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Geopolitical paradigm shifts and coping with psychopaths: An Interview with Professor Sergei A. Karaganov



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I personally would not want Russia to become a vast empire again, because the Russian way of building an empire was ultimately at the expense of the Russians themselves. (Al Mayadeen English; Illustrated by Batoul Chamas)

Tariq Marzbaan and Nora Hoppe interview Professor Karaganov from Russia's leading public foreign policy organisation, conversing with him on an array of issues, including Western escalation against Russia, the war in Ukraine, colonialism, and the genocide in Gaza.

It is clear that the Anglo-Saxon industrial-military-media complex, with the help of its vassals, intends to preserve its global hegemony and its colonialist conquests at all costs. The Hegemon cannot accept the paradigm shift of an emerging Multipolar World. Any discussion of peace, diplomacy, or negotiations regarding the wars it has started is out of the question. Western populations, whose minds are contaminated with neoliberalism and Russophobia, are currently terrified of an "imminent Russian invasion"... Mass delirium is preventing REASON from returning to the West. How can the rest of the world cope with this madness? And what can the rest of the world hope for?

We turn to Professor Sergei A. Karaganov* – Honorary Chairman of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy (Russia's leading public foreign policy organisation) and academic supervisor of the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow – as he has long been offering insightful views on such topics as the use of nuclear deterrence as a wake-up call to the West to restore common sense and Russia's needed pivot away from the West and to the East.* * *

Warning the West against Escalation

Question: As one of the ways to warn the West against escalating the war in Ukraine and its growing aggression toward Russia, you have advocated for nuclear deterrence... Do you believe that Western leaders, most of whom give the impression of being totally irrational, can take such threats seriously?

Professor Karaganov: Many of the Western elites no longer have a sense of history and have lost their sense of self-preservation. I call this condition “strategic parasitism”. The same goes for a good part of the Western population, who became complacent about peace, which was largely guaranteed to them by nuclear deterrence – something they do not understand. In addition, the intellectual level of most elites has fallen sharply due to the changes in moral standards and to the deterioration of their system of higher education – especially in Europe. So there are very few indeed who understand these issues.

The situation is somewhat better in the United States, which seems to have preserved at least the remnants of a strategically-minded political class, but they are obviously not the ones running the show. However, some are still close to power and sometimes they can influence those in power. In any case, the state of affairs there is quite troubling. Just an example: both President Biden and his Secretary of State Blinken recently declared that global warming is as bad as or worse than nuclear war. I was quite shocked. This is pretty insane.

Western populations, who have been accustomed to storefront democracy, prosperity, and mass consumption for decades, seem to be paralysed and will not stand up to stop and disempower the war lobby. Diplomacy no longer works either. What do you think is behind this Western complacency? A lack of imagination of what war could be like on their own soil? A case of cognitive impairment, pathological delusions, hubris, their ignorance of history? A cover for their desperation and anxiety over their own existence? Or could it just be a façade for some coldly calculated strategy on their part?

All the factors you mentioned play a role. Though I believe that the biggest factor is their inability and unwillingness to face reality. People have become so used to those flickering images on their screens that they take them for reality. This is a problem for all nations, but especially for those most affected by digital technology.

There are people in the ruling circles of the West – in the United States, but especially in Europe – who are losing their ability to govern their peoples due to growing problems they cannot deal with or even face... such as mounting social inequality, migration, even climate issues. Of course I could go on and on...

Modern capitalism is an utterly inadequate system. It is based on the endless growth of consumption, which is ultimately killing the Earth. Instead of trying to cut back consumption, modern Western political classes are trying to pass the burden of fighting pollution and even blaming climate change on manufacturers – most of whom are in the "developing" world), but not on consumers – most of whom are in the so-called “developed” world.

The list of unresolved problems and challenges is very long. The ruling circles try to distract their citizens' attention away from these problems by creating an enemy. This time it is Russia... An easy target because of their already prevalent, deep-seated Russophobia, but also because Russia is relatively "small" in terms of its economy, and losing Russia as an economic partner is cheaper than losing China. (But anti-Chinese sentiment is also on the rise, especially in the United States.)

There is a growing strata amongst Western elites who have begun to prepare their citizens for war. In the meantime, Western leaders have completely severed any ties between their citizens and Russians and Russia itself. Trade and even any discourse with Russians are more or less forbidden, and those who visit Russia end up being interrogated by the police or security services. This is symptomatic of a preparation for war - this build-up of hostility. They already succeeded in turning most Ukrainians into a herd of haters, who are all obediently heading for the slaughterhouse. Next up are some European nations.

This is all quite sinister. We are observing this carefully and we are aware that some of today's political classes or ruling classes in the West are so desperate that they are resorting to fomenting wars so as to hide their incompetence and/or their crimes.

The Sitting Ducks of the West

Many have clearly noted the lack of interest on the part of Germany and the EU to investigate the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines... Then came the "Taurus Leaks", in which German military officers could be heard [first discussing attacks on Crimea with American military officers](#), four months before Scholz and Pistorius learned of these plans.

Recently Sweden and Finland did away with the neutrality of their states and are now welcoming NATO bases on their territories, which they believe will give them more security. What do you think is behind such behaviour? Why are they allowing themselves to become the first sitting ducks in a hot war against Russia? Why are these people sacrificing their own countries to the US Deep State? Whom do they really serve? Is their allegiance to another entity and not to their own countries?

Indeed, the level of intellect and sense of responsibility of most of the ruling classes – especially in Europe – has grossly deteriorated. The United States – which I must almost applaud in this case – has created a huge comprador class in Europe... one that has the interests of the US and the orders it gives them much more at heart than the interests of their own countries and peoples.

The American Deep State is not only grounded in the United States... an extension of it can also be found in Europe. It is comprised of what could be called "the global imperialist liberal class" that aims to serve "common interests". But the Europeans are even worse than the Americans here because they are openly sacrificing the interests of their nations. They are quite obviously traitors to their motherlands... And that's why they covered up such crimes as provoking the war in Ukraine, the blowing up of the Nord Stream... that's why they are even willing to risk providing long-range weapons to Ukraine. (Interestingly enough, Americans are not openly providing such long-range weapons, because they understand that this could lead to escalation, even nuclear escalation.) So the Americans are simply sacrificing the Europeans. They have already been using Ukraine as cannon fodder... and it looks like they are preparing to use their European allies as cannon fodder, as well.

We are observing these developments with great concern, and realise that we unfortunately have almost no reasonable partners in Europe. We are thus preparing for the worst-case scenario. Nevertheless, we hope that by intensifying our practice of nuclear deterrence we can sober up some people in Europe and in the United States. If this does not succeed, the numerous crises plaguing the world will end up escalating into a Third World War.

The burgeoning global crises

These burgeoning global crises are the result of tectonic shifts in the current world order, which was essentially founded on the five-hundred-year dominance of the West, largely based on its military superiority. Gunpowder and cannons were invented in China. But constantly warring Europeans made better use of them and had a better system for organising their military. Based on that, they began to colonise the rest of the world, suppressing and even destroying some civilisations (Aztecs, Incas), extracting first colonial, then neocolonial rent. But this foundation began to be undermined by the former Soviet Union, when it reached nuclear parity, and now by a resurrected Russia. The shifting of this entire system has given rise to many crises and conflicts. But, first of all, it helped to liberate “the Rest”, “the Global South”, or, better, “the Global Majority”.

Now the question is not only how to stop the West – but also how to stop the rising waves of military conflicts around the world. By catering to our core security interests, we have simultaneously liberated the rest of the world from the Western yoke and undermined its ability to siphon off the wealth of other countries. The West is now in a state of desperation. To instill some common sense in them, we need the restoration of a “healthy fear” – that is, we need to restore the validity of nuclear deterrence. Unfortunately, I see no other way at this juncture. Because many people, especially in the West, seem to have lost their minds and their sense of responsibility.

The ongoing Genocide...

Today the barbaric genocide that "Israel" – as another colonialist Western power – is perpetrating against the Palestinians continues unabated. The agonies of the Palestinian civilian population are inconceivable, and the rest of the world watches and watches. What is the "international community" doing – to put an end to the massacres perpetrated by "Israel" and its destruction of the Palestinian homeland... and to get the USA/EU states to stop supporting "Israel"? And... would you say that the genocide in Palestine (also the ongoing military attacks on Syria) and the war in Ukraine are essentially part of a "Greater War" against those sovereign nations of the Global Majority who refuse to become vassals of the Hegemon?

Under the current “world system”, the “international community” will do very little to help the Palestinians.

I see the entire conflict in Palestine as a link in a chain of conflicts triggered by the tectonic shifts in power under the current system and the West's desperate attempts to maintain its dominance. It is clear that the United States – while outwardly withdrawing from the many countries and territories in the world that it has occupied and dominated – is covertly provoking instability in those territories in order to create problems for their future leaders. And most of those territories happen to be in Eurasia.

I must say that I could never see how the Israelis would have been able to launch this war [against Palestine] without the open support of the United States. For all intents and purposes, it looks like some circles in the United States decided to unleash a new major Middle Eastern war to destabilise the entire region (the United States is in any case no longer dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas, so they had no interest in retaining any stability there).

The Gaza massacre has undermined Israel's legitimacy, and I cannot see how that legitimacy could ever be restored. It looks like we have the seeds of a new, major war in the Middle East and a new tragedy – for the Jewish people, as well, because they too are being sacrificed by the stupidity and hubris of Israel's leaders. I cannot understand Israeli politicians. They have obviously lost their minds... just like the European political class. And the Palestinians continue to be massacred for this agenda.

Aside from the use of the nuclear threat as a deterrence... and considering that "global institutions" such as the UN and the International Court of Justice are ineffectual in stopping any wars and genocides, and that they are – one could say – essentially in the hands of the Western elites... could one not conceive of an additional measure of deterrence – such as a global "Alliance of Resistance", acting as an active "front" against the unipolar power?

The Global Majority is potentially much more powerful than the former Non-Aligned Movement, and it is of course becoming a much more important factor in international politics. A new system will be born in the next few decades

– that is, if we survive this period of crises and wars... and if we can avoid a Third World War, which would probably be the last war... and we must do everything we can to avoid it.

I don't see any possibility of creating what one could call an "Alliance of Resistance" in the near future... however, a Commonwealth of Free Nations – "free" in terms of being able to live and work according to their national interests – would be a major contribution to world peace. But to achieve the future world of free nations, to create more security and reduce potential tensions, we would have to reintroduce "safety locks" into the international system. At the moment, there is only one "safety lock" – and that is nuclear deterrence. We also need to build a new institutional system in parallel to the collapsing existing system. The UN may continue to exist, but it obviously cannot become effective again, because its secretariat is dominated by Western-oriented officials. We would therefore have to build an entirely new institutional system based on BRICS+, SCO+, and other such institutions.

Indeed... we need a new set of institutions which are not dominated by the West, whose power is waning and whose moral authority is gone, because it has failed in all respects – politically, economically, and especially ethically – having unleashed countless brutal acts of aggression while it had the opportunity to dictate the fate of the world community. That era of the so-called "unipolar moment" reached its peak in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.

Western powers have shown what their worth is. They should now be cast aside. We need to build a parallel system of world governance – one that would be more just and more effective. We need a new International Court of Justice, institutions that help to alleviate hunger in the world, and institutions that work to improve global health (during the Covid pandemic, we witnessed how Western nations, which pretty much controlled the world institutions, failed to deal with this challenge properly and adequately).

Colonialism vs. Internationalism

Tsarist Russia was a colonial power and in fierce competition with the colonial states of Western Europe, especially with the British Empire. How did Tsarist Russian colonialism differ from, say, British colonialism?

Yes, in many ways Tsarist Russia was a colonial power, but it was very different from the Western colonial powers. When the Russians advanced eastwards and southwards, conquering and developing Siberia, they did not resort to genocidal means. The Russians actually mixed with the local elites, there were a large number of inter-ethnic marriages, so the Russians were not colonialists of the Western mould. Tsars even invited local elites to join the Russian nobility. It seems that we once almost doubled the number of princes we had when we incorporated Georgia, whose entire nobility claimed to be princes. Half of the Russian nobility was ethnically non-Russian. Russia absorbed the cultures of the colonised peoples instead of suppressing them. Racism is almost completely alien to Russians.

Even though Russia naturally benefited from the wealth of neighbouring lands, it subsidised them in most cases... and this was particularly the case during the Soviet era, when Russia was the main provider of wealth. I believe that all but one of the republics in the former Soviet Union were heavily subsidised.

So we are a colonial power in name only. In many ways, metropolitan Russia was a colony of its suburbs. Then, due to its need for security, Russia expanded, but in many cases paid an economic price for this expansion. For example, after the Second World War, Ukraine was reconstructed ahead of those areas of Russia proper that had suffered under Nazi occupation. We can also note with a certain pride that most of the civilisations of the Nordic peoples of Siberia have endured to this day (unlike those usurped territories in the United States or elsewhere). Some of their populations have even increased, for example in Yakutia. Both Russian and, in particular, Soviet scholars created written languages for these peoples and, of course, brought education with them. The written languages in the Baltic areas, now states, were developed in St Petersburg in the late 19th century.

Thus Russia was not "colonialist" in the traditional sense. Ultimately, it was the creation of a common state in which local elites and local populations – who were non-ethnic Russians – could play an equal or sometimes even a more important and privileged role than ethnic Russians themselves. This is also a consequence of our history... We were colonised by the empire of Genghis Khan, but the Mongols did not impose their culture, their language, or their beliefs on us. Our expansion has more or less emulated this type of expansion. So I wouldn't describe our expansion as "colonialist", but rather as "internationalist".

And of course, our expansion did bring us resources, especially from Siberia. First, it was furs, the so-called "soft gold", then all kinds of precious stones, silver, gold, then oil, gas. And now Siberia is Russia's breadbasket, the foundation of our future. Siberia will supply Russia and Eurasia with food, water, and natural resources for decades and hopefully centuries to come.

Empires vs. Civilisations

Some proponents of a future Multipolar World speak of assembling geographic regions of the world into "empires"... What would Russia's position be then? Would the notion of "building various empires" not be problematic for a Multipolar World?

It is too early to speak of future empires, but an empire – apart from having sometimes been a territory of power that suppressed other peoples – was also at times a domain that provided security and well-being for many peoples.

I'm not sure whether we shall see a world of several major empires. I believe that we have passed that period of history. If we speak of Russia, it will be one of the cultural, political, economic, military centres of the world. It will be a "Civilisation of Civilisations" embracing many ethnic groups... a Eurasian civilisation opened to others.

I personally would not want Russia to become a vast empire again, because the Russian way of building an empire was ultimately at the expense of the Russians themselves. They may have had noble aims, but it was too costly for Russian people. I would rather see us as a civilisation of civilisations: respecting others, learning from the experiences of all nations... a military-political guardian safeguarding the freedom of other nations to choose their own path. Freeing the world from hegemony is ultimately our manifest destiny.

Looking to the East and to the Global Majority

Russia is the host of the BRICS+ this year... Russia has also recently organised and hosted the Conference on Multipolarity, the International Youth Festival, and many other events to bring the Global Majority together... What could Russia learn from Asia? Africa? Latin America? And what could these regions learn from Russia?

We learn from one another. Russians are unique in being a culturally open nation. This cultural openness is actually the essence of being "Russian". We were born as a "nation of nations". We are known as a state-civilisation. But, again, I would call us "a Civilisation of Civilisations". Throughout the centuries of our development, we have embraced many civilisations and are, almost by definition, internationalists. Of course we have racists, chauvinists in Russia. But on the whole, Russians are exceptionally internationalist. We are therefore better prepared than most for a multipolar, multicultural and multiracial world of the future. We must learn from one another to live in peace, to respect and support the cultures of others, to develop our own culture and to promote it throughout the world. Above all, however, we must respect the uniqueness of each people and foster positive cross-cultural enrichment.

I feel very optimistic about the world to come, if we are able to avoid a World War III. But this is our common task.

Sergei Aleksandrovich Karaganov

Extensive biography: <https://karaganov.ru/en/>

Specialisation: Soviet/Russian foreign and defence policies, security and economic aspects of Russian–European interaction, the Russian pivot to the East.

Author and editor of 28 books and brochures, published around 600 articles on economics of foreign policy, arms control, national security strategy, Russian foreign and defence policies. Articles and books were published in more than 50 countries.

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