

# A new world order: A view from Russia

*Sergey Karaganov and Dmitry Suslov*

Since around 2017–2018, the world has been living through a period of progressive erosion, or collapse, of international orders inherited from the past. With the election of Donald Trump and the rapid increase of US containment of Russia and China—which is both a consequence of this gradual erosion and also represents deep internal and international contradictions—this process entered its apogee. A period of collapse opens up possibilities for the creation of a new world order; hopefully, a fairer, stable, and peaceful order than has been previously experienced. Russia has a good chance of influencing the formation a new order.

However, the establishment of a new world order will take time, and in the meantime serious conflicts and crises could occur. The current state of US-Russia relations is just a beginning in this regard. In the medium term, the priority for major powers is to prevent a new large-scale war, which is becoming highly likely. In this regard, Russia, again, intends to act as a key security provider through its foreign and defence policies. Russian achievements in defence, declared by President Putin in his 2018 address to the Federal Assembly (Putin 2018), strengthen deterrence, and show that achieving military ascendancy and changing the overall military balance is impossible, thus deterring an arms race, and creating the preconditions for dialogue with Washington. Russia's pivot to Asia will continue and the Greater Eurasia comprehensive partnership concept will gradually be substantiated and thus will become a zone of stability and a powerful unit within the global order.

No major improvement in relations with the United States is in sight, mainly because of the situation within both Western societies and the Western international community itself. At the same time, Russia will continue to deepen partnerships with China and India and to enhance cooperative relations with US allies and partners like Japan, South Korea, and, when possible, Western European countries. Neither major European allies nor Asian allies of the US support further escalation of the Russia-West and US-Russia confrontation. Maintaining these relationships seems the best way to for-

ward the confrontation's conclusion on terms compatible with the current state of the world.

Russia's policy, therefore, is to remain tactically flexible, prepared for every eventuality, but also to be more strategic than ever in building a world order that is stable, peaceful, and comfortable for Russia. As the US and Europe are not ready to engage in order-building with Russia and other major non-Western actors, instead adopting an oppositional posture, and—primarily due to internal political reasons—because they are highly unlikely to so engage in the next decade, a new international order's emergence is more likely to occur in the 2030s or 2040s than in the 2020s, after the inevitable rotation of elites in the US and the EU.

## Collapse of orders

The main reason for the general confusion among Western elites and the tension in world politics and the international economy is the simultaneous decay of most global and regional international political and economic orders, by which here we refer to systems of rules, norms, and patterns of behaviour accepted by a majority of actors at a particular time. This decay had been brewing for a long time but has only become visible in the last decade. Figuratively speaking, several tectonic plates on which international order and its underlying concepts have stood have begun to move.

The most dramatic shift is the end of the 500-year-long dominance of the West—firstly Europe, then the US and its allies—in politics, the economy, and ideology. This is chiefly due to loss of the military superiority the West had possessed since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Up until around the sixteenth century, Europe did not have primacy over most other civilisations. Many of the greatest scientific and industrial discoveries of the time were made in China, Persia, or the Arab world. A combination of factors then led to Western leadership in military technologies and organisation.<sup>1</sup> Spanish and Portuguese navies, then latterly the British navy, led Europe to predominance in the building and use of warships. This

---

<sup>1</sup> The gradual formation of capitalism and the nation-state, which turned out to be a very efficient form of political organisation, were key, but the vast experience of never-ending wars within Europe was arguably the most significant factor.

capacity to project power abroad enabled Europe to conquer the Americas, Africa, and South Asia, as well as to subordinate China. Interestingly, China had possessed a far more powerful navy two centuries before the Europeans had built theirs, with substantially larger and more capable ships. However, perhaps due to assumptions of Chinese civilisational self-sufficiency or a fear of foreign influence, China destroyed its own navy in the fifteenth century.

In addition to naval and military supremacy, Europe's thirst for world domination was fuelled by its relative poverty, in comparison with other civilisations of the time, and the overcrowded limitations on European elites. Similar factors influenced the Crusades several centuries before the Age of Discovery. Despite the ideological and religious slogans, the major European imperative had been a desire to rob the Middle East of its riches.

The taking possession of colonies and semi-colonies resulted in a profound redistribution of global gross national product in Europe and the West's favour. It stimulated a flourishing of European science and culture, further development of military power, and it strengthened European and Western global dominance for several centuries. At this point, Russia was also part of the West. Russia's remarkably quick conquest of Siberia, which took less than a century, was possible not just because of Cossack bravery and desire to escape the lack of freedom in core Russia, but also because of their military superiority: They used canons and guns against the locals' bows and arrows. Unquestioned military superiority also enabled the Russian empire to easily conquer Central Asia in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

World history as we know it was written by the victors: predominantly European victors. Ferdinand von Richthofen of Germany referred to the region of economic and cultural interaction between China and the West as *the Silk Road*. Nowadays, China, reasserting itself ideologically, has branded its new initiative for the region *One Belt, One Road*. The terms *Middle East* and *Far East* were invented by the British and conveyed how far away these regions were from them. Yet the eastern regions of Siberia are still referred to as the Far East.

In the coming decades, the whole of humanity—not just scholars—will learn a new history of civilisation, not the one written by Europeans. Byzantium, which throughout the dark medieval era preserved and developed the best features of European culture in combination with the variety of cul-

---

<sup>2</sup> However, this conquest was barely profitable. In contrast to other European empires, the Russia paid more for its Central Asian territories than it received in return.

tures to Europe's east, will no longer be referred to disparagingly, but will be hailed as one of the triumphs of human civilisation. Whereas the Western Roman Empire collapsed under attack from so-called barbarians to the north, the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantium, was bled dry and eventually collapsed largely due to numerous—some might say barbaric—interventions from the west. The changing fortunes of Chinese, Indian, and Persian dynasties will be viewed as of equal importance to the alternating rules of the Stuarts, the Bourbons, the Habsburgs, and the Romanovs. The current generation's grandchildren will live in a world of different historical narratives. This will certainly challenge prevailing European—including Russian—cultural and historical identities.

The threshold moment in the centuries-old history of Western military supremacy and political and ideological ascendancy occurred in the middle of the twentieth century, when the West's opponents—the USSR and then China—obtained nuclear weapons. The West lost supremacy over half the world. This was followed by the US failure to win the Korean War and its subsequent defeat in Vietnam. In both instances, nuclear escalation was considered but not employed.

The feeling of supremacy returned for a brief period in 1991–2007 when the Soviet Union fell apart and ceased to be a military-political balancer, while the West declared a “unipolar moment” (Krauthammer 1990/91) and proclaimed that the US-led and West-centric liberal world order should become universal and global. After political losses in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, that sense of primacy is now falling apart, to the irritation of its architects. The Trump Administration was the first to officially recognise the loss of US military pre-eminence. The January 2018 National Defense Strategy claims that “For decades the United States has enjoyed uncontested or dominant superiority in every operating domain. We could generally deploy our forces when we wanted, assemble them where we wanted, and operate how we wanted. Today, every domain is contested—air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace” (Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy).

The crisis of 2008 showed, among other things, that the Western economic model was unable to deal with open competition when not backed up by military supremacy. The liberal trade and economic order mainly benefited those who had designed its rules, based on military and naval superiority, firstly the United Kingdom and then the United States. Their superior guns and warships, alongside efficient military organisation, made it possible to plunder colonies and dictate their own trading rules. The most vivid

example is the series of wars in the nineteenth century that forced China to engage in the opium trade with British India, which was hugely profitable for the British, but intoxicated a considerable portion of Chinese society and accelerated its ruin.

The liberal economic order created by the West—primarily the US—at the Bretton Woods conference and expanded to the entire world since the 1990s is being undermined by a pile-up of contradictions and a reluctance of the rising *new* powers to play solely by the rules of the *old* powers. The new economic powers have certainly used the liberal order to progress economically. Western powers have encouraged this in the hope that the new powers would eventually transform themselves according to Western economic and political models and join the West as *apprentice* members. This is not happening. As the Trump Administration's 2017 National Security Strategy correctly put it, "the US post-Cold war policy was based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false" (National Security Strategy 2017).

However, the main reason for the decay of this particular liberal economic order is the United States itself, and its protectionist and mercantilist turn upon realisation that when not backed up by military and political supremacy, the liberal order increasingly benefits new powers which refuse to yield to Western competitors. Trump's *America first* slogan is the hyperbolic epitome of the prevailing sentiments among the US elite and its broader population. The US and Europe still possess leading positions within the international economic system and continue to use them to redirect the benefits of the existing economic order in their favour. First and foremost, this occurs through sanctions, which target economic containment of adversaries rather than changes in their foreign policy. Thus, the US and Europe undermine both the liberal system and trust in themselves. It is no coincidence that the massive use of sanctions by Western countries is justified in order to apply pressure in the absence of the possibility of using military force.

Another fading system is the bipolar confrontation, even though both Americans and docile *new Europeans* are eager to renew divisions in Europe, and the US is trying to create new divisions in the Pacific. Western Europe would like to avoid a confrontation with Russia, but it is holding on to Atlantic bonds which involve security being paid for by the US. The US is currently trying to distance itself from Europe, especially economically and stra-

tegitally, while at the same time attempting to keep Europe dependent. The US is also taking steps to besiege China from the south and east through its Indo-Pacific strategy, an attempt to weaken Chinese positions by threatening trade and energy-supply routes in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, by creating the Quad—the partnership of the US, Japan, India, and Australia—as a coalition to contain China, and by providing an alternative to the OBOR initiative (Swain 2018), while—in defiance of any reasonable foreign policy logic—pushing Russia and China into a *de facto* alliance.

It seems that faced with the apparent failure of attempts to include China and Russia within a US-led order as junior partners fully transformed in Western terms, as well as with the crumbling of this order, the US has decided to return to fully fledged containment (Suslov 2018). The US has intensified containment *vis-à-vis* both China and Russia in political, security, and economic fields, beginning with depictions of their roles across the world as profoundly negative and even predatory, and pushing other countries to pick sides: Either they are with the US as part of the liberal order, or against it, together with Moscow and Beijing. See, for example, Rex Tillerson's speeches on US policies in Latin America and Africa, given at the University of Texas in Austin on 1 February 2018, and at George Mason University on 6 March 2018. He describes China, and to some extent Russia too, as malevolent actors, and he cautions countries in those regions against deepening relations with them (Tillerson 2018a, 2018b).

Finally, the US has adopted a new ideology of global polarisation and division, presenting Russia and China in the most recent National Security Strategy and other influential documents as a kind of united authoritarian bloc of revisionist powers committed to undermining the existing international order and opposing the free world. This aims to unite allies and partners under US leadership and to win a global confrontation for the second time.

However, attempts to restore a bygone bipolarity—let alone win a new global Cold War against Russia and China together—which are relatively beneficial for the US and the West more broadly, are actually doomed, the contemporary world being far more complex and far less dependent on the will of major powers than the world of the twentieth century. The overwhelming majority of US allies and partners in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa are clearly resistant to the either-or choice between the US on one hand and China and Russia on the other, and would prefer to diversify their foreign economic and security relationships. The stronger US

pressure is for countries to make such a choice, the weaker its influence and credibility will be. India, although a willing participant in the Indo-Pacific process and the Quad because of its growing concerns over Chinese economic and military advantage and what New Delhi sees as the policies of an encroaching Chinese hegemony in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region, is nonetheless highly unlikely to dispense with its independent foreign policy, reject its Eurasian ambitions, withdraw from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and become just another US ally in the Indo-Pacific region.

Even if a new bipolarity were to ever become a reality, it would hardly benefit the United States or the West. Given Beijing's pace of growth, its level of investment in science, education, and technology, and its ability to maintain an authoritarian political system—which is more effective in international competition when combined with a market economy—China is likely to become the world's number one power in fifteen years.

The Thucydides Trap, the danger of a war between a dominant power and a rising power, has been heavily discussed lately (Allison 2017). Pressure from the east and the south and an increase in rivalry with the United States has forced Beijing to progress westward and south-westward. This will have a dual effect. On one hand, this will spur the emergence of new clusters of development in central Eurasia and the formation of the comprehensive Eurasian partnership. But on the other hand, this will simultaneously intensify the opposite tendency, stoking concerns among China's neighbours about its growing power. To mitigate these concerns, China will need to allow greater multilateralism in its foreign policy and accept engagement in regional systems of rules and institutions, i. e., not rules imposed from the outside, but rules developed together with China. This is the kernel of the concept of Greater Eurasia.

## The West's position

Could history have turned out less unfavourably for the West? The rise of the non-Western powers was inevitable, and Western military force lost potency not simply because of the Cold War years of strategic parity with the USSR/Russia, but also due to other reasons (Karaganov and Bordachev 2013). Still, these changes could have followed a softer trajectory.

In the early 1990s, Russia wanted to join the West and become a NATO member. Certainly, if it had joined the Western alliance, NATO would have taken a very different course. The US would have lost its hegemonic position. It would have been difficult to impose the insanely incompetent decisions to initiate wars against Yugoslavia and Libya, and interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In any case, the West rejected this opportunity and failed to offer Russia a new Marshall Plan, as had been the case with Europe after World War Two, which strengthened Western military, economic, and ideological power for years to come. Without question, being a country with an almost sacred attitude to sovereignty, Russia could hardly have been fully integrated. Still, allied relations could have been established. This would have dramatically changed the world's military balance and history would have followed a different path.

Alas, the West decided that Russia was defeated, and that for the victory to be complete, Russia needed to be pushed further back and deprived of any serious influence beyond its borders. Recall the Western mantra of the 1990s and 2000s that Russia *must not have veto right* over European security issues, including decisions on the use of force, and security and military architecture. Thus, instead of integration and a re-shaping of the Western order together with Russia, turning it into a broadly inclusive Northern Hemisphere order, the West launched a neo-Weimar policy vis-à-vis Russia with its primary manifestation being NATO expansion.

As a result, the West faced a geopolitically perked up, non-Western—or even anti-Western—Russia and doomed itself to a more rapid and sustained withering of its international standing. This chapter's senior author, who had initially pushed Russia to join NATO and later to establish an *Alliance of Europe* with the EU, was so shocked by the West's lack of reason when rejecting the Russian offer to build an alliance that he began to doubt the West's rationality. Western policy adventures that followed this episode have turned these doubts into a confidence in the West's historic incompetence.

Western countries, only recently regarded as examples of efficiency, are having a hard time. Western populations increasingly feel the negative impact of globalisation, with middle classes facing an unpromising future. The information revolution—primarily social networks—makes societies less subject to control by elites, parties, and traditional mass media. This is particularly evident in the United States, where swathes of the traditional middle class, in defiance of the regular channels of influence controlled by elites, voted for the non-standard presidential candidate who was able to express

their views, fears, and concerns, if not their interests. It is this loss of control and the victory of a candidate who had campaigned against the establishment, rather than Donald Trump's unconventional personality or inexperience, which explains the fury, bordering on insanity, which has swept the majority of the American elite. Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama were also unconventional and relatively inexperienced, especially in foreign affairs, but unlike Trump, they were part of the elite and were nominated by the elite in order to make necessary corrections after crises.

After its defeat in November 2016, the US establishment, and especially what is sometimes referred to as the deep state, has struggled to restore control over the political system. This struggle is only partly directed towards Trump. Anti-Russian rhetoric also appears to be a cover for attempts to reform US domestic policy and make society more manageable, primarily by tightening control over social media, which made Trump's victory possible. Social media, which was originally seen as an open platform for the competition of ideas, and which helped the US to interfere in domestic affairs in other countries like Egypt, Ukraine, and Russia, is now seen as the major channel of what is referred to as Russian meddling. As a result, the necessity of strengthening supervision and building defence against "Russian attacks against democracy" has already become a narrative in the US (Minority Staff Report 2017; Zhou et al 2017). In other words, traditionalist elites are trying to, as they present it, save democracy by strengthening authoritarian control over mass media.

The extraordinary avalanche of accusations that "Russian meddling" is undermining democracies all over the world (Biden 2018) seems to be cover for attempts to regain control. This certainly includes limiting opportunities for foreign actors to influence US policies.

As far as this chapter's authors are concerned, Russia would have been proud if at least 2 percent of these accusations were grounded in truth. The US elite must learn a lesson: People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. This includes extensive long-term meddling in the internal affairs of other countries, in most cases bringing chaos and bloodshed; Ukraine being a recent case. Fortunately, due to Russian involvement, a regime change in Syria that would have resulted in a profound strengthening of radical Islamist terrorism, was prevented. However, we doubt that even 2 percent of the accusations have any basis. In the meantime, US elites, divided and almost waging civil war against each other, are further undermining the moral and political standing of the West, and indeed of democracy itself.

Naturally, irritation with Russia has geopolitical causes, too. Russia is both symbolic of, and largely the reason for, the loss of US military supremacy. Russia intentionally opposed the US-led liberal world order, especially attempts to universalise it, whereby non-Western powers could take no part in order-building. Russia has opposed NATO enlargement since the 1990s, and has opposed illegal aggression in what was left of Yugoslavia in 1999, Iraq in 2003, and Libya in 2011. Russia has always demanded a role of co-designer, co-architect, and co-manager in the construction of a new international order, on parity with the West, and both Russian domestic and foreign policy, including nuclear weapons policy and policies with regard to the territory of the former USSR have clearly demonstrated Russia's refusal to be simply a junior participant in a US-led system.

The roots of anti-Russian policy run deep and a thaw in bilateral relations cannot be expected in the near future, especially if US elites fail to take control of the country's domestic situation. US-Europe estrangement is not too deep. However, the world to which Western elites had become accustomed, and the world which they desire, is crumbling, and Russia is both a symbol and a cause of this. The political positions of traditionalist elites are weakening across Europe, as shown by the rise of so-called right-wing populists and a stark fall in the popularity of mainstream political parties.

A return to the status quo of the 1990s and early 2000s is impossible. The US economy is dynamic and will likely be driven further by Trump's tax cuts and deregulation, which will maintain US strength for the next several years. The question is whether the US will opt for a partial isolationism and build a kind of fortress America, without totally abandoning global economic engagement, of course, as promoted by Trump's electoral campaign. Or, will the world once again face a policy of great-power revanchism, a bid to restore the US position as sole global leader? The latter outlook is favoured by the US military establishment, including those in the Trump Administration, and by hawkish internationalists among both Democrats and Republicans, and it could be more dangerous than in Reagan's time. Partial isolationism could prevail in the longer run because the traditionalist elite is losing ground and the world is becoming increasingly multipolar. This will create problems, both for Russia and for the world more broadly, but it will also offer new opportunities.

Russia, foreseeing these tendencies in US policy, intends to keep the US at bay through a strategy of *pre-emptive deterrence*. The cutting-edge strategic systems which Vladimir Putin referred to in his presidential address to

the Federal Assembly on 1 March 2018 aim to prevent US attempts to regain military superiority by showing that such attempts would be ineffective and prohibitively expensive (Putin 2018).

The situation in Europe is somewhat similar. Several European countries have accused Moscow of interference and claimed sight of a Russian trail in Brexit and the Catalan separatist movement. So-called populists—who seem to represent a considerable portion of the electorate dissatisfied with current policies and deteriorating economic, social, and security conditions—are edging out elites, imposing their own agendas, and undermining traditional parties. However, no one knows who or what will replace the customary pro-Atlantic ruling class.

The European Union is facing four possible scenarios. The first would be to maintain an alliance with a less committed US, on deteriorating terms, possibly compensating and saving face by simultaneously making slight improvements to relations with Russia. The second scenario would be a pursuit of strategic independence through an effective security policy, but this would require enormous financial and political commitments and a revision of the basic principles of the European project itself. This could lead to either closer relations with the East, in order to respond to real challenges, or to a continued distancing from Russia. For the time being, the EU is trying to keep the faltering European project together with the help of anti-Russian sanctions, thus allowing the EU to speak with one voice. The third scenario would allow individual European countries and the European Union to join the Greater Eurasia project without breaking with the US. But this would be based on different values and political principles to those the EU is used to. Finally, the fourth scenario would involve the EU continuing to patch up holes without any strategic decisions having been made, while continuing to face the risk of the European project's erosion.

A majority among the current European elite dream of the second scenario and favour the first, but in reality, Europe is heading towards the fourth option. The third scenario could materialise in several years, after Europe has felt even greater consequences of the internal and external transformations in world affairs and understood the perils of alternative options, and especially given the likelihood of a more egotistical and detached US policy, and when the ongoing transformation of the European elite is far down the road. All of the above scenarios will require Russia to pursue a new and more active policy towards Europe (Lukyanov 2018a, 2018b; Miller and Lukyanov 2016).

Structurally, the situation in the West is so strained that it has become a serious challenge to international security. Whereas fifteen years ago the purpose of the international system was thought to be managing the rise of the *new* powers, it would now be more appropriate to speak about managing the decline of the *old* powers. Some prominent realist thinkers have already claimed—contrary to classic theories of power transition—that existing hegemonies, in this case the US, are the real revisionist powers, whose policies violate the rules and practices of the existing order and thus constitute the major challenge to international stability (Schweller 2015).

The current state of international relations is often described as a new Cold War. In fact, the higher level of structural tensions, the number of unresolved problems, the proliferation of uncontrollable and irresponsible actors, and the lack of regulation mean that it is actually even more dangerous than that. To top it all, there is a new ideological confrontation, not between communism and capitalism, but within Western elites themselves, who are trying to stop the slide of their ideological, political, and economic positions. This confrontation is no less severe than the Cold War. To be sure, the bellicose US ideological and military build-up are currently attempting to replay the Reagan strategy of the 1980s.<sup>3</sup> This strategy is married to McCarthyism—a witch-hunt within the country. Just as in the 1950s, some leading US experts and think tanks are accused of pro-Russian sentiments (Young 2015). But neither Russia nor China, nor even the majority of US allies in Asia, the Middle East, or Latin America are willing to join in with a new game of old-style Cold War. Those in the West who want to play this game will have to do so alone, drifting towards new defeats and even isolation. Preliminary assessments of the new confrontation Washington is trying to unleash—in particular, correlation of forces analyses—show that its chances of victory are slim.

Russia, China, India, and the other so-called new powers are not engaged in ideological expansion and are generally content with the direction in which the international system is evolving. They are powers of an emerging new status quo being repulsed by old powers.

---

<sup>3</sup> According to many in the US military and Republican political establishment, it was Reagan's policies of arms race escalation, intensified confrontation, ideological offensive, and rhetorical pressure in the early 1980s which caused the old Soviet elite to shudder and compelled a serious of concessions, which eventually brought the Cold War to an end on American terms.

## Security challenges

As international relations witness mounting structural tensions, there is an increasing danger of regional crises too. Old conflicts in the Middle East, previously suppressed by the old international system, are breaking out again. With a further awakening of the peoples and increasing incidence of nationalism across Africa, especially below the Sahara, further destabilisation is guaranteed. The rise of Asia is unfreezing old contradictions, previously suppressed by the bipolar world order and colonial powers, and creating new sources of tension.

Nuclear weapons are proliferating. It is unrealistic to expect North Korea to give up its nuclear goals after Israel, India, and Pakistan faced no penalties for moving forwards with their own nuclear programmes, and especially after Iraq and Libya were devastatingly attacked after abandoning theirs. Crimea's incorporation within Russia was geopolitically necessary and historically fair. However, the action broke the pledge in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum—designed to reward Kiev for abandoning Soviet nuclear weapons (Memorandum on Security Assurances 1994)—to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. As a result, the moral justification for the non-proliferation regime was undermined.

If the pressure on Iran and the threats to impose new sanctions and revise the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA) continue, Iran will obtain nuclear weapons sooner or later as well. Iran will be followed by Saudi Arabia and Egypt. South Korea and Japan may want to match North Korea and possess their own nuclear weapons as well, especially if the US makes a deal with Pyongyang which prohibits North Korea possessing intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the US mainland but does not result in its complete de-nuclearisation.<sup>4</sup> However, even without such a gloomy scenario coming to pass, strategic stability is still in decline and the risk of a nuclear conflict is growing.

New kinds of weapons are emerging: nuclear, near-nuclear, and conventional. Cyber weapons are acquiring a strategic nature because they can cause comparable damage to weapons of mass destruction. If they are not controlled through joint efforts, they could become ideal weapons for terrorists

---

<sup>4</sup> Obtaining an independent nuclear deterrent is under consideration in South Korea. For Japan, this is more difficult politically, given the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thus far, Japan has preferred the idea of stationing US nuclear weapons on its territory, but over time this position could change.

as they are relatively cheap, hard to trace, and can deliver stealth attacks on vital facilities, provoking international conflicts and producing a powerful multiplier effect. Biological weapons capable of causing significant damage may be in the making too. All this is happening at a time when the old system of nuclear arms control and its related structures of dialogue are crumbling, whereas new systems are not emerging. There has been practically no serious discussion of new threats. For the first time since the 1950s, the world could have no rules whatsoever governing strategic weapons, and this at a time when the strategic environment is far more complex and far less governable than it was in the early stages of the Cold War.

In part, the current situation is a result of free-riding in matters of security and what may be called strategic frivolity: the readiness for long-term risks including military conflicts with huge escalatory potential in order to achieve short-term tactical gains, because the materialisation of such risks is mistakenly perceived as unthinkable (Bordachev 2017; Kissinger 2015). States and societies have become used to a long period of relative peace and have preferred either to think it will last forever or to propose escapist plans to scrap all nuclear weapons, the fear of which is the main, if not the only, guarantee of relative peace. In this situation, current relations between Moscow and Washington are particularly alarming. On the surface, they are characterised by disdain on one side and near hatred on the other. This is a bad backdrop for strategic stability.

The growing number of actors and the lack of dialogue are compounded by intellectual confusion in elite circles. Meanwhile, the pace of change is increasing. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, just like the preceding Digital Revolution, will bring tremendous benefits but also heighten social and political tensions. Advances in medicine could save millions but could exacerbate demographic issues like ageing and overpopulation. Robotisation and localisation of production is reversing industrialisation in many developing countries, promoting re-industrialisation of the developed world, but most of the repercussions of this revolution are difficult to predict. In fact, just fifteen years ago the US counted on supremacy in the cyber sphere and rejected the very idea of it being internationally regulated. Russian concepts of information security and repeated proposals to develop rules of behaviour in the cyber sphere regarding both infrastructure and information were criticised as attempts to legalise censorship (Remington et al 2016). Now the US has finally realised its own vulnerability. As we have argued above, social networks and other new media have been among the key factors contributing to the

current political turmoil in the US. Therefore, the United States, which only recently advocated complete freedom of the internet—or rather, freedom for US media and ideas—is now seeking to limit it.

Fundamental geopolitical shifts, elite confusion, and new technologies not only increase the risk of war, but also thrust international relations back to basics. The skeletal foundation of military-power is increasingly visible beneath the economic, information, and political superstructure, which only recently was seen as dominant.

### Russia: Victorious, but with problems

Russia's recent foreign policy has been extremely successful (Karaganov 2017c). It has harnessed a historical wave: renationalisation; a re-assertion of sovereignty; negative responses to globalisation in many societies; and a growing role of military-political factors. Sovereignty, the primacy of security issues, and traditional values have returned to the fore. Traditional values almost universally include a prevalence of communal over individual interests, to be realised through public service and recognition. As explained by Rein Mullerson, peace and prosperity in the second half of the twentieth century spurred the emergence of a new individualism in the West (Mullerson 2017), but globally, the inherently social nature of humanity has been more prominent.

Russia's resolutely swift takeover of Crimea and support of the rebellion in the Donbass have prevented the further expansion of the Western bloc.<sup>5</sup> This expansion had been changing the balance of power to Russia's disadvantage and could have resulted in a large-scale war. Russia's remarkably successful involvement in Syria has enabled it to regain the status of a top-level player. For the first time in 30 years, Russia has proved capable of not just preventing regime change by projecting power in a country outside of the former USSR, but also of creating a new geopolitical environment disregarding US preferences. Russian success in Syria has influenced the Middle East more broadly by encouraging regional powers to diversify their

---

<sup>5</sup> Russian intervention stopped the expansion of both the EU and NATO and prevented resumption of NATO's further enlargement to the East. Initially, NATO expansion to the former USSR was halted in 2008 by Russian involvement in Georgia and subsequent recognition of independence for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

foreign policy and security relationships. The sense of victory and regaining of great-power confidence, paired with the West's angry reaction, have so far rallied Russian society, nationalised elites, and marginalised comprador sentiments.

Russia has established a historically unique partnership: a near-allied relationship with China, which is destined to become the world's leading power in the near future. A majority among Russian elites have changed their geo-strategic identity, turning from a marginal part of Europe, with an expensive and unguaranteed access to the centre, to central Eurasia. In other words, Russia is transforming itself in accordance with both the present and future state of world affairs. Having survived waves of hostile sanctions, it also senses a moral victory too.

The development and deployment of a series of high-tech strategic weapons, announced by President Putin in his 1 March 2018 address to the Federal Assembly, not only render most US investments in these fields obsolete, but guarantee for years, if not decades, the effectiveness of a Russian deterrent and its role as the main security provider globally and regionally. This role is crucial against a background of the incompetence and self-destructiveness of US policy and ongoing attempts to intensify simultaneous containment of Russia and China, re-creating a new bipolar global division. The world has seen what happened when the role of Russian deterrence weakened in the 1990s and 2000s due to its own internal crisis. The alliance of democratic countries ran amok, committing a series of interventions with horribly costly repercussions in Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Libya. The West began to aggressively export its political model, bringing chaos to countries and regions it influenced. The latest example is Ukraine, which has slid from a weak to an almost failed state. Still, despite apparent foreign policy successes, there are several strategic challenges Russia needs to deal with.

Apart from the objectively growing threat of war, the primary challenge is the lack of a coherent strategy for economic and social development. The fat Russia accumulated in the 2000s is running thin. Foreign policy successes are important in themselves, but poor compensation for social and economic troubles. No less risky would be a premature withdrawal from conflicts, as some in the Russian elite suggest (Timofeev 2017). So far, Russia has acted intelligently and deftly, but failures are possible and likely to occur. Russia's relative economic weakness has limited its partners' desire for friendship and encouraged opponents to feud with it. If economic stagnation continues,

geopolitical mishaps could ruin any aura of victory and expose economic weakness. A strategy of technocratic, conservative modernisation has been declared but is still to be implemented. So far the only area where Russia has undergone profoundly successful modernisation is its military.

Russia has lacked not only an attractive strategy for its own development but also a positive vision of a future world order. Just like China, Russia has been slow to fill the ideological vacuum created by the collapse of many of the previous international economic, political, and security orders and the Western recipes for international development. Contrary to conventional thinking, multipolarity throughout history is hardly a harmonious state of affairs, but is chaotic, characterised by almost endless conflicts, and wars among great powers like the two world wars of the twentieth century. Multipolarity has only been a useful concept as an antithesis to the bygone unipolarity. But what could be next?

Besides strengthening its own capabilities for deterrence, Russia has not yet arrived at a coherent strategy to improve international security, which is currently under severe stress, if not under threat of total collapse.

Relations with the West are at their worst, although the majority of the blame for this does not lie with Russia. Nonetheless, Russia is also at fault because of its past weaknesses, foolishness, its giving of concessions in hope of gratitude, and its reluctance to foresee the inevitable problem in Ukraine for years on end. Russia has strengthened its economic and political positions by turning east, but further movement will be constantly impeded by the weakness of the western flank. Concessions to Western partners would not make sense and could even be dangerous. They wouldn't so much encourage the kind of foolishly arrogant expansion attempted previously, but rather a desire to sort of finish Russia off, strengthening Western warmongers. Concessions would create the illusion that current US attempts to kind of replay the 1980s actually work and thereby stir even greater escalation. There should be no expectation of a lifting of sanctions in the foreseeable future, especially from the US. However, the present state of affairs is also counterproductive and harmful. Russia needs to make changes, look at the situation from a different angle, and give up its obsession with the West in both pro-Western and anti-Western forms.

## Future policy

The collapse of the previous international orders requires Russia's creative participation, on parity with other centres of global power, in the building of a new and balanced world order.

The cornerstones of Russian strategy should be leadership in prevention of a new large-scale war and a transformation of itself into a leading provider of international security. This should be achieved by developing both capabilities and a doctrine of deterrence, and by offering, even insisting—as opposed to acting without permission—to jointly strengthen international strategic stability.<sup>6</sup> This could be worked out not so much through traditional arms control channels,<sup>7</sup> but by promoting a system of dialogue which would increase transparency and reduce the risk of accidental or escalating conflicts. If the United States were to balk at the task, Russia and China should start without it by inviting other states to join in. Another option would be a series of unofficial dialogues between US, Chinese, and specialists from other countries on how to strengthen international strategic stability.

Naturally, new creative approaches are needed to preserve peace, including joint efforts not to overcome nuclear deterrence, but to strengthen it, as the main instrument for preventing war in the foreseeable future (Karaganov 2017a). It is worth fighting against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. But there must be a forward-looking philosophy and a practice of dialogue that engage *unofficial* nuclear and *threshold* states in order to strengthen their security. This is the only way to mitigate or prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons.

As a rule, international orders emerge after wars, but nowadays a major war would spell the real end of history. Russia should clearly declare a commitment to ensuring that history goes on. Russia is a major supplier of global security, as borne out by its policies in the Middle East and Central Asia, by its efforts to prevent the expansion of Western alliances in Europe which have created the risk of war, and also by its efforts to deter the United States and other major powers. It should formalise this status politically and intellectually.

---

<sup>6</sup> The term *international strategic stability* emphasises the polycentric and *multi-domain* nature of strategic stability in the current and future strategic environment.

<sup>7</sup> Although such channels could also be useful, the previous results of which, like the INF and New START treaties, should be preserved.

Once the foundation of the future world order is built through mutual deterrence and dialogue between leading powers, a discussion of its principles can commence: cooperation; respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; and the freedom of political, cultural, and value choices. The universalism of communism, liberalism, and other *isms* should be left behind.

Russia should revive the legalist tradition—a commitment to international law—which has been pushed to the side-lines by the so-called liberal-world-order era's law of the jungle. The necessary conditions for this, including a favourable balance of power, are re-emerging.

In geopolitical terms, the most promising option for Russia in the coming years would be a further pivot to the East to create a comprehensive partnership in Greater Eurasia. The US and its neighbours, alongside particular European and Asian states, will probably create their own centre.

Russia and China have reiterated their readiness to join forces with other countries in order to build a comprehensive partnership in Eurasia. Russia has supported China's One Belt, One Road initiative, which can, together with other projects, provide an economic foundation for future partnership. China has supported the Eurasian Economic Union and agreed to enlarge the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to include India and Pakistan: both necessary steps towards establishing the political, normative, and institutional foundations for Eurasian partnership. But then Moscow suffered a loss of initiative, apparently due to the Russian character: we make a breakthrough and then relax. The idea of Eurasian partnership requires systemic interaction, primarily with China, India, Japan, South Korea, and the Eurasian Economic Union, SCO, and ASEAN member states.

The Greater Eurasian partnership is not only a conceptual framework for building a united Eurasia as a global economic and political unit and thus a key element of the future world order, but also a way of integrating China's growing power within a system of institutions, ties, dialogues, and balances. Beijing, which maintains a Middle Kingdom tradition of surrounding itself with dependent states, faces a difficult task of overcoming this tradition. In the contemporary world this will only lead to a *Thucydides Trap*, prompting other countries to pool their efforts against China. This can already be seen in the emergence of the Indo-Pacific strategy, designed precisely to contain China from the east and south. However, there is a good chance of China operating through a cooperative, multilateral, and less Beijing-centred order, once this order has been systematically

built.<sup>8</sup> Simplifying somewhat, we could say the Greater Eurasian partnership is supposed to achieve with Chinese power something similar to what European integration achieved with German power: after reunification, fuse together a system of multilateral rules and institutions, thus avoiding both unilateral hegemonic ambitions and fear among neighbours. The EU has successfully solved the German issue—Germany's predominant power and hegemonic ambitions having produced two world wars in the twentieth century. It is in everyone's interests to resolve the Chinese question *before* unilateral exercise of its power provokes a backlash.

Another important task is avoiding a bipolarisation of the Pacific into the Indo-Pacific with the US, the Quad, and US allies and partners on one hand, and Greater Eurasia with China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian states and perhaps others, on the other hand. This is being promoted by the US and, if successful, would constitute a new global divide, with the Pacific turning into the major front of the new global Cold War and Europe being a second front—a reversed reflection of the previous Cold War's geopolitical arrangement. Containing China with economic alternatives to OBOR and military components—the Quad and US-India partnership—of the Indo-Pacific strategy, combined with an intensification of Russian containment, the US is indeed pushing China towards the Eurasian landmass and pushing Russia and China towards one another, thus accelerating the emergence of Greater Eurasia as a geopolitical and economic reality, albeit with Greater Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific region emerging as rival neighbours.

In order to avoid this, Russia, China, India, Japan, and other Asian and Eurasian actors should develop Greater Eurasia and Indo-Pacific partnerships as cooperative, not adversarial, projects. This requires dialogue between Russia and India, Russia and Japan, and Russia and ASEAN, and perhaps the creation of a trilateral format between Russia, India, and Japan. Remarkably, none of these countries support a bipolarisation of the Pacific, despite Japan and India's apparent desire to strengthen counter-balancing of China; meanwhile, smaller Asian states are resistant to having to make strategic choices between the US and China. Russia, India, and Japan should discuss alternative ways of managing Chinese power to containment, above all through a system of rules and institutions, which would diffuse Chinese power, and by combining the economic power of OBOR and the Indo-Pacific region, mak-

---

<sup>8</sup> For more details on how to build a multilateral order in Eurasia, its potential outlines, and key projects, see Karaganov (2017b).

ing connectivity and development projects in the region more inclusive. At a later stage, this system of dialogue could and should be complemented with a Russia–China–India–Japan format.

Three to four years down the line, when the Greater Eurasian partnership has already been consolidated and substantiated, and when the political problems in European states have settled down—either through traditional elites re-establishing control or through new elites taking their places—Russia should resume efforts to improve relations with leading European countries and the EU as a whole. This time, this improvement—including dialogue between the EU and Eurasian Economic Union—would not happen bilaterally. And unlike in the early 2000s, it would not imply Russia joining an EU-centric arrangement. On the contrary, it would happen within the wider context of Greater Eurasia and would constitute engagement of major European players and perhaps the EU within the ambitious Greater Eurasian partnership, comprising the creation of a China-Russia-Europe triangle of peace and development within which Russia would act as a link and as a balancing power. Promoting the compatibility of Greater Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific region will make the emergence of the China-Russia-Europe triangle much easier, as Europe would no longer perceive this as joining a Cold War-style adversarial bloc.

Russia must not repeat the mistake of the 1990s and 2000s by trying to strengthen relations with Europe through institutions of the Cold War era which keep reproducing the Cold War, like the OSCE or the Russia-NATO Council. These should be used instrumentally, wherever they can be useful—to regulate crises or prevent conflicts—but otherwise be pushed aside. Of course, it would also be good to improve relations with the United States, but this will depend on the internal politics of the US and will take time. It is unlikely that the US will be ready for a new partnership with Russia based on joint building and management of international order before the rotation of US elites, which began with the 2016 election, is complete. Still, the degree of tension should be eased wherever possible and Russia should seek to withdraw from current conflicts and avoid new conflicts. Russia has achieved everything it possibly could have through the strengthening of its strategic deterrent and its policies in Syria and Ukraine.

History, coupled with Russia's efforts in recent years, has made it possible for Russia to play a role in the building of a new world order. Russia paid for this right 75 years ago with millions of lives, but both international and domestic systems hampered further Russian success. Today, Russia should once

again attempt to shape a new world order, but at lower cost and with greater benefits. There is no way Russia can avoid this challenge. If it sits out the process, a new world order will be created without Russia, or even against it. Russia should continue to act deftly and maintain a systematic approach, being persistent, ready to cooperate, and to contribute to international balance, although these characteristics do not naturally fit Russian traditions.

### Works cited

- Allison, Graham (2017). *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Biden, Joseph (2018). Night Owl Session "Present at the Destruction? The Liberal International Order Under Threat". Munich Security Conference 2018. Available online at <https://www.securityconference.de/en/media-library/munich-security-conference-2018/video/night-owl-session-present-at-the-destruction-the-liberal-international-order-under-threat/>.
- Bordachev, Timofei (2017). The Guns of April, or the Return of Strategic Frivolity. *Valdai Discussion Club*. Available online at <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/guns-of-april/>.
- Karaganov, Sergei (2017a). Taking a New Look at Nuclear Peace. *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2. Available online at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Taking-a-New-Look-at-Nuclear-Peace-18752>.
- Karaganov, Sergei (2017b). From the Pivot to the East to Greater Eurasia. *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, 5.
- Karaganov, Sergei (2017c). A Year of Victories. What's Next? *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 7171(7). Available online at <https://rg.ru/2017/01/15/sergej-karaganov-vozobnovlenie-dialoga-rossiia-nato-oshibka.html>.
- Karaganov, Sergei, and Timofei Bordachev (eds.). (2013). *Liki sili. Intellektualnaya elita Rossii i mira o glavnom voprose mirovoi politiki* [Faces of power. Intellectual Elite of Russia and the World on the Key Question of World Politics]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnie otnosheniya.
- Kissinger, Henry (2015). *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*. London: Penguin.
- Krauthammer, Charles (1990/91). The Unipolar Moment. *Foreign Affairs*, 70(1), 23–33
- Lukyanov, Fyodor (2018a). Evropejskie prilivi i otlivi [European ebbs and flows]. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 7512(49). Available online at <https://rg.ru/2018/03/06/lukyanov-evropa-v-blizhajshie-gody-ne-smozhet-stat-nadezhnym-partnerom-rf.html>.
- Lukyanov, Fyodor (2018b, February 17). Evropa v sebe [Europe in Itself]. *Profil*. Available online at <http://m.profile.ru/politika/item/124976-evropa-v-sebe>.

- Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1994). Available online at <http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/12/13943175580.pdf>.
- Miller, Alexei, and Fyodor Lukyanov (2016). *Detachment Instead of Confrontation: Post-European Russia in Search of Self-Sufficiency*. Bruno Kreisky Forum Report, October 2016. [http://www.kreisky-forum.org/dataall/Report\\_Post-European-Russia.pdf](http://www.kreisky-forum.org/dataall/Report_Post-European-Russia.pdf).
- Minority Staff Report (2018). *Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for US National Security*. Prepared for the Use of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate. One Hundred Fifteenth Congress, 10 January 2018. <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FinalRR.pdf>.
- Mullerson, Rein (2017). *Dawn of a New Order: Geopolitics and the Clash of Ideologies*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2017). Available online at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.
- Putin, Vladimir (2018). *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly*. Available online at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>.
- Remington, Thomas, Chris Spirito, Elena Chernenko, Oleg Demidov, and Vitaly Kabernik (2016). *Toward U.S.-Russia Bilateral Cooperation in the Sphere of Cybersecurity*. Working Group on the Future of US-Russia Relations Paper 7. Available online at [https://futureofusruissrelations.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/wg\\_working\\_paper7\\_cybersecurity\\_final.pdf](https://futureofusruissrelations.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/wg_working_paper7_cybersecurity_final.pdf).
- Schweller, Randall L. (2015). Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders. *Valdai Discussion Club*. Available online at [http://valdaiclub.com/a/valdaipapers/valdai\\_paper\\_16\\_rising\\_powers\\_and\\_revisionism\\_in\\_emerging\\_international\\_orders/](http://valdaiclub.com/a/valdaipapers/valdai_paper_16_rising_powers_and_revisionism_in_emerging_international_orders/).
- Suslov, Dmitry (2018). The Limits of Global Containment: How to Win a New Cold War. *Valdai Discussion Club*. Available online at <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-limits-of-global-containment/>.
- Swain, Michael D. (2018, March 2). A Counterproductive Cold War With China. *Foreign Affairs*. Available online at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-03-02/counterproductive-cold-war-china>.
- Tillerson, Rex W. (2018a). *U.S. Engagement in the Western Hemisphere*. University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas. 1 February 2018. Available online at <https://www.state.gov/secretary/20172018tillerson/remarks/2018/02/277840.htm>.
- Tillerson, Rex W. (2018b). *U.S.-Africa Relations: A New Framework*. George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. 6 March 2018. Available online at <https://www.state.gov/secretary/20172018tillerson/remarks/2018/03/279065.htm>.
- Timofeev, Ivan (2017). Working Under the Radar: The Stealth Alternative in Russian Foreign Policy. *Valdai Discussion Club*. Available online at <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/working-under-the-radar-the-stealth-alternative-in/>.

- US Department of Defense (2018). *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. Available online at <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.
- Young, Cathy (2015, November 10). Putin's New American Fan Club? *Daily Beast*. Available online at <https://www.thedailybeast.com/putins-new-american-fan-club>.
- Zhou, Li, Nancy Scola, and Ashley Gold (2017, November 1). Senators to Facebook, Google, Twitter: Wake up to Russian threat. *Politico*. Available online at <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/11/01/google-facebook-twitter-russia-meddling-244412>.