

Sergey Karaganov: Expect Russia's Divorce from the West

Description

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“In terms of being a global centre of power, the Old World is finished. Moscow understands this reality, but our former partners remain in denial”

Russia's HSE University Dean of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs Sergey Karaganov attends a session of the 14th Eurasian Economic Forum in Verona, Italy. © Sputnik / Sputnik

by **Evgeny Shostakov**, in conversation with **Sergey Karaganov**

Not long ago, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said: “The European Union must be ready for war by the end of the decade.” Berlin has started talking about the return of universal military service and preparations for a confrontation with Moscow. There are similar sentiments in Poland. But is it only because of the events in Ukraine?

What is the reason for the upsurge in fighting talk in Europe?

Leading Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta talks to international relations expert Sergey Karaganov, who is the honorary chairman of Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, an academic supervisor at the School of International Economics and Foreign Affairs Higher School of Economics (HSE) in Moscow, and a former Kremlin advisor.

— Evgeny Shostakov: Mr. Karaganov, given the current difficult foreign policy situation, is there a need for a conceptually different theory of deterrence against Russia’s enemies in order to stop the growing confrontation at an early stage, and to discourage our adversaries from fueling conflicts?

— The elites of Western Europe – and especially in Germany – are in a state of historical failure. The main basis of their 500-year domination [of the world] was military superiority, on which the economic, political and cultural dominance of the West was built. But this has been knocked out from under them. With the help of this advantage, they manipulated the world’s resources in their favor. First they plundered their colonies, and later they did the same, but with more sophisticated methods.

Today’s Western elites are failing to address a range of growing problems in their societies. These include a shrinking middle class and rising inequality. Almost all their initiatives are failing. The European Union, as everyone knows, is slowly but surely sprawling out. That is why its ruling class has been hostile to Russia for about 15 years now. They need an external enemy; Josep Borrell [the EU’s top foreign affairs official] called the world around the bloc a jungle last year. Indeed, in the past, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that the sanctions adopted by the EU [against Russia] were necessary first and foremost to unite the European Union and prevent it from collapsing.

The German and Western European elites have an inferiority complex in, what is for them, a now-monstrous situation, where their part of the world is being overtaken by everyone. Not only by the Chinese and the Americans, but also by many other countries. Thanks to Russia’s liberation of the world from the ‘Western yoke’, Western Europe is no longer lording it over the states of the Global South, or as I call them, the countries of the world majority.

The threat Western Europe now presents is that the Old World has lost its fear of armed conflict. And that is very dangerous. At the same time, the West of Europe, let me remind you, has been the source of the worst disasters in human history. Now in Ukraine there is a struggle not only for Russia’s interests, for the interests of its security, but also to prevent a new global confrontation. The threat is growing. This is also due to the West’s desperate attempts at counter-attacks to maintain its dominance. Today’s Western European elites are failing and losing influence in the world to a much greater extent than their American counterparts.

Russia is fighting its own battle and fighting it successfully. We are acting confidently enough to sober up these Western elites, lest they unleash another world conflict in despair at their failures. We must not forget that these same people’s predecessors unleashed two world wars within one generation in the last century. Now, the quality of these elites is even lower than it was then.

— Are you talking about the spiritual and political defeat of Western Europe as a fait accompli?

— Yes, and it is frightening. After all, we are also part of European culture. But I hope that, through a series of crises, healthy forces will prevail on that side of the continent in about 20 years, let’s say. And it will wake up from its failure, including its moral failure.

— For the time being, we are witnessing the formation of a new Iron Curtain in relation to Russia. The West is trying to “erase” our country, including in the fields of culture and values. There is deliberate dehumanization of Russians in the media. Should we react in reverse and “cancel” the West?

— Absolutely not. The West is now closing the Iron Curtain, first of all because we in Russia are the real Europeans. We remain healthy. And they want to exclude these healthy forces. Secondly, the West is closing this curtain, even more tightly than during the Cold War, in order to mobilize its population for hostilities. But we do not need a military confrontation with the West, so we will rely on a policy of containment to prevent the worst.

Of course, we will not cancel anything, including our European story. Yes, we have completed our European journey [in terms of integration]. I think it has dragged on a bit, maybe for a century. But without European inoculation, without European culture, we would not have become such a great power. We would not have had Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Pushkin or Blok. So we will keep European culture, which the West of our continent seems to be trying to abandon. But I hope that it will not destroy itself completely, in this regard. Because Western Europe is not only abandoning Russian culture, it is abandoning its own culture. It is cancelling a culture that is largely based on love and Christian values. It is cancelling its history, destroying its monuments. However, we will not reject our European roots.

I have always been against looking at the West with mere squeamishness. You should not do that. Then we would be like them. And they are now sliding towards an inevitable march towards fascism. We do not need all the contagions that have been and are growing out of the west of Europe. Including, once again, the growing contagion of fascism.

— The year 2023 saw the unfreezing of old conflicts and the demonstrative creation of the conditions for new ones – the predictable explosion of the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation, a series of wars in Africa, and more localized clashes in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Will this trend continue?

— This trend will not become an avalanche next year. But it is quite obvious that it will increase, because the tectonic plates under the world system have shifted. Russia is much better prepared for this period than it was a few years ago. The military operation we are conducting in Ukraine is aimed, among other things, at preparing the country for life in the very dangerous world of the future. We are purifying our elite, getting rid of corrupt, pro-Western elements. We are reviving our economy. We are reviving our military. We are reviving the Russian spirit. We are now much better prepared to defend our interests in the world than we were a few years ago. We live in a resurgent country that looks boldly to the future. The military operation is helping us to purge ourselves of Westerners and Westernizers, to find our new place in history. And finally, to strengthen ourselves militarily.

— Do you agree that from 2024 the world will enter a period of prolonged conflict? Does humanity today have the political will to change this situation?

— Of course we have entered an era of protracted conflicts. But we are much better prepared for them than ever before. It seems to me that by pursuing a course of containing the West and building relations with brotherly China, we are now becoming an axis of the world that can prevent everyone

from sliding into a global catastrophe. But this requires efforts to sober up our opponents in the West. We have entered a struggle to save the world. Perhaps Russia's mission is to free our planet from the 'Western yoke', to save it from the difficulties that will arise from changes that are already causing a lot of friction. The threat comes in no small part from the desperate counterattack of the West, which is clinging to its 500-year-old dominance, which has allowed it to plunder the world.

We see that new values have emerged in the West, including the denial of everything human and divine in man. Western elites have begun to nurture these anti-values and to suppress normal values. So we have a difficult period ahead of us, but I hope that we will preserve ourselves and help the world to save traditional humanity.

One of the many problems facing the world today is, of course, that the global economy is in a systemic crisis because of the endless growth of consumption. This destroys nature itself. Man was not created to consume; to see the meaning of existence in buying new things.

— In an interview with Interfax, our Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov linked the possible future abandonment of the anti-Russian course of the United States and its subordinates to a “generational change” in the West. But could a change of elites in the West, if it happens, provide an impetus to defuse tensions? Germany’s Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, born in 1980, for example, is a member of the new generation, but her views are more radical than those of other ‘hawks’ of the past. In your view, are there any reasonable, and diplomatic, politicians left in the West?

— I think that today in the West we are dealing with two generations of elites who are already quite degraded. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that we will be able to reach an agreement with them. However, I still believe that societies and peoples, including those in Western Europe, will return to normal values. Of course, this will require a change in generations of elites. I agree with Sergey Ryabkov that it will take a long time, but I hope that the Western European countries, and perhaps the US too, will not fall into a hopeless state, and healthy national forces will return to power across Europe.

However, I do not believe that real, pragmatic, and I repeat, national forces can come to power in Western Europe in the near future. So I believe that if we ever talk about normal relations between Russia and the West [returning], it will take at least 20 years.

We must also realize that we no longer need the West. We have taken all we could from this wonderful European journey that Peter the Great started. Now we must return to ourselves, to the origins of Russia's greatness. That is, of course, the development of Siberia. Its new development, which means reaching new horizons. We must remember that we are not so much a European country as an Eurasian one. I will never tire of reminding you that Alexander Nevsky spent a year and a half traveling through Central Asia and then Southern Siberia on his way to Karakorum, the capital of the Mongolian Empire. In fact, he was the first Russian Siberian.

By returning to Siberia, to the Urals, by building new roads, new industries, we are returning to ourselves, to the roots of our 500 years of greatness. It was only after Siberia was opened up that Russia found the strength and opportunity to become a great power.

In the foreseeable future, unfortunately, there can be no serious interstate arms limitation agreements in principle.

— **How reasonable is it to forget Europe for decades?**

— Under no circumstances should we forget the old sacred stones of Europe that Dostoyevsky spoke of. They are part of our self-awareness. I myself love Europe, and Venice in particular. It was through this city that the Silk Road passed, and through it the great Asian civilizations. At that time, by the way, they surpassed European civilization in their development. Even 150-200 years ago, looking towards Europe was a sign of modernization and progress. But for a long time now, and even more so today, it has been a sign of intellectual and moral backwardness. We should not deny our European roots; we should treat them with care. After all, Europe has given us a lot. But Russia must move forward. And forward does not mean to the West, but to the East and the South. That is where the future of humanity lies.

— **The Strategic Offensive Arms Treaty expires in 2026. What comes next? Given the legal nihilism of the West, can we count on new interstate military agreements? Or is humanity condemned to an uncontrollable arms race until the establishment of a new world order and, consequently, a new status quo?**

— It is pointless to negotiate with the current Western elites. In my writings I urge the Western oligarchy to replace these people, because they are dangerous to themselves, and I hope that sooner or later such a process will begin. Because the current group are so deeply degraded that it is impossible to negotiate with them. Of course, you have to talk to them. After all, there are other threats besides nuclear weapons. There's the drone revolution. Cyber weapons have emerged. There is artificial intelligence. Biological weapons have appeared which can also threaten humanity with terrible problems. Russia needs to develop a new strategy to contain all these threats. We are working on it, including at the new Institute of International Military Economics and Strategy, and will continue to do so with the intellectual elites of the countries of the world majority. These are, first and foremost, our Chinese and Indian friends. We will discuss it with our Pakistani and Arab colleagues. So far, the West has nothing constructive to offer us. But we will not close our doors.

In the foreseeable future, unfortunately, there can be no serious interstate agreements on arms limitation in principle. Simply because we do not even know what to limit and how to limit it. But we need to develop new approaches and instill more realistic views in our partners around the world. It is not even technically possible to count on arms limitation agreements in the coming years. It would simply be a waste of time. However, it may be possible to conduct some pro forma negotiations. For example, trying to ban new areas of the arms race. I'm particularly concerned about biological weapons, and weapons in space. Something can be done in those areas. But what Russia needs now is to develop a new concept of deterrence, which will have not only military but also psychological, political and moral aspects.

— **Are assessments that the West has come to terms with Kiev's defeat too premature? And the idea that the Global South is confidently defeating the Western world?**

— The US benefits from the confrontation in Ukraine. [Meanwhile] for the Western European elites, it is the only way to avoid moral collapse. That is why they will support the conflict in Ukraine for a long time

to come. In such a situation, we need to act decisively both on the ground and in the area of strategic deterrence in order to achieve our goals as soon as possible. At the same time, it is important to understand that the majority of the world will not fight against the West. Many countries are interested in developing trade and other relations with it. Therefore, the World Majority is a partner but not an ally of Russia. We have to be tough, but calculated. I am almost certain that with the right policy of containment and an active policy on the fringes of Ukraine, we can break the will of the West's dangerous resistance.

In today's world, it's every man for himself. It is a wonderful multi-polar, multi-colored world. This does not mean that in 20 years there will not be some blocs, including a conditional pro-Russian bloc. We have to find ourselves, to understand who we are. A great Eurasian power, North Eurasia. A liberator of nations, a guarantor of peace and a military-political pivot of the world majority. This is our destiny. In addition, we are uniquely prepared for this world because of the cultural openness we have gained from our history. We are religiously open. We are nationally open. These are all things we are now defending. More and more, we realize that the most important thing about us is the Russian spirit and Russian culture. We are all Russians – Russian Russians, Russian Tatars, Russian Chechens, Russian Yakuts... I think we are finding ourselves again. And I enter the New Year with a sense of spiritual uplift and optimism. Russia is being reborn. It is absolutely obvious.

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