

John Mearsheimer & Sergey Karaganov: Nuclear Strike on Europe to Restore Deterrence

John Mearsheimer & Sergey Karaganov discuss why Russia is under mounting pressure to restore its deterrence, which will likely escalate quickly to a nuclear strike on Europe. Mearsheimer and Karaganov agree that a nuclear strike would likely be successful to restore deterrence as the US would not respond. Prof. Karaganov is an Honorary Chairman of the Council on Foreign and Defense and was an advisor for Russia's political elites for decades. Prof. Karaganov wrote speeches for Brezhnev and advised Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin. Prof. Mearsheimer is the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago
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#Glenn

Welcome back to the program. Today we are joined by Professor John Mearsheimer from the University of Chicago and Professor Sergei Karaganov, head of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, and also a former advisor to Gorbachev, Yeltsin, as well as President Putin. So thank you both for coming back on the program. The topic today, though, is Russia restoring its deterrence, as this is becoming a key theme. And, well, over the past four years, we know that NATO has incrementally increased its involvement in the war.

So from sending tanks, artillery, HIMARS, F-16s, which back in the day Biden warned would mean World War III, then long-range missiles, drones, and the next step or the new step now appears to have been attacks from NATO territory. And I guess at every step on this escalation ladder, it seems that NATO might become more emboldened and certain that Russia will not respond, while at the same time, at every step, we know that more pressure mounts on the Kremlin to retaliate. So we appear to be heading towards a very dangerous place. And again, I thought a good place to start would be how you interpret the situation and how much further this can go before something goes terribly wrong. Shall we pass the ball first to you, John?

#John Mearsheimer

I think it would be best to start with Sergei, Glenn, because he is really the driving force behind this discourse. I'm not. I'm more than willing to jump in and participate, for sure. But I think we should start with Sergei.

#Glenn

Yeah, that's probably a good call. I should have put in the context as well that Professor Karaganov is considered possibly the most influential one in Moscow in terms of convincing Putin and the Kremlin to change the nuclear doctrine of Russia. So, yes, I think it's probably fitting that we start with you, Sergei.

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, thank you, but of course, John could have started, I mean, the debate. The problem is not that simple. I mean, using or not using nuclear weapons, and strengthening deterrence, etc. About 15 or 17 years ago, the world moved.

#Sergey Karaganov

In the most dangerous period in its history, when everything is changing because the tectonic plates under the previous system have shifted. So the question is not only, I mean, finishing the war between Russia and Europe in Ukraine by threatening the use of nuclear weapons or non-use of nuclear weapons, etc., etc. The question is that we are in for several decades of wars, and for about 60 or 70 years after the end of the last devastating war, the Second World War, we had the advent of nuclear weapons, which I believe were sent to us by the Almighty, but of course through the hands of Oppenheimer and Fermi, Korolev and Sakharov, we refrained from warring with each other.

But now we are starting. And what is the most pertinent question is that we are at the beginning of a world war. This war is starting on all fronts. One, the main driver of this war is the counterattack, or revanche, however you call it, by the West, which is losing its superior position in the world system, which it had been keeping for about 500 years, which gave it the possibility to siphon off the world GNP, to impose its cultural and...

#Sergey Karaganov

Political views and systems. But now we're in a very, again, that started exactly, from my point of view, in the mid-2000s. We talked about that when we met. But now we are getting closer and closer to a chain of conflicts which we do not have an instrument to stop until they end up in an all-out war. And that's why, I mean, a few years ago, not only because of Russia's war with Europe or with the West in Ukraine, I put forward the issue of restoring the viability of nuclear deterrence. It is not only about Russia, it's not about Russia and the West, etc.

It is about saving the world, humanity, from its usual pattern, which at this juncture used to be suicidal, but the juncture is becoming even more suicidal, especially on the part of the losing West. But it is not only the West. We have to restore all kinds of systems of deterrence, of dialogue, of rules, which have been thrown away during exactly the last several years, when a president of a major country is threatening every day to kill leaders of another country. That had been even impossible during the stable times. But that is where we are.

That's why I think it's important for us, the intellectual community, political science, and responsible citizens, to restore the fear which has kept us from warring with each other for about 70 years, especially in Europe, which has been the embodiment and the source of all major wars—and I'm sorry, you are European—of most of the evil things in the history of human society, including colonialism, including racism, including serial genocides. But I'm not anti-European. I think that we have to... I think about how we could live through this period of very, very dangerous turmoil. And this period has started, as I said, in the mid-2000s, and it is unwinding.

#John Mearsheimer

Yeah, I'd like to jump in and offer my interpretation of events since the start of the Cold War and build on what Sergei said. If you go back to the Cold War, you had this incredibly intense and hostile security competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. So the situation that we see today, that Sergei was just describing, is not that different from what we saw during the Cold War. But what happened over the course of the Cold War, as both sides developed nuclear arsenals and thought about different ways to use them, I think everybody came to realize that a nuclear war would be catastrophic.

And therefore, both sides had to be extremely careful in terms of how they dealt with each other. Lots of red lines were drawn. We all understood those red lines, and we didn't cross them. For example, when the Soviets went into Hungary in 1956 and then into Czechoslovakia in 1968, the West did nothing, and for good strategic reasons. And by the last decade or two of the Cold War, I think we had worked out all the rules of the road, and we had understood—we came to understand—where the red lines were, what we could do and what we couldn't do. Then the Cold War ends.

And of course, Russia once again becomes a great power, in my opinion, roughly around 2017. And then the Ukraine war breaks out in February of 2022. And I must say, I have been amazed at the extent to which people in the West seem to have forgotten that we live in a very dangerous world because of the presence of nuclear weapons. And those red lines that were established in the Cold War in many important ways seem to have disappeared, to my amazement. And the two examples I like to point to that highlight the extent to which I think things have changed between the world that we now live in and the Cold War are the August 2024 Ukrainian invasion of the Kursk region of Mother Russia.

To think that an American ally, Ukraine, that's backed and supported by the United States, would be allowed to invade Russia and then we would assist the Ukrainians in the conduct of that operation was unthinkable during the Cold War. The idea that an American ally or the United States itself would invade the Soviet Union is unthinkable because the Soviet Union had a huge nuclear arsenal. And by invading the Soviet Union, you were threatening its survival. The same thing is true with regard to Ukraine invading Kursk. This is just something that shouldn't be done when you're dealing with an adversary, which is Russia in this case, that has nuclear weapons. And then the other example, of course, is the next year, in 2025, the Ukrainians attacked one leg of the strategic nuclear triad of Russia.

This too was unthinkable during the Cold War. You just would have never attacked the strategic nuclear triad of Russia, or excuse me, of the Soviet Union in the case of the Cold War. But it happened. And the United States—I don't think the United States knew it was going to happen—but the United States didn't criticize it at all. And this just tells me that the West thinks that it can push the Russians around and that there are no serious red lines there. And my understanding of history is, whether you're talking about the Soviet Union or any other great power, you have to be extremely careful not to back that country into a corner. And that is especially true when that country has lots of nuclear weapons that it can use against you.

But for some reason, people in the West seem to have forgotten the lessons that we learned during the Cold War. And just to go to a more general level on this issue, I think if you go back to right before the war in Ukraine started—of course, it started February 24th, 2022—but if you look at the two or three months before the war started and then how the United States behaved after the war started, it seems very clear to me that what we, the West, were interested in doing was knocking Russia out of the ranks of the great powers. I think that the West thought that by using economic sanctions, we could bring the Russians to their knees, and by supporting the Ukrainian army on the battlefield, we could defeat the Russians in that war.

And the combination of sanctions and the successes of the Ukrainian army would, in effect, knock Russia out of the ranks of the great powers. I thought at the time that this was an extremely dangerous way of thinking about how to deal with the Russians. Again, you're threatening the survival of a country that has many, many nuclear weapons. And when countries, great powers, get desperate, they'll pursue remarkably risky strategies. And I think in the Russian case, that would have meant using nuclear weapons. But we didn't seem to care about that. We thought that we could sort of push the Russians around, knock them out of the ranks of the great powers, and get away with it. So I'm actually quite surprised at what's happened between Western thinking in the Cold War and Western thinking today. And I find it a very disturbing situation.

#Glenn

Well, my interpretation, though, is that over the four-plus years, we've seen this renegotiation of the rules of a proxy war, and with this creeping incrementalism all along. But it does seem that part of the reason why there's such a willingness to escalate is also because this proxy war is happening at a time when there's a shift in world order. That is, the world is being pulled between unipolarity and multipolarity, in which the great powers are willing to take immense risks, given that it's often defined as an all-or-nothing game. But... but where do we stand now? What are Russia's options? Because we've kind of reached a level now where, as we saw last week, an attack on St. Petersburg—there seems to be no restraints anymore. So what does Russia do at this point? Does it restore its deterrence? And if it does, how? And what would be the consequences?

#Sergey Karaganov

I'm roughly criticizing my own elite and my government for being irresponsible, if for good reasons. We should and we must restore deterrence, not only because we have to stop this movement, this ugly war, which, by the way, Glenn, was started not in 2022—it was started in 1994. And I talked to most of the leaders, and not only to the president in the United States, but to many other European leaders, saying that the expansion of NATO would lead to war. And that happened. The problem is much deeper. As I've said, we have to restore fear of nuclear deterrence, and that's the fear of God. As to Russian policies, I think they are not correct. In principle, I would tend to disagree with John and many others, because I have been a student of nuclear strategy for about 50 years.

I mean, we are old—forty-five. And if Russia uses, God forbid, nuclear weapons in Europe after, of course, certain steps of escalation, which we are already taking now, as you know—at last, I mean, placing nuclear warheads from their storages to their missiles and to other nuclear vehicles—if we use them, we would win the war. But that would be a terrible moral disaster. And that is the only reason, I believe, that President Putin, or our President Putin, is hesitating. Because, I mean, from the point of view of a person like myself—and we are doing all kinds of scenarios—winning a war in Europe is easy. But it is a terrible moral sin. And also, it opens up another box.

Because then everybody would start to use all kinds of weapons of mass destruction. And we have already opened a lot of Pandora's boxes during the last years, when countries openly attack each other and even, as I've said, are calling for the elimination of the leaders of other countries and openly, openly threatening them. That was impossible not only during the Cold War; that was impossible even during tribal times. What our American partners are doing is unthinkable—not in terms of the Cold War—but threatening to kill leaders of a sovereign country, for whatever reasons, especially for false reasons, is something which hasn't happened in the history of humanity. There were, of course... But now we are again psychologically and morally in a different milieu.

And that's why I'm so alarmed, and that's why I'm saying to my fellow colleagues that it is not only our responsibility towards the security of our country and stopping this bloodshed, but it is also our responsibility as a great country to stop this slide towards a no-rules world with a lot of modern

weapons. And we are not only talking about nuclear weapons, but we already have, I mean, other weapons of almost mass destruction. We have waited with John and with you, talking about biotech weapons which are already there, about cyber weapons which are already there. But even the drone revolution is, in a way, a step towards some kind of new world of mass destruction, where everybody could defend.

And we have to stop that slide. But for that, we have to overcome some of the ideas which we have inherited from that previous period. One of the ideas is that if a nuclear war is not winnable, it is winnable—but God forbid. A second is that if it starts, it will inevitably lead to an all-out nuclear exchange. No, but if this series of bleeding conflicts continues, we will end up in a quagmire. That's why I'm insisting on restoring the validity of nuclear deterrence—but not only of nuclear deterrence. It's also the validity of sensible thinking among the predators of the world, which is now absent, or almost absent.

#John Mearsheimer

If I can just jump in, Glenn, and respond to Sergei's use of the word "winning" when talking about a nuclear war, and just offer my observations and then get Sergei to say what he thinks about my perspective on this. I think it's impossible to win a nuclear war if you're talking about both sides engaging in an all-out fight with their nuclear inventories. I don't think anybody wins that war. I think we all end up getting vaporized. We just have too many nuclear weapons, and they are weapons of mass destruction. So I don't think that if, you know, NATO and Russia were to engage in a full-scale nuclear war, there would be a winner.

I think there would be nothing but losers. And the way I think about nuclear weapons and using them in a way that's very effective squares with the way I read your various articles on the subject. And that is that what the Russians would do is use a handful of nuclear weapons in the West or against Western targets, all for the purpose of signaling just how serious Russia was about reestablishing deterrence. And, in effect, to use Thomas Schelling's terminology, putting both sides out on the slippery slope to oblivion. In other words, the Russians would not use nuclear weapons to win a military victory.

It would be the mere use of nuclear weapons by the Russians that would scare the living daylights out of everybody in Europe and would cause them to think seriously about what's going on here. In essence, the Russians would be pushing the Europeans and the Americans to focus their minds on what's going on here. And the belief is that if a small number of nuclear weapons were used, and we were not talking about a full-scale exchange, but the possibility of a full-scale exchange was present, the West would go to great lengths to back off and make sure that this never happened.

And in a sense, the Russians would establish or reestablish deterrence by using this small number of nuclear weapons. And in a sense, Sergei, the words that we used to use during the Cold War with regard to this scenario is you wouldn't win the nuclear war, right, on the battlefield or in terms of the

strategic nuclear exchange. There was no winning an actual conflict. But what you would do is you would coerce the other side to change its behavior, to respect your red line, or to stop the attacking forces because of the threat of nuclear escalation. In other words, in the scenario that you describe, what really sits at the heart of it is the threat of nuclear escalation.

You're saying use a handful of nuclear weapons, and everybody then understands that the threat of nuclear escalation is really present and dangerous, and therefore the United States and the Europeans will back off and they'll respect Russia's red line. But it's the threat of escalation, it's not the escalation itself, because if you get escalation and you get a general thermonuclear war, we all get vaporized and nobody wants that. So I read you to have a much more limited view on how Russia could use nuclear weapons to coerce the West. And we're talking about coercion here. You're getting the West to change its thinking about deterrence vis-à-vis Russia. And it is not about winning in the sense that you would have a full-scale nuclear exchange between the two sides. What's your sense of what I'm saying?

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, I mean, I agree. However, let me... Well, I'm thinking in very practical terms. I hate that...

#Sergey Karaganov

The idea that I have again returned to the days of my youth when I was, along with you, but we were at the time not friendly to all these theories and scenarios.

#Sergey Karaganov

As I said, if, God forbid, this war continues, because it is inhibited by the West for all kinds of reasons, and Russia would come to the conclusion that it is senseless to spend the lives of our best men, we shouldn't escalate. And if there is—of course, I mean, there are several letters, already some of the letters have been already passed. We have several. So now we have 25 letters, much less than in previous years. But first, of course, there would be attacks on available military or symbolic targets in Europe. And I don't want that. Then, if there is a response, the response will be a limited nuclear strike. Then Russia would win.

Nobody would dare to attack Russian soil. But we would then feel ourselves sinners. And that is the main reason, the main reason why I think people like myself, and I think President Putin, are refraining from using nuclear weapons. I think that if we decide to do that, it is an absolutely winnable strategy. The United States would never respond, as you know. And Europeans are good for nothing, or moreover, if the French—of course, they are now almost insane—or the Brits would try to, that means immediate evaporation of their nations. But I don't want that ever to happen.

But as I've said, I mean, the threshold is not about unlimited, etc., etc., war. It is about, I mean, crossing certain moral barriers first. Second, if we use nuclear weapons and we win—and I must assure you that, quote-unquote, we would win, because that would be a victory—then everybody in the world, and there are many countries which already have nuclear weapons, there are several which will acquire nuclear weapons, will be using them. And we will get into something absolutely different. Because before, with these myths which we have created, that nuclear war is unthinkable, other than that, it would lead to immediate...

#Sergey Karaganov

Global thermonuclear and evaporation of humanity. It is not. But we have to stop somewhere before. Because now we already have several nuclear powers. We'll have two or three, and I think that we should have two or three more. But if we have two or three more, we have to restore the validity of nuclear deterrence. And if we use nuclear weapons in a limited way and win, that would undermine this fear which we have instilled in ourselves. And I participated in this process around the 70s. Of course, you remember these ideas about the nuclear winter, about global stature. We instilled these theories because we wanted to prevent another world war, but it has stopped. And that is why I am thinking about restoring the validity of nuclear deterrence, hopefully before nuclear weapons are used.

#John Mearsheimer

Glenn, can I ask Sergei two questions? Yeah, go. So, Sergei, I want to be clear here. You're basically saying that if Russia were to use nuclear weapons—a limited nuclear attack into Europe—the Europeans and the United States simply would not respond in kind. They would accept the fact that it's not possible to attack Russia with nuclear weapons, and they would also change their behavior in the sense that they would now understand what the red line is, or deterrence would be restored from the Russian side. So that's your argument. So you don't envision fighting a nuclear war. You believe that if Russia uses nuclear weapons, the West will submit. So that's my first question. My second question is—oh, go ahead. Why don't you answer that, and then I'll quickly ask the second question.

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, the West is different. There was one country, and that is your country, the United States. And that is the only country which would respond to or attack Russia. But never since the mid-50s, the United States—and I am pretty sure about that—thought about attacking Russia, the Soviet Union, with nuclear weapons, in spite of all these theories we have been playing with during this period, because it was unthinkable that the United States would attack Russia. Or it was unthinkable that Russia, the Soviet Union, would attack the United States.

As for Europe, I mean, Europeans were more or less in the same mood as we used to be. But unfortunately, the level of their elites has deteriorated to the level of imbeciles. And that's why it is dangerous. Of course, there is one reason: a madman, quote-unquote, president of a nuclear country uses two or three warheads against Russia. That would mean the evaporation of several European countries immediately. But we have to persuade him, etc., that that should never happen. And that's why it is absolutely unthinkable to wage a war again in Europe, which is the source of all evil in human society. And it is returning to its own bloody roots.

Of course, I'm writing, I'm saying, that in spite of the fact that I'm European, though of course I'm in a strategic land, particularly wise in emigration and Russian, we should not finish European civilization, because it's part of us. But if Europeans continue to do that, they will finish themselves. And that is, in terms of operational plans, feasible. But a person like myself or my friends or my colleagues and grandsons would feel themselves sinners for the rest of their life. That's why I'm saying we should not use nuclear weapons, but we should threaten to use them and be ready to use them. Because otherwise we would risk the continuous drive of the world towards endless wars and inevitable global thermonuclear war.

I mean, over, say, a couple of decades. And thinking about history, the United States would never respond, as you know, for sure. And in principle, the scenarios are very obvious. But again, and all the more that, of course, we know that in Hiroshima fewer people were killed than in Dresden or Cologne. But we should have brought into our minds and our souls the fear of these weapons and the fear of hell. We should use this fear of hell to restore the fear of hell, because our, at least European, partners have lost the fear of hell. But I'm not especially frightened by the possibility of a nuclear escalation between Russia and the United States if we have to use nuclear weapons in Europe. But God forbid it.

#John Mearsheimer

Yeah, I think you're correct. I mean, you can never say with absolute certainty, but I think you're correct that if Russia were to use a limited number of nuclear weapons on European targets, the United States would not use nuclear weapons to retaliate against Russia. And certainly the Europeans wouldn't either. I mean, we're talking about the French and the British here. They're not going to use their nuclear weapons against Russia. But this raises a really big question in my mind. This is my second question for you: what about the Germans? Germany does not have nuclear weapons of its own. It's physically much closer to Russia than either Britain or France, and certainly the United States. And if the scenario that you described were to take place, where Russia used a handful of nuclear weapons in, let's say, Eastern Europe, wouldn't this incentivize the Germans to get a large nuclear arsenal of their own?

And in fact, you were saying before, when you were talking, that if Russia did use nuclear weapons, it would create all sorts of incentives for proliferation and even for nuclear use around the world, which I'm sad to say is probably true. But this logic that you were spelling out applies to Germany.

And given what happened on June 22, 1941, running up to May 9, 1945, Germany has a special place in the minds of people like you and people in Russia more generally. And the question is, what happens if the Germans decide that they need nuclear weapons because nuclear weapons are the ultimate deterrent and they no longer can depend on the United States? It's a self-help world, so they have to go out and get nuclear weapons. Where does that leave Russia?

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, I'm writing in my published article, but of course also I'm using this argument in our internal debate. Germany is the threat, the worst threat in world and human history, along with Japan. It should never be allowed to use nuclear weapons. If they even try, they should be absolutely evaporated from there.

#Sergey Karaganov

From the face of the earth, and we are sending the signals to our German partners. Hopefully, they will come to their senses, because their elites are becoming so illiterate and so irresponsible that they're really weird. But Germany should never even get close. If they get close, Germany should be evaporated from the face of the world, as well as Japan. We are talking about that with our Chinese friends and allies, because they have fought these terrible wars which bled humankind white, which brought that things unthinkable are thinkable. So, even when I hope that it would never happen, Russia would have to use first conventional missiles, and then war on nuclear missiles. The prime target would be not only in Romania or Poland, God forbid.

It would be in Germany, and Germany would suffer first. And they should understand that, because they have unleashed two world wars in one generation, and they should never be forgiven for that. We Russians, because we are generous, have almost forgiven them. Never. Because they are becoming revanchists. And that's why, if they come close, they should get eliminated. Oh, I hope that would never happen, because I know German culture, I know their contribution—of course, that of Holland and others—to our common culture, and of course I know that the Germans have contributed a lot to Russian culture and Russian civilization. But if they get closer, they should be eliminated, and that's it. I'll turn to you, Glenn. Yeah, I am...

#Glenn

Yeah, there are some freezes in the video. Well, I was going to ask, how do you expect the war to play out here, though? Because as Professor Kragner pointed out, if they go up the escalation ladder—that is, the Russians by retaliating—I would assume that the first step on this escalation ladder would be conventional weapons. So we're not going to see a nuclear strike tomorrow. But let's say drones or conventional missiles would be used to hit a European target, be it Latvia or be it Germany.

Once Russia retaliates against Europe, is escalation control then simply an illusion? Because the assumption would be that the Europeans would be, you know, warned to back off. They would be compelled to essentially respect Russia's red lines. But, you know, this assumes a rational response. And as you and I have spoken about at length in the past, rationality and the instinct of self-preservation appear to be in short supply at this time in Europe. So how do you envision this escalation ladder working? How would we go up?

#John Mearsheimer

Well, I mean, there are two dimensions to it. Obviously, as Sergei has elucidated in his various articles and in his presentation today, the first step would be using conventional weapons. And I would imagine that, and I'd be curious to know what Sergei thinks, but I would imagine that if Russia attacked into Europe with conventional weapons, there would probably be a response—a conventional response by the West—in which case the Russians would probably then use the nuclear option, as he described it. And the key point there is that in his story, and I think he's probably correct, there will not be escalation. His story is that if the Russians use a limited number of nuclear weapons aimed at targets in Europe, in NATO countries, there will be no retaliation in kind.

The United States and the Europeans will not go up the escalation ladder, and in effect, Russia will win. I interpret that to be what he means by winning, and I think he's correct in that regard. So I think if you're at the conventional level, there is, I think, real potential—maybe even likelihood—for escalation. In other words, if the Russians attack with conventional weapons, the West uses conventional weapons. But once nuclear weapons are used in his story, and I think, again, he's correct, you can't be 100% certain that you won't have escalation. But that tells you that the Russians are incentivized to think about using nuclear weapons. If you believe that his basic argument is correct, then the question is, why not just use a handful of nuclear weapons and reestablish deterrence?

#Glenn

Well, if Russia... Well, I guess I have a twofold question, and that is, how much more NATO escalation do you think Russia could tolerate? And have they kind of reached the end of the line now, where they can't accept it anymore? It only has the option of deterring, either using conventional weapons or nuclear weapons. But as you suggest, conventional weapons would probably be a very brief stepping stone toward the nuclear option. So if we're reaching the end of the line here, I mean, how are you seeing the situation? It seems we're getting very close to a disaster. You would think there would be more discussion among European or Western politicians altogether about where exactly this is heading, but I see nothing of the sort.

#John Mearsheimer

My great hope, Glenn, is that more and more attention is paid to Sergei's argument, and more and more people in the West therefore come to understand that increasing the air offensive with drones and missiles against Russia is a prescription for disaster. Let's hope there's a learning curve that goes up in the West, and that his message—and it's not only his message; there are other people in Russia who are making the same argument—let's hope that that argument begins to get traction here in the West and we don't have to go down this road, because it would be disastrous to do so. But I don't know exactly what's going to happen. And I think if we get increasingly desperate as Ukraine loses on the battlefield and we go to a strategy that ratchets up the air offensive against Mother Russia, then we're going to put the Russians in a position where they're going to think seriously about striking into Europe.

#Glenn

When you hear European leaders say that they're preparing for war, that is, they think Russia will attack by 2029 or 2030, they have very strange dates. They don't necessarily explain them; they just refer to intelligence. What kind of war do you think they're talking about? Do they think Russia wants to annex Poland? I'm curious what kind of war they think they're preparing for, because if they trigger a Russian response, it surely won't be, you know, it's not going to be an extension of what we're seeing in Ukraine—this gradual, you know, grab of territory, gradually grinding down the adversary's army. I just can't imagine this being controlled on the escalation ladder, that we would go straight up to, yeah, a nuclear option.

#John Mearsheimer

Well, the thing is, you know, when we talk about a world war—and I was going to push Sergei on this as well—it has connotations of World War I and World War II. But the fundamental difference between World War I and World War II on one hand, and where we are today, is that we have nuclear weapons today. You just simply couldn't fight a war like World War II in today's world because of the presence of nuclear weapons. As I was saying to Sergei, if you had an all-out nuclear exchange between Russia on one side and the United States on the other side, there'd be no winner. There'd just be losers. We'd all be incinerated. It just makes no sense at all. So the only kind of war you could have is a limited war. And that limited war would either involve simply conventional forces or the limited use of nuclear weapons.

And again, that's what Sergei is talking about. He's not talking about launching the entire inventory of Russian nuclear weapons and scoring a splendid first strike against the United States or the British and French nuclear deterrents. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about a limited use. So any kind of world war between Russia and the United States or Russia and NATO has to be a limited war. It can't look like World War I or World War II. And I do not, for the life of me, see what these European leaders are talking about when they hypothesize a war with Russia. What's that war look like? What are you fighting over? How do you win that war? It's just hard for me to understand.

It's also hard for me to understand because there's no evidence that Putin wants this war. But anyway, I'm not sure what they're talking about.

#Glenn

Yeah, I keep seeing media posts where the different military, the media refers to some intelligence assessments that Russia's going to be ready for war in two, three years, whatever. But as you said, the objective is never stated. They never explain why. Why would Russia go to war? Because, again, the purpose would be quite important. That is, if they dreamt up this option that the Russians are going to come and, as I said, march on Paris, then, of course, that war would be fought in a very different way.

However, if one recognizes that the most likely objective of Russia in any war with NATO now would be to restore its deterrence—that is, to have NATO back off from attacking Russia through Ukraine—then, yeah, this will be a very different kind of war. This will be simply to give a powerful warning shot into NATO countries, either in the form of a conventional or a nuclear strike, and hoping or assuming that this would make the NATO countries back off. But it's unclear to me how they're going to prepare for such a war, prepare for a Russian strike to deter. I mean, did you see any other information coming out in terms of how they envision this war being fought or what the objectives would be?

#John Mearsheimer

No, I don't, because there's no plausible story that they can tell about what the war looks like. I mean, it's not like Putin has said that he plans to expand into this country or that country, or he has a grand scheme to recreate the Soviet empire, and therefore the West has to start plotting different ways to prevent that from happening. Putin has never said he had any interest in conquering all of Ukraine, much less reestablishing the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. So I don't understand what the threat scenario is that you plan against if you're the West.

I think the key issue here is, as I was discussing before with Sergei, the question of German nuclear weapons. I think that in the process of reestablishing or establishing deterrence with the West, the Russians will end up scaring the Germans greatly. If the Russians do what Sergei says might very well happen, this will really spook the Germans, and the Germans will have powerful incentives to get a nuclear deterrent of their own. And then the question is, you want to ask yourself where that leads. And if you listen to what Sergei said, it's a positively frightening scenario. So I think that, you know, we're headed for big trouble.

As you and I have said on this show many times before, we're eventually going to get a frozen conflict, in all likelihood, in Ukraine. But we're not going to live happily ever after once you get that frozen conflict. The potential for the Ukraine war starting all over again will be significant. And furthermore, there are just all sorts of other ways that you can get a conflict in Eastern Europe. And,

you know, we just talked about the whole nuclear issue vis-à-vis Germany, which is something we haven't talked much about in the past, you and I, but is a very real threat moving forward.

#Glenn

Well, does it surprise you, though, that, as Professor Karaganov said, Germany would be possibly the most likely target of such a strike to make the Europeans back off? Well, I should say, Professor Karaganov dropped off. We're waiting for him to come back in. But again, this is one of the things that has really changed over the past four years. That's the way Germany is perceived in Russia, because the improvement of relations between Germany and Russia was really one of the great achievements after World War II, considering the horrific things that were done during World War II. And the lesson we learned was they learned from history. They patched things up. You had leaders such as Putin and Schröder.

His father died on the Eastern Front, but nonetheless, their descendants could come together and patch things up. I mean, it was kind of a hope, a story about hope almost, that those two large European powers could essentially overcome history. But now, when you look at Germany today, all they're talking about is, you know, war with Russia. Germany should have the largest army. Any sanctions, they want to be, you know, essentially at the forefront. They position themselves very aggressively, and especially after Trump tried to reposition the US or start to pull it a bit away from the war and hand over responsibility to the Europeans, Germany's really made itself into a frontline state. And, well, I guess, does it surprise you the way Germany is now seemingly the most hated country by the Kremlin?

#John Mearsheimer

Look, the problem here, Glenn, is that Germany is potentially the most powerful country in Europe. And as long as NATO was firmly intact and the United States' security umbrella was over Germany and other countries in Europe, there was not much of a German threat to Russia. You want to remember that when the Cold War ends, the Soviet Union decides it's going to leave Eastern Europe, and the Warsaw Pact is going to be allowed to disintegrate, to disappear. But the Soviets, and then later the Russians, are content to allow NATO to remain intact. They don't want NATO expansion, of course, but they have no problem with NATO remaining in place. And I believe that the principal reason that was the case was because NATO, to put it slightly differently—the American military presence in Europe—solved the German problem.

German security was basically subordinated to American security. And as long as the United States was in the driver's seat and Germany was not in the driver's seat, it was easy for the Russians and the Germans to make up, to some extent, for what happened between 1941 and 1945. Not completely by any means. But what's happening today, as you well know, is that the American military footprint in Europe looks like it's going to be significantly reduced. The future of the NATO alliance is in question. And given that the United States has to pivot to East Asia to deal with China,

and that it's deeply involved in this war in the Middle East, the United States wants to shift the burden for European security off its shoulders onto the shoulders of the Europeans. And the end result of this is that the Germans are behaving in a more independent fashion.

And needless to say, given what's going on in Ukraine, if you have a situation where at the same time Germany is talking about serious rearmament and beginning to act like it is providing for its own security, that is going to upset the Russians to no end. And I think you see that going on now. I think it's very important to understand that in all likelihood, America's relationship with Europe is undergoing a fundamental transformation. There was a lot of continuity between the Cold War and the unipolar moment. We did not leave Europe. We stayed in Europe. NATO remained intact. We provided security for the Germans. That world is going away. And the Germans, I don't want to say that today they're on their own, but more and more it looks like the Germans are on their own.

And when the Germans start providing for their own security, it's not only going to scare the Russians, it's going to scare the French, it's going to scare the British, and so forth and so on. Because Sergei was talking about World War I and World War II. Remember, it was not just Russia slash the Soviet Union that fought against Germany. It was also the French and the British and the Americans. Germany was an incredibly powerful country in those days. It's not that powerful anymore, but in those days it was very powerful. So if the Germans don't have the American security umbrella over their head, and the Germans are providing for their own security, and especially if they're thinking about getting nuclear weapons, this is going to have huge consequences.

#Glenn

Well, Professor Karaganov, I wanted to ask you as well, how do you see, even if the NATO countries would now essentially stop on the escalation ladder, that is, start to walk back these attacks on Russia from NATO territory and get the situation under control, how stable do you think the current status quo is anyway? Because over the war in Ukraine, how long is Russia willing to play this role, play this game? Because the goal of prolonging the war, either by deporting Ukrainian refugees from Europe or finding more weapons to send, more money—like, is there pressure in the Kremlin in terms of changing its strategy? Because I get the impression that many Russians are now wanting a tougher hand to put a quicker end to this war.

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, first of all, I'll react to our previous discussion. Stalin was a great leader, but a bloody dictator. But also, he made a few geopolitical mistakes. One of those mistakes was that he stopped the Morgenthau, if I remember, plan to disband Germany. Germany should never again become a threat to the world and Europe. If it becomes one, then it should be punished. But, of course, I admire German culture. I have many friends in Germany who are now forbidden to deal with me. That is

one question. The answer to the question of how long should we tolerate attacks on our cities, killings of our civilians—the question is very simple. We do not want to go very fast, faster up the ladder of escalation, but we have started to move.

When I, not only because of the Russian war with the West—not with Europe—in Ukraine, put the issue of restoring the validity of nuclear deterrence on the table several years ago, I was thinking not only about this war in Europe but about the general international situation. But now, and at that time, I was criticized by many of my compatriots. And I understood that, because thinking about nuclear war is hard. Now, as far as I understand, I'm roughly criticized by the majority, the absolute majority, of my compatriots for not being effective in persuading our government to use nuclear deterrence in full. And I'm concerned about that because I do not want to cross their moral threshold.

I mean, John Mishima is the king of rulers. I'm only a duke. But let me tell you, John, the moral issue is much more important than, I mean, quid pro quo, I mean, return strikes. However, when several years ago we put on the agenda the possibility of using nuclear weapons in a war in Europe, some American leaders—and you know them personally—came here or met our senior advisors elsewhere and said that if Russia ever uses nuclear weapons, they would respond with a massive conventional strike which would eliminate Russian armed forces, at least in Ukraine or elsewhere. Then we came with a counterargument, saying that then we would use nuclear weapons.

And after that, the Biden administration started to withdraw from this war. And I hope that will continue. And Mr. Trump is not a peacemaker. He simply caters to American basic interests. So I hope that Americans have come to their senses. But unfortunately, our European neighbors have not yet come to their senses. And of course, John, an American doesn't have this depth of history. But we have been attacked by Europe many times. The Napoleonic invasion was one of the worst. I mean, even the Mongols didn't burn churches, while the French did. We well remember what happened in the First World War and the Second World War.

That was a Holocaust. We never before said that we have had a Holocaust of Soviet people. We were talking about the Holocaust of Jews. But many more people from the Soviet Union, in addition to Jews, were killed in all kinds of massacres by the Germans, and we should never forget that. And I hope that the Germans will understand that. However, I believe that if Russia stands firm and increases its activity and energy in terms of military and nuclear deterrence, we will help the world. We will help Europe to come to its senses.

But in addition to what I have said, I have to reiterate one of the issues which I put forward in our previous conversation. Europe has been the source of all evils in human history — most of the evils of human history: world wars, the Holocaust, racism, colonialism, etc. So the best way for us, I mean, people of the world and leaders of the world, is to push Europe from the leading positions or

any positions in history. Of course, hopefully without physical elimination, and I am praying for that. But Europe has been the source of all problems and most disasters in human history. So it's not only about rallies.

#John Mearsheimer

It's about morals. But don't you run the danger, Sergei, when you talk about Europe in such incredibly negative terms and you talk about elimination as strategies of creating a situation where the European countries, especially Germany, have a very powerful incentive to get nuclear weapons of their own and to view the Russians in the worst possible terms? I mean, doesn't your rhetoric feed into German fears of Russia? I mean, I can see why, from a Russian point of view, you have so much hostility towards Germany.

I actually am one of the few people in the West who really understands what happened during the Napoleonic Wars, World War I, and World War II. I understand what you're saying about all the killing that took place in the Soviet Union during World War II. I've done a lot of research on the German killing machine in World War II, so I'm fully aware of what you're saying. And I don't want to make light of German history between 1941 and 1945 in terms of what happened inside the Soviet Union. So I'm on the same page as you in that regard. But isn't there a real danger in sort of acting as if nothing has changed at all?

And, you know, the Third Reich is still in control in Germany. And if they try to provide for their own security, we should eliminate them. Isn't this just going to make a bad situation worse? I mean, again, I understand the reason that Russia wants to reestablish deterrence. It makes good sense, as I said earlier on. But I think you have to be very careful about how you do that and how you think about dealing with countries in Europe. You want to reestablish deterrence, but in the process, you don't want to cause a world war. And you don't want to get into the business of talking about or actually eliminating countries from the face of the earth.

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, first of all, I'm thinking not only about Europe. I'm thinking about the situation we are already facing and will be facing in the coming decades, when the world order is collapsing, when all moral limits are collapsing, when all habits of distance are taken away. That's why I'm thinking about the necessity to restore at least nuclear deterrence. And I insist that Germans, or else, should be restored to the deadly fear of being eliminated, because they have been the source of most of the worst things in human history. Again, I like Germany. I have many German friends. I know German culture. And I don't want Germany to be eliminated. But Germany becoming again a revanchist power is a danger. And some other European countries are becoming revanchist.

We, in the Second World War, we fought with most of Europe except for Britain, which was helped by the United States, from Yugoslavia and Greece. We all remember that. And I don't want Europe

to return to its vicious place in human history. Though I'm culturally European, and Beethoven, Balzac, Goethe are my writers, along with Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Pushkin. However, this is not a question of a simple dance of powers. It is a question of where humanity is moving. We have already crossed several thresholds, and we also see that modern civilization is undermining the sense of the human in the human. And we have to think about how we should work together to save the human in ourselves. That's why I'm thinking about building a coalition towards a new humanism, because, for example, Europe, where humanism was born, has lost it.

#Sergey Karaganov

Left behind, Europe — not only Europe, of course — has eliminated God from their souls. I do not want to raise full religion, but the fact that Europe is living in the dehumanization of humans is very important. We all remember how ugly they were during the Napoleonic Wars, during the First World War, during the Second World War. We should never give them that opportunity again. However, there are different Europes, and I believe that in the future, say, 20 years from now — I mean, unfortunately, I don't think that we'll be able to discuss that online, but Glenn will be discussing it with others — some Europe will come to its senses, but Calvinist Europe, not Western Europe, should be pushed aside, not eliminated.

And it is the source of most evils. Norway, of course, is not part of this group of nations because they didn't play any significant role in any of the great invasions after the Viking times. However, we all remember what Europe has been. And I believe that in, say, 20 years, if we survive this period of hostility and turmoil, Southern Europe, Central Europe, will join in the community of Eurasian nations, a very vague community, which will be led by Russia, China, India, Iran, Turkey, together with the United States, but without Europe, and especially without Northwestern Europe. That is the best chance for humanity. However, we have to live through this period, and that's why ERA's prescriptions are very valid.

#John Mearsheimer

I have just a couple of points I want to make. First of all, I think all great powers, not just the European great powers, all great powers behave in incredibly ruthless ways from time to time. This includes the United States. It certainly includes the Japanese. And you were critical of the Japanese before. And the Japanese, as you well know, are not Europeans. And it includes Russia. Russia has done ruthless things in the past, as well as the United States, as well as Japan, and of course, as well as those European great powers. It's basically built into what great powers do to survive in the international system. So I think you run the danger of focusing all your attention on the Europeans and describing them as the only ruthless great powers in recorded history, when in fact, virtually all great powers have behaved in ruthless ways over time.

#Sergey Karaganov

That's great. I mean, uh, I couldn't disagree from my point of view, but I have a somewhat different view on history. And Russia has had a somewhat different history from most of the world powers. We conquered, but we integrated. We never eliminated, unlike most European-aligned powers. But, of course, we were also a great power. We fought wars. But now I'm thinking about the future. And in terms of our common future, we have to understand that the worst threats in our history have been coming from Europe. We should contain them. We should deter them. By the way, we should deter, of course, the United States, because the United States is now acting not very elegantly, to say it.

#John Mearsheimer

Like a ruthless great power.

#Sergey Karaganov

Yes, yes, absolutely. But we have to think about how to build a better future for humanity. And previously, for many years, because we are people of European culture, we believed that the better future of humanity is the European way. No, not anymore. And that's it. However, countries like Spain, Italy, most Central European countries will rejoin normal human civilization, which some of the Europeans have left, unfortunately. Of course, some Americans have left as well. We have also such people in our society. But we have to do it. It is a very complex world. It's not only about the competition between great powers. It is a competition of civilizations, and it is a competition for humanity.

And I think that one of the main tasks for people like ourselves, in spite of the fact that we all, of course, support the school of thought of Mishima, is also about saving humanism and saving humanity from some of the modern traits of civilization, most of which have been emanating from Europe, partially from the United States, but also from other countries. We, by the way, Russians, have suffered greatly in the previous centuries. I mean, Peter the Great, because of the relative backwardness of our country, opened a window to Europe. He wanted to close that window after getting European technologies, European culture. It should have been closed by the end of the 19th century. And our great czar, who is very popular now, Alexander III, wanted to close it. But he died for all kinds of reasons. And that's why we were infected by, God bless communism, one of the worst traits of European civilization. And that's why we should keep Europe away, but respect our European heritage.

#John Mearsheimer

I want to go back to your view of the Germans, which is reflected in your view of the Europeans in general. But I want to focus on your view of the Germans, in good part because I think German-Russian relations are going to be very important in the years ahead. And I think what you're saying about Germany is right—very important. But let me talk about that subject by telling you how I think

most people in the West today think about Russia. As you know, Sergei and Glenn, I argued that the principal cause of the Ukraine war was NATO expansion, coupled with EU expansion and the color revolutions, right? And I believe the West is principally responsible for the Ukraine war.

But as you know, most people in the West believe Russia is responsible. And when you ask them why, their basic argument in many cases—this is especially true in Eastern Europe—is that it's in the blood. The Russians are naturally aggressive. It's in their genes. We call this, in the social science world here in the United States, an essentialist argument, right? The Russians are just natural aggressors. And you should understand that what you're really saying about the Germans is remarkably similar to what many in the West are saying about the Russians. In other words, you're basically saying that the Germans are natural aggressors.

It's in their mother's milk, just as many people in the West think that the Russian aggression they see is in the mother's milk. And I think the argument that the Russians are natural aggressors, that it's hardwired into Russian civilization, is nonsense. And it can't explain the Ukraine war. And I think the same thing is true with regard to the argument you're making about Putin and Germany. You're absolutely correct in your description of Germany during World War II as a country that had an eliminationist mentality. I have no doubt that you and I would agree completely on what happened in that war.

But Germans were not always like that beforehand, and they're not like that today. You're not talking about the Germany of 1933 to 1945 today. Bismarck's Germany, as you well know, was not Hitler's Germany. And I just would say, with all due respect, I think you run a real danger of portraying the Germans in the most negative light, as sort of congenital aggressors. And I think if that argument takes hold in Russia, it's going to complicate the matter of trying to reestablish deterrence in your rhetoric and making sure we don't end up in a major conflict between Germany and Russia in the future.

#Sergey Karaganov

That's a valid argument. And I must say that I'm not anti-German. Germans have contributed a lot to Russian culture, to Russian identity. Some of our greatest leaders were German. Catherine the Great was absolutely German, but she was the embodiment of the Russian Tsarina. So it is not anti-German. It is... and a Germany which was born after Bismarck. Bismarck didn't want to make Germany into what it became. But then Germany became what it became, and I know that already at the beginning of the previous century, the German general staff was planning on creating the European Reich, even before Hitler. They were not allowed, but then Hitler tried. But again, Germany is a small pawn in this game. We are paying too much attention to them.

They could be and should be pushed aside. And the question now is where India goes, where China goes, where Persia goes, where Turkey goes, where the USA goes, where Russia goes. And we are still, because we are people of European culture, paying too much attention to them. My recipe is

push them aside and do not allow them to be what they used to be in the 20th century. All the more that, in spite of the huge tragedies which they inflicted on themselves and on humanity, Germany is getting back. It is unbelievable. It's awful. It's unthinkable, but it is there. But Germany is a small pawn in the general game. Let us keep our attention on India, on Persia, on the countries of the Middle East, on Indonesia, which will be far more important than Germany in 20 years.

#John Mearsheimer

But with all due respect, Sergei, if you look at geography, Germany is a much bigger potential threat to Russia than India is or Persia is. I think it's no accident that we focused a lot of attention on Germany, because if you hypothesize a situation where the United States greatly reduces its military footprint in Europe and the Germans have to provide for their own security, the consequences, or the potential consequences, for Germany and for Russia are enormous, as you indicate. And then the question is, how do you deal with it? And I'm just saying to you that, you know, there are many people in Germany—you talk about revanchism—there are many people in Germany who have what I call the essentialist view of Russia. They think that Russians are natural aggressors. And you run the danger, again, with all due respect, of seeing the Germans as natural aggressors. And when both sides are thinking that way, you're going to get yourself into an awful lot of trouble in all likelihood.

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, thank God we have nuclear weapons. And that's why, first of all, I mean, Russians have been expanding for all kinds of reasons, because we have been on the plain and have been attacked from all sides. We know this history. And, you know, to provide for security, we expanded. But that's an old history. We, by the way, took many more lands than we would have needed for a viable country. But we've got Siberia, which is the source of the future wealth, stability, and development of our country and Eurasia. So I'm saying to my countrymen, don't pay attention to Europe. I mean, concentrate on developing security.

And on developing workable ties with China, with India, with the United States, with Iran, with Turkey, with the Arab world, Indonesia, etc., etc. And let us leave behind our unpleasant history, our unpleasant European history. Though, of course, again and again I'm saying that Europe, though it had been robbing the whole world for 500 years since the 16th century, has also contributed a lot to our culture. But Europe should be pushed aside from the world scene, and we should concentrate also, as strategists, on developing a new structure for the whole world, in spite of the fact that because of our intellectual history, I mean, we are more or less from the same school.

We tried to concentrate on Europe. I am, by the way, the founder of the Institute of Europe in Russia. I mean, in the Soviet Union. But when I got into that, I understood that it is a blind alley for Russia. We got a lot positive from Europe, but Europe is now the provider of problems. However, they have great people, they have great nations, they have great culture, and some of Europe will

recuperate from its present sickness. So I think that we should simply push them aside, especially Northwestern Europe, and build up a society for the future world where countries like, as I've said, India, Indonesia, Persia, China, Russia, and the United States should play a leading role.

#John Mearsheimer

I don't deny for one second that it's in Russia's interest to have good relations and improve its relations with countries like India, China, and so forth and so on. But you cannot, in my opinion, push aside Europe. It's right next door geographically to Russia. And furthermore, the Ukraine war is not going to have a peaceful ending. It's going to end, and I believe the Russians will win what I say is an ugly victory. But Eastern Europe is going to be an unstable place for a long time to come. I think you and I agree on that. Absolutely. Yeah, okay, but if Eastern Europe is an unstable place, the Russians can't ignore it. In fact, they have to focus laser-like on Eastern Europe for fear that another war will break out. So you just can't push it aside.

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, John, I agree with you completely from my point of view. But as I've said, one of the worst mistakes of the recent Russian elite has been Europhilia and over-consideration of Europe. We should look in different directions. Our future is in Asia. We are, by the way, not a European country. We, of course, have a very significant element of European culture. But Russia, geostrategically and even culturally, is Eurasian. Our external sources of spirituality came from Palestine, Israel, from the Muslim world, from Buddhism. And our political culture came from the great Mongol Empire. Then, of course, we got a powerful diffusion of European culture, which was useful for 150 years, but which brought the worst century in our history, which was the 20th century.

So, I mean, of course, I understand that we have to deal with that, but I'm a Russian, and I'm talking with my fellow Russian thinkers and strategists, and telling them, I mean, deal with Europe — it will be unstable, it will be ugly, it will have all kinds of wars, especially when it starts to degrade as it has started — but concentrate on the south, on the east, and on the north. The United States, of course, should be our partner, even when we overcome all kinds of difficulties about Europe. Europe should finally be pushed aside, hopefully without using ultimate weapons, from the core of human history, where it has been, as I've said, the source of most of the evil.

#Glenn

I would just, yeah, you know, I think that if we all survive the Ukraine war, I mean, I would predict that Russia's geopolitical position would be that its weapons would point to the West in terms of aiming to deter the Europeans, while all its economic connectivity would be headed east. While geography is permanent, I do think that that would shape it. For me, though, as a European, I had great hopes in a greater Europe that is based on Gorbachev's idea of a common European home. I know it's gone. It's a tragedy. Because I think a divided Europe would make this continent less

secure, be destined for economic decline and political irrelevance. But I do think it's gone. I think things have gone too far. And, well, to be honest, at this point, I would settle for any future that doesn't involve a nuclear war. I think that would be a win, which is kind of putting the bar very low, but that still would be an achievement. We are running out of time, though, so we have to start to wrap things up. Any final thoughts?

#Sergey Karaganov

Well, John.

#John Mearsheimer

No, I don't have any final thoughts. I think I've pretty much gotten all my points out. I'm just looking at my list of notes here. I just hope that we never have to move down the road where Sergei's plan to even attack with conventional weapons into Europe is necessary, and certainly with regard to nuclear weapons. And I hope people in the West wake up to the fact that it's very dangerous to provoke the Russians, and we change our behavior so that we avoid catastrophe.

#Sergey Karaganov

I agree with you, but I am helping to house refugees from the areas that have been attacked with American and European weapons in Russia. And that is again and again. That's why I have a bit of a different view from you, because you spent most of your life in a different part of the world. So my recipe for the future of Russia is: go east and south. Develop Siberia, which is the source of our future wealth and already is the source of our wealth and our moral and political might. And while we're managing conflicts in Europe, which will be inevitable, we will have to manage them with Americans and with others, because they will return—they are returning to their usual ways. I mean, Germans are not Germans. But my recipe for my country is: go southeast and north. And I am very happy that we are going in that direction. However, of course, we still have this great...

#Sergey Karaganov

European heritage, which at this juncture is becoming negative. And we have to part from it as fast as possible. But it will take time. It will take effort—intellectual, political, cultural, and strategic.

#Glenn

Well, thank you both for taking the time. And yeah, let's hope all our predictions turn out to be wrong. So thank you both.

#Sergey Karaganov

You're welcome. Thank you, Julian. It was a great conversation, and thank you, John. Because, I mean, it is very rare these days when people and nations are trading accusations or stupidities. I mean, people are having deep conversations, so thank you very much for arranging it, and thank you, John, for joining us.

#John Mearsheimer

Yeah, thank you, Sergey. I enjoyed the conversation, even though it was very depressing. But that seems to be the order of the day in this era—everything is so depressing.

#Sergey Karaganov

But I'm optimistic we shall win them.

#Glenn

Thanks.

#Sergey Karaganov

And avoid a global nuclear holocaust, which is, by the way, one of the main reasons why I'm so much involved in this game. But we have to add to our debate the problem of the degradation of some parts of human civilization, which is happening. But that is not for, I mean, hardcore realists like we are, or you are.