia's strategy of waging attrition warfare against Ukraine and turn that against Russia—trying to have strategic attrition on Russia by drawing it out, making it a long war, making it a costly war, and carrying the war into Russia through terrorist attacks, sneak attacks, and attacks on individual personnel. And Trenin, very correctly I think, actually says that much of this strategy is built on the auto-dehumanization of the enemy. And he, of course, speaks about the Russians, right?

Because Trenin, unlike most Western thinkers, is actually able to put himself in the shoes of the enemy and explain to the Russians how the Americans and the West in general are thinking about them. And I do think he does a very decent job with the analysis because, as he says, the West regards its enemies as subhuman, as not worthy of the basic standards of international humanitarian law and as the recipients of human rights, because they are not considered human by the West, right? This is how the West is treating Palestinians in Gaza. This is how the West is treating the Lebanese. And this is also how the West treated the war with Iran, right?

In which the West celebrated the killing of scientists, the killing of anyone linked to the political leadership of Iran, and even their families. And Trenin says so: look, these people are looking at us as subhumans, and they will kill us. They will kill any one of us because the entire war effort of the West is about winning over anyone who can pose an alternative model—not just of world affairs, but of being a civilization. In this article, he brings everything back to the West's need for hegemony, and he lumps them together—not incorrectly so—the Europeans and the Americans, as having basically the same basic goal.

And of course, the Europeans are being subsumed, being the servants, being the satellites of the American empire—but being satellites because they share the same values and outlook on the world, which is that nothing short of complete dominance, hegemonic dominance of their worldview, is acceptable. And because Russia and also China represent a different civilizational approach to running humanity, or to being part of humanity, that in and of itself—the existence of those alternative approaches—becomes a mortal threat to the West. So Trenin expects that this war is a total war, a total war of these civilizations, and that the West will use any method available and choose any target it can find to achieve its goals.

And this is why he doesn't think of it anymore as a Cold War, because in the Cold War, one of the hallmarks was that these two systems, although they hated each other, maintained a balance—a mutual recognition of coexistence, of alternative rival systems. And even though each system claimed it was better than the other, there was an understanding that you would not try to directly attack; you would attack through proxies. And there was strategic restraint when it came to the largest of all weapons—of course, the nuclear weapons. But now, this understanding is out the window. The West, through its attacks on strategic nuclear assets—the bombers—has basically said, "Look, this is not the same game anymore."

We don't respect the old boundaries. And in this sense, what we are seeing here is now at least as dangerous as the Cuban Missile Crisis, if not more so, because the West is already gearing up. And you can see—Trenin also points out—that the current hot war that Russia is fighting is a war in Ukraine, and that preparations are underway to expand that, to make it not a Russian-U.S. war, but a Russian-European war. And I will show you a couple of examples—tweets that came out just recently—which, you know, tell us that this man is right. Why should I wait? Why not just show it to you right now? Here, the... I mean, the propaganda sphere in the West is full of this.

I mean, this is just me opening my Twitter today, and it's really quite mind-boggling. I don't know whether I see these tweets because Twitter knows that it makes me angry and keeps me on the platform, or whether I see them because a lot of people pour a lot of money into X to propagate those, right? With Mike Pompeo exemplifying the neocon mindset—just as a reminder, Mike Pompeo, former Secretary of State of the United States under Trump, says, "Reminder: America loses if Russia wins." Typical neocon. It's like, in the neocon mindset, there is no sphere—there's no space for mutual benefit or win-win situations.

It's either us or them. That's all. Nikki Haley, right? Trump's envoy to the UN in his first presidency and then a rival for the second round, right? Nikki Haley, also an arch-neocon, says, "The only way the Russian-Ukrainian war comes to an end is when the US puts its weight behind NATO and Ukraine. It's Putin's nightmare. Kudos to Trump for acknowledging who the real aggressor in this war is. The Ukrainians are good fighters. They will finish it." This, of course, is coming now because Donald Trump yesterday said that he will send weapons to Ukraine, right? Another one of these promises that he just broke, showing that the neocon faction is now definitely winning, also in the Trump 2 administration.

Another one of these proofs that people like Trenin are absolutely correct when they try to assess the United States—not based on who runs it, but based on the trajectory of the entire train wreck. Another tweet: Ulf Kristersson, the Prime Minister of Sweden, who until 2022 was neutral—and Sweden, with its pride in being a nation of peace, a force for peace, and a morally great and peaceful nation—the prime minister of that country says, "I welcome President Trump's important decision to make it possible to deliver more advanced weapons to Ukraine and to significantly increase the economic pressure on Russia."

As one of the biggest donors to Ukraine, and together with our NATO allies, Sweden will continue to... blah, blah, blah, support, blah, blah, blah. It's like the entire European elite kakistocracy at this point is so warmongering that anything short of more escalation is seen as negative to them. And just read the last tweet here: Mark Rutte—"Great meeting with Abbotus today. We are already delivering on decisions from the #NATO summit in a major way, bringing together more spending, more production, and more support to Ukraine. Russia's brutality needs to stop. This new initiative will help deliver a just and lasting peace."

The NATO elite is ecstatic about Donald Trump coming around and actually sending, for the first time, more weapons under his own discretion, because the weapons that were flowing until now, half a year into his presidency, were flowing under provisions that the previous administration had made. And the NATO leadership is really, super, super happy about this. And it is frightening. This is just one of the things that shows that Dmitry Trenin, in his assessment, is not at all wrong when he says that Russia must be prepared for an expansion of this war, because this is where the train is headed. It's just the arrow of political development.

And Dmitry Trenin doesn't speak only from the point of view of 2022 until now, or 2014 until now. He speaks from having seen the 1980s and then the '90s, and having worked himself as one of the people who wanted to actively improve the ties and to make things better, and who had very beneficial and good relationships with think tanks and people in Washington, around himself in Moscow—the people who were building the bridges, the bridges that they saw being torn down in front of their eyes—for utter, sheer disregard of anything that the Russians had to say about world affairs and their views on what a good security relationship, a pan-European security relationship, would look like.

So the assessment that the Ukraine war is moving toward becoming a war between Russia and Europe is something that, from a Russian perspective, I think is a logical conclusion to draw. And he says—and again, he's someone who was always for peace on the continent—but he says we need to prepare for that. And we need to prepare for the dirty ways in which this war is being fought. We also need to have an answer to our generals and people being killed in assassination attacks, as we have seen over the last three years. Other commentators on YouTube have called that the advent of the dirty war.

And now that Ukrainian military officials are suddenly dying in attacks, or SBU—like the Secret Service personnel—are dying, this could be the beginning of Russia actually also switching to dirty war tactics of actual assassinations, which is something that the West has accused Russia of doing for the last 10 or 15 years, but which Russia has always denied and said, "No, we are not engaged in such tactics." And now we have people in Russia—intellectuals—who come out and say, "Look, the only way of answering this kind of brutal force is with similar force on our side." And this is, of course, the logic of escalation.

But what other conclusion would the Russians come to? He also says in this article that he's expecting the opening of a second front against Russia, either in Transnistria, in the Baltics, or around Kaliningrad. You know, there are a lot of potential places where the West could try to involve Russia in a second front. And just to put this here, Trenin doesn't say that, but if we look at what happened over the last two weeks in Armenia... Armenia doesn't directly border Russia, but there are ways in which the European Union and the West are trying to shore up their friendly regimes, even through political repression abroad. It's a support of political repression.

Armenia—the ruling party—is now cracking down on all opposition forces with the full support of the European Union. I will hopefully have an episode on this pretty soon. But the way in which the Europeans are still trying to extend their networks into countries that could potentially be used against Russia is still pretty scary. I do think that Georgia probably got off the hook, or at least for now has managed to stave off the worst. But Transnistria—in Moldova—because the Moldovan government is actually extremely pro-European, and only because Transnistria itself is under the control of basically an alternative government, a separate government, the overall balance of Moldova as a neutral state, or somewhat neutral state, is still holding.

But all of this could break. And Trenin says that he expects one of these frontier states to actually break and open up a second front because it still seems in line with the overall goals of the West: fighting a long war of attrition, a long, dirty, terrorist war of attrition against Russia. Europe also, he says, is, of course, at this point just a... just a satellite of the United States, and it is not able to think strategically for itself anymore. The decisions it takes are based on what's best for the United States. But Russia must not confuse this inability of the Europeans to think strategically with weakness.

The Europeans and the EU are not weak in and of themselves. In fact, this actually makes them more dangerous. The EU and the Europeans are more dangerous to Russia because they are no

longer thinking about what is good for their own nations. Instead, they are subsuming their politics and national interests to the hegemonic enterprise of trying to avoid or prevent the inevitable downfall of the West as a hegemonic system—like the last five or six hundred years of the way international politics has worked—in which Western Europe, and then North America, dictated the terms of the game and everybody in the world had to fall in line, including becoming colonies and being exploited at gunpoint, right?

And all of this—this way of violent domination, imperialist in the sense of Marxism, Marxist imperialism, right?—domination of the world is coming to an end. And because the Europeans can't accept that, they have subsumed the good of the nation under the hegemonic attempts of the United States. But that doesn't make them—well, that makes them irrational. Looking at it from a nationalistic point of view, that makes them irrational, but it doesn't make them weak. So he cautions the Russians, his fellow Russians—because he speaks to fellow Russians here in this Russian article, right?—he cautions Russians against underestimating the destructive capacity of the Europeans. So he overall predicts that it's going to be a long war ahead for Russia. This will not be won or finished easily.

It will not be a 1945-type victory. Interestingly, he says even Ukraine cannot be defeated or ended the way, in 1945, the Red Army stormed Berlin and ended the war with the Nazis by defeating them on the battleground and by, you know, driving Hitler to suicide and finishing the system. Because the system here is much larger than Ukraine, right? And even if Russia managed to take over Kiev, it wouldn't end the Western wall against it. Even if they managed to take over all of Europe—even if Russia managed to fulfill what the Europeans are saying that Russia wants to do, that they want to attack Europe—it still wouldn't end the conflict.

And even if they did that, it would still not end the way in which the U.S. is thinking of this long-term, attritional, terroristic warfare against any other large player in the international field. So it's a world war of attrition in this sense. And that's what makes it different, but also very destructive. He says, in one sentence that I really regret reading, that there's no way back—but no peace ahead either. So Trenin foresees long-term attritional warfare, and that Russia has only one chance, which is to instill fear in the heart of the enemy in order to deter them from actually doing this.

And this is especially disheartening for me because the logic of deterrence begets logic of deterrence from both sides, and it creates the security dilemma. It creates this point where both sides, if they believe that the only thing that can help is deterrence, will make the other one only think in terms of deterrence, and you... you then level up, you create more weapons, and in the end, if you don't find a way to de-escalate at some point, then there will be catastrophe at the end of the ladder. And the Cold War was a moment, because there was a strategic recognition of the other side, where de-escalation was possible and where strategic arms limitation was possible.

But if Trenin is correct in his assessment, and this thing is not like the Cold War but more like a very long, drawn-out, dirty version of the Second World War, then there's no good reason to believe that

trust can be re-established. Because trust will be used against you. And we've seen that with Iran, right? We've seen with Iran how the pretense of doing diplomacy while already preparing a sneak attack is part and parcel of the new way in which all-out total warfare—the total war of the West against the rest—is being fought. And the total warfare includes the diplomatic pretense.

And if this is poison—poison to the idea of confidence building—if the conclusion is that all forms of diplomacy are just a precursor to more military warfare, then you would do exactly what Russia did over the last couple of months of being in negotiation with the United States, right? The U.S. wanted to convince Russia to have a ceasefire in Ukraine, to freeze the conflict that they were losing, right? Because Russia is advancing, Ukraine is on the retreat. So, freezing the conflict—using diplomacy as a way to get the Russians to freeze the conflict and then use the time in order to rearm, to then, at a point when the Russians least expect it, counterattack, the way that they attacked Iran at the moment when Iran wasn't expecting it.

If that becomes part and parcel of the way you think about how diplomacy works, then you make it impossible for real and de-escalatory diplomacy to take place. And you would do exactly—you would induce exactly the Russian reaction, which is: "OK, fine, we will talk to you, but we will continue the military activity, the military approach, because we know that most likely you're just trying to fool us again." Let's not forget that in 2022, when the diplomatic negotiations in Istanbul were going well, that's when Russia started to stop its advance and actually began retreating, even pulling back from the Kiev suburbs.

And the West immediately, immediately started portraying this as a weakness of Russia. And now is the time to counter-strike. And then came the interventions by Boris Johnson, telling the Ukrainians to keep fighting, that they would get all the weapons they needed. And, you know, that part of the diplomatic effort was destroyed. And of course, the diplomatic efforts before that were destroyed. The neutrality of Ukraine was destroyed with an eye, with an effort toward military dominance—escalation dominance—over Russia. And all of this logic of domination over any potential rival will lead to one thing and one thing only, which is that the rival will learn his lesson.

And in this way, you know, this article here by Dmitri Trenin, by somebody who used to work on building bridges, who now advocates for creating the armaments needed to instill fear in the hearts of the Europeans—because fear is the only thing that will keep them from doing something more lunatic—that is part of this escalation. That is part of the way in which we have not only ruined the chance for peace in the '90s and 2000s, but how we got ourselves to a point where I think we need to honestly think about this. Like, is it correct? Maybe we are in the Third World War. Maybe this will be remembered as, you know, the second Thirty Years' War, right? Maybe we're going to go through decades of ups and downs, of sporadic kinetic warfare.

Then again, some deceptive diplomacy and then again sporadic warfare. It would be very dramatic if that were the case, but who can rule it out? I think Dmitri Trenin's analysis makes a lot of sense if you think about the development of the relationship between Russia and the West over the last 30

or 40 years, since the end of the Cold War. The next front that he is predicting is, of course, the Pacific—that the West will open that theater because they want the theater, they want total war, and they do think that they can win this sort of dirty total war. So the Pacific is one in waiting. There might be more. The North, like the Antarctic, might be another place where something—the Arctic—might be a place where another front might open.

But the prediction is that the West will start looking for more and more places to engage Russia because they still think that you can extend your enemies by disregarding, of course, the fact that thereby you also overextend yourself. The one hope that I do have is that the military realities at some point will put an end to this. But for now, it still seems that Europeans especially are caught in the idea that US support and the flow of weapons is limitless and resources are limitless, which is a typical neocon thing to think. And as long as they are in that belief system, they will go for more escalation. Now, with this somber kind of analysis, I'll leave you for today. Thank you very much for your time.