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THE NEW GREAT GAME



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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 the American containment campaign against Russia and China—which is both a consequence of this gradual erosion and also represents deep internal and international contradictions—this process has entered its apogee. A period of collapse opens up possibilities for the creation of a new world order; hopefully, a fairer, more stable, and peaceful order than has been previously experienced. Russia has a good chance of influencing the formation of such a new order.

However, establishing a new world order will take time, and in the meantime serious conflicts and crises could occur. The current state of U.S.-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 increasingly likely. In this regard, Russia, again, intends to act as a key security provider through its foreign and defense policies.

Russian achievements in defense, as stated by President Putin in his March 2018 address to the Federal Assembly, strengthened deterrence, and demonstrated 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. The aim is to ensure this geography becomes 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

Sergey Karaganov is head of the Russia-based Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and Dean of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs at Moscow's Higher School of Economics. Dmitry Suslov is Deputy Director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies at the Higher School of Economics.



Photo: Kremlin.ru.

Grandiose new plans being made here for a new international order?

Western part of the international community itself. At the same time, Russia will continue to deepen partnerships with China and India and to enhance cooperative relations with American allies and partners like Japan, South Korea, and, when possible, Western European countries.

Neither major European allies nor Asian allies of the United States support further escalation of the Russia-West and U.S.-Russia confrontation. Maintaining these relationships seems the best way to forward 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 United States and Europe are not ready to engage in order-building with Russia and other major non-Western actors, instead adopting a confrontational posture, and—primarily due to internal political reasons—because they are highly unlikely to so engage in the next decade, the emergence of a new international order is more likely to occur in the 2030s or 2040s than in the 2020s.

COLLAPSE OF ORDER

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 regional and global political and economic orders, by which here we mean to systems of rules, norms, and patterns of behavior 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 the international order and its underlying concepts have stood have now begun to move.

The most dramatic shift is the end of the five centuries-long dominance of the West—firstly Europe, then the United States and its allies—in politics, economics, and ideology. This is primarily due to the loss of the military superiority the West had possessed since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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 of the world. This was followed by the

American 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 between 1991 and 2007, when the Soviet Union fell apart and ceased to be a military-political balancer, while the West declared a “unipolar moment” and proclaimed that the liberal world order should become both universal and global.

After political losses in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria,

that same sense of primacy is now falling apart, to the irritation of its architects. The Trump Administration was the first to officially recognize the loss of American 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.”

The crisis of 2008 showed, among other things, that the Western economic model was unable to deal with open competition when not backed by

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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 organization, 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 United States—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 certainly used the liberal order to progress economically. Western powers 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 correct-

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–U.S. National Security Strategy (2017)

ly put it, “the U.S. 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.”

ON THE CUSP OF GREATER EURASIA

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 realization that when not backed by military and political supremacy, the liberal order increasingly benefits new powers that refuse to yield to Western competitors.

Trump's *America first* slogan is the hyperbolic epitome of the prevailing sentiments among the American elite and its broader population. The United States and Europe still hold

leading positions within the international economic system and continue to use them to redirect the benefits of the existing economic order in their favor. First and foremost, this occurs through sanctions, which target economic containment of adversaries rather than changes in their foreign policy.

Thus, the United States 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 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 United States 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 that involve security being paid for by the United States. America is currently trying to distance itself from Europe, especially economically and strategically, while at the same time attempting to keep Europe dependent.

Washington 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 United States, Japan, India, and Australia—as a coalition to contain China, and by providing an alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) whilst—in defiance of any reasonable foreign policy logic—pushing Russia and China into a de facto alliance.

Faced with the apparent failure of attempts to include China and Russia into an American-led order as junior partners—as well as with the crumbling of the existing order—it seems that the United States has decided to return to fully fledged containment, as Dmitry Suslov accurately observed in a 2018 article on U.S.-Russian relations in the Asia-Pacific region. Washington 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.

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Either they are with the United States as part of the liberal order, or against it, together with Moscow and Beijing. See, for example, Rex Tillerson's speeches on American policies in Latin America and Africa, given at the University of Texas in Austin in February 2018, and at George Mason University in March 2018. He describes China, and to some extent Russia, as malevolent actors, and he cautions countries in their respective near-abroad regions against deepening relations with them.

Finally, the United States has adopted a new ideology of global polarization and division, presenting Russia and China in the most recent National Security Strategy and other influential documents as a kind of united authoritarian block of revisionist powers committed to undermining the existing international order and opposing the free world.

This aims to unite allies and partners under American 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 United States and the

West more broadly, are actually doomed to fail. Part of the reason why this is the case is because the contemporary world is far more complex and far less dependent on the will of major powers than the world of the twentieth century.

The overwhelming majority of American allies and partners in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa are clearly resistant to the either/or choice between the United States on the one hand and China and Russia on the other, and would prefer to diversify their foreign economic and security relationships.

The stronger American pressure is on countries to make either/or choices, the weaker Washington's 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 policies of an encroaching Chinese hegemony in South-East 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 American ally in the Indo-Pacific region.

Attempts to restore a bygone bipolarity—let alone win a new global Cold War against Russia and China together—are doomed to fail.

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 top power in 15 years.

The Thucydides Trap, the danger of a war between a dominant power and a rising power, has been heavily discussed lately. 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 a comprehensive Eurasian partnership. But on the other hand, this will simultaneously intensify the opposite tendency, stoking concerns among China's neighbors about its growing power.

To mitigate such 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

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 United States 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 II. Without a question, being a country with an almost sacred attitude toward 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.

As 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 a veto right over European security issues, including decisions on the use of force, as well as 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 essay's senior author, who had initially pushed Russia into joining NATO and establishing an Alliance of Europe with the EU, was so shocked by the West's rejection of 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 conviction of the West's historic incompetence.

Western countries are having a hard time. Their populations increasingly feel the negative impact of globalization, with middle classes facing an unpromising future. The information revolution—primarily social networks—has made societies less subject to control by elites, parties, and traditional mass media. This is particu-

larly evident in the United States, where the traditional middle class, in defiance of the regular channels of influence controlled by elites, massively voted for the non-standard presidential candidate able to appeal to their views, fears, and concerns, if not 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. Unlike Trump, however, they were all part of, and nominated by the elites in order to make necessary corrections after crises.

After its defeat in November 2016, the American establishment, and especially 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 domestic policy in the United States and render society more manageable, primarily by tightening control over the 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 United States to interfere in the domestic affairs in 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 defense against “Russian attacks against democracy” has already become a narrative in the United States. In other words, traditionalist elites are trying to save democracy by strengthening authoritarian control over mass media.

The extraordinary avalanche of accusations that “Russian meddling” is undermining democracies all over the world seems to be a cover for attempts to regain control. This certainly includes limiting opportunities for foreign actors to influence American policies.

As far as this essay’s authors are concerned, Russia would have been proud if at least 2 percent of these accusations were based on truth. The American elite must learn a lesson: people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. This includes an extensive record of long-term meddling in the internal

affairs of other countries, which in most cases brought chaos and bloodshed—Ukraine being a recent example.

Fortunately, due to Russian involvement, a regime change in Syria that

would have resulted in a profound strengthening of radical Islamic terrorism, was prevented. In the meantime, American elites, divided and on the verge of a civil war with 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 American military supremacy. Russia intentionally opposed the American-led liberal world order, especially attempts to universalize it, whereby non-Western powers could take no part in order-building. Russia has opposed NATO enlargement since the 1990s. Moreover, Moscow opposed then illegal aggression against 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

The question is whether Washington will opt for partial isolationism and build Fortress America, without totally abandoning global economic engagement, of course. Or, will the world once again face a policy of great-power revanchism, a bid to restore the American position of sole global leader?

in the construction of a new international order on parity with the West.

The roots of American anti-Russian policies run deep and a thaw in bilateral relations cannot be expected in the near future, especially if American elites fail to take control of the country’s domestic situation. The U.S.-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 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 American economy is dynamic and will likely be driven further by Trump’s tax cuts and deregulation, which will maintain America’s strength for the next several years. The question is whether Washington will opt for partial isolationism and build 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 American position of sole global leader?

The latter outlook is favored by the American military establishment, including those in the Trump Adminis-

tration, and by hawkish internationalists among both Democrats and Republicans. This 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, but also new opportunities—both for Russia and the world.

MOSCOW’S FORESIGHT

Foreseeing these tendencies in American policy, Russia intends to keep the United States 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 in March 2018 aim to prevent American attempts to regain military superiority by showing that such attempts would be ineffective and prohibitively expensive.

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. 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 United States, 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 ties with the United States. Still, this would be based on different values and political principles than those the EU is used to.

Finally, the fourth scenario would involve the EU continuing to patch up holes without any regard for strategic decisionmaking, facing the increasing risk of the European project's erosion.

A majority among the current European elite dream of the second scenario and favor the first, but in reality, Europe is heading towards the fourth option. The third scenario could materialize in several years, after Europe has felt even greater consequences of the internal and external transformations in world affairs.

All of the above scenarios will require Russia to pursue a new and more active policy towards Europe.

Structurally, the situation in the West is so strained that it has become a serious challenge to international security. Whereas 15 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.

The current state of international relations is often described as a new Cold War. In fact, the higher level of structural

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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 among Western elites themselves, who are trying to stop the downward slide of their ideological, political, and economic positions. This confrontation is no less severe than the Cold War.

To be sure, the bellicose American ideological and military build-up are currently attempting to replay the Reagan strategy of the 1980s. This strategy is married to McCarthyism—a witch-hunt within the country. Just as in the 1950s, some leading American experts and think tanks are accused of pro-Russian sentiments. But neither Russia nor China, nor even the majority of American allies in Asia, the Middle East, or Latin America, are willing to join 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. 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.

GLOBAL SECURITY CHALLENGES ABOUND

As international relations witness mounting structural tensions, there is an increasing danger of regional crises too. Old conflicts in the

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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 destabilization 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 programs, and especially after Iraq and Libya were devastatingly attacked after abandoning theirs.

Crimea's reincorporation within Russia was geopolitically necessary and

historically fair. However, the action broke a 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 (JCPOA) 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 United States makes a deal with Pyongyang which prohibits North Korea possessing intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the U.S. mainland but does not result in its complete denuclearization. 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 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

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huge escalatory potential in order to achieve short-term tactical gains, because the materialization of such risks is mistakenly perceived as unthinkable. 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 characterized 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 aging and overpopulation. Robotization and localization of production is reversing industrialization in

many developing countries, promoting re-industrialization of the developed world, but most of the repercussions of this revolution are difficult to predict.

In fact, just 15 years ago the United States 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 behavior in the cyber sphere regarding both infrastructure and information were criticized as attempts to legalize censorship.

Now the United States has finally realized 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 United States. Therefore, the United States, which only until recently advocated complete freedom of the internet—or rather, freedom for American 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

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military-power is increasingly visible beneath the economic, information and political superstructure, which was only recently seen as dominant.

VICTORIOUS RUSSIA'S PROBLEMS

Russia's recent foreign policy has been extremely successful, as I have repeatedly pointed out in previous years. It has harnessed a historical wave: renationalization; a reassertion of sovereignty; negative responses to globalization 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 realized through public service and recognition. As explained by Rein Mullerson in a 2017 essay, peace and prosperity in the second half of the twentieth century spurred the emergence of a new individualism in the West; but globally, the inherently social nature of humanity has been more prominent.

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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 by disregarding American preferences. Russian success in Syria has influenced the Middle East more broadly by encouraging regional powers to diversify their foreign policy and security relationships.

The sense of victory and regaining a great-power type of confidence, paired with the West's angry reaction, have so far rallied the Russian society, *nationalized* its elites, and marginalized 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 geostrategic identity, turning from a marginal



Photo: Guliver Image/Getty Images

Russian soldiers in Syria

part of Europe, with an expensive and unguaranteed access to the center, to central Eurasia. In other words, Russia is transforming itself in accordance with both the present and future state of world affairs.

The development and deployment of a series of high-tech strategic weapons, announced by President Putin in his March 2018 address to the Federal Assembly, not only render most American 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 American policy and ongoing attempts to intensify simultaneous containment of Russia and China, recreating a new bipolar global division. The world saw what happened when the role of Russia as a deterrent weakened in the 1990s and 2000s due to the country's 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.

A part from the objectively growing threat of war, the primary challenge is the lack of a coherent strategy for economic and social development. The reserves that Russia had accumulated in the 2000s are running thin. Foreign policy successes are important in themselves, but they are poor compensation for social and economic troubles. No less risky would be a premature withdrawal from conflicts, as some in the Russian elite suggest.

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 modernization has been declared but remains to be implemented. So far the only area where Russia has undergone profoundly successful modernization 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 Western recipes for international development.

Contrary to conventional thinking, multipolarity throughout history has hardly been a harmonious state of affairs, but rather chaotic, characterized 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 a 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 concession giving in the hope of gratitude, and its reluctance to fore-

Multipolarity has only been a useful concept as an antithesis to the bygone unipolarity. But what could be next?

see the inevitable problem in Ukraine for years on end. Russia has strengthened its economic and political positions by turning East, but any further movement will be constantly impeded by the weakness of its western flank.

Concessions to Western partners would create the illusion that current American attempts to 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 United States. 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 centers of global power, in the building of a new and balanced world order.

The cornerstones of Russian strategy should be leadership in preventing a new large-scale war and a transformation of itself into a leading provider of interna-

tional 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.

This could be worked out not so much through traditional arms control channels, 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 Americans, Chinese, and specialists from other countries on how to strengthen international strategic stability.

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.

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. 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 formalize this status politically and intellectually.

Once the foundation of the future world order is built through mutual deterrence and dialogue between leading powers, a discussion on 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 sidelines by the liberal-world-order era's law of the jungle. The necessary conditions for this, including a favorable balance of power, are re-emerging.

In geopolitical terms, the most promising option for Russia in the coming years would be a further eastward pivot in order to create a comprehensive partnership in Greater Eurasia. The United States and its neighbors,

alongside certain European and Asian states, will probably create their own center.

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 Belt

and 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

In geopolitical terms, the most promising option for Russia in the coming years would be a further eastward pivot in order to create a comprehensive partnership in Greater Eurasia.

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-centered order, once this order has been systematically built.

Simplifying somewhat, we could say the Greater Eurasian partnership is supposed to achieve with Chinese power

By containing China with economic alternatives to BRI and military components of the Indo-Pacific strategy combined with an intensification of Russian containment, the United States is indeed pushing both China towards the Eurasian landmass and Russia and China towards one another, thus accelerating the emergence of Greater Eurasia as geopolitical and economic reality.

what European integration has achieved with German power: after reunification, fuse together a system of multilateral rules and institutions, thus avoiding both unilateral hegemonic ambitions and fear among neighbors. 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 bipolarization of the Pacific into the Indo-Pacific with the United States, the Quad, and American allies and partners on the 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

United States 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.

By containing China with economic alternatives to BRI and military components of the Indo-Pacific strategy—the Quad and U.S.-India partnership—combined with an intensification of Russian containment, the United States is indeed pushing both China towards the Eurasian landmass and Russia and China towards one another, thus accelerating the emergence of Greater Eurasia as geopolitical and economic reality.

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 bipolarization of the Pacific, despite Japan and India’s apparent desire to strengthen counterbalancing of China.

Meanwhile, smaller Asian states are resistant to having to make strategic

choices between the United States 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 BRI and the Indo-Pacific region, making 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 road, 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 the 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, com-

prising the creation of a China-Russia-Europe triangle of peace and development within which Russia would act as a link and 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.

Relations with the West are at their worst, although the majority of the blame for this does not lie with Russia.

order before the rotation of American 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.

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 United States and will take time.

It is unlikely that the United States will be ready for a new partnership with Russia based on joint building and management of international

History, coupled with Russia’s efforts in recent years, has made it possible for Moscow 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 a 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. ●