

Open Letter to PBS re: Interview with Dmitri Trenin (August 14, 2025)

Dear Mr Schifrin,

I saw your interview with Dmitri Trenin on the August 14, 2025, broadcast of the PBS News Hour (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PtkeyyOOoeE>). I have some critical comments to make, which I hope you—and more broadly the PBS staff—will take into account in your future efforts to achieve a balanced perspective and objectivity on topics covered, which includes the need for greater scrutiny and care in choosing whom to interview.

Based on today's broadcast, it would appear that PBS is not adhering to the standards set by the program's co-founders, MacNeil/Lehrer. The topic at hand was the upcoming summit between Putin and Trump, with bringing the war in Ukraine to an end and achieving peace as the central focus of the discussion. Although Mr. Trenin was interviewed, presenting a Russian point of view, a Ukrainian spokesperson was not interviewed or asked to comment. Neither was a US spokesperson asked to comment. This, despite the fact that the main topic at hand concerned Ukraine and Russia's aggressive war against this country. Any balance or attempt at objectivity was thus completely absent. The viewer was treated to only one point of view—a Russian one.

Related to this, and perhaps most importantly, the person chosen to be interviewed was Dmitri Trenin. So, who is Mr. Trenin? He was introduced on the broadcast as a long-time analyst and presented as a sort of Western-friendly figure and academic, as the former head of the Moscow office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and currently a professor at the Higher School of Economics University. This introduction, however, presented only a partial, sanitized picture of Mr. Trenin. A quick check of the Wikipedia article on him (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dmitri_Trenin) paints a more complex and far less rosy portrait of this person. Mr Trenin, it is noted, served for many years in the Soviet military, which may not be in itself troubling except that this service was tied to military intelligence.

This crucial fact was not mentioned in the remarks introducing Mr. Trenin. The PBS viewer would also not be aware of why Mr. Trenin's association with the Carnegie Endowment was ended, and when this occurred. The Carnegie Endowment webpage on him (<https://carnegieendowment.org/people/dmitri-trenin?lang=en>)

notes very tersely that it "ended its affiliation with Dmitri Trenin in early 2022." The Wikipedia article notes that he was expelled from the Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences in the fall of 2022.

It appears that shortly after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Trenin easily shed his pro-Western skin and reported for duty as a Russian intelligence officer again. Since the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, he has written diatribes against the United States and the West that have been published in the journal *Russia in Global Affairs* (Russia's equivalent of the American journal *Foreign Affairs*). Mr. Trenin is a featured author of this publication (<https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/authors/dmitry-trenin/>).

His most recent article published there (<https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/nuclear-reminder/>) is titled "It's Time for Russia to Give the West a Nuclear Reminder." As the title of this 2024 article suggests, this opinion piece calls on Russia to ratchet up its nuclear threats against the United States. Earlier, in a 2022 article, he penned an opinion piece that had advocated placing the "nuclear bullet" into the "revolver drum" as a means of intimidating and frightening the United States. (<https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/ukraine-and-nuclear-weapons/>). In an article published earlier that year, Trenin framed the West's actions in support of Ukraine as posing an existential threat to Russia and advocated building "a new global order" with the support of China, Brazil, India, and other "regional players." (<https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-must-reinvent-itself/>).

In short, Trenin advocated threatening the use of nuclear weapons in response to US support of Ukraine's right to defend itself against Russian aggression, painting it as an "existential threat" to Russia's existence. What he wrote suggests strongly that Mr. Trenin was writing not as an "analyst" but rather an intelligence officer fighting on the disinformation and propaganda front against the United States, and more broadly, the West.

Returning to the interview with Trenin, it appears that PBS not only failed to provide balanced coverage by not providing a countervailing view from either a Ukrainian or American perspective, but also very poor judgement in giving a forum to a person who is probably a Russian intelligence officer, not "a long-time analyst" to comment on the upcoming meeting of the two world leaders.



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