

## Transcript for Garry Kasparov | Deep Thinking (Episode 644)

Full show notes found here: <https://theartofcharm.com/644/>

GARRY: I've been saying for years that Putin was our problem but eventually it will be everybody's problem because that's what I read about other dictators.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm Jordan Harbinger and I'm here with producer Jason DeFillippo. On this episode we'll be talking with my friend Garry Kasparov. He is a Russian chess grandmaster, former world chess champion, he's a writer, political activist -- many people consider him to be the greatest chess player of all time and now he's fighting another battle in a different game against Vladimir Putin.

And one thing I tried to do in this interview -- I hope you all agree -- I tried to give Garry plenty of space to answer questions and explain the situation in Russia and explain his own mindsets and his way of thinking. Far too many writers and journalists seem obsessed with showing other people how smart they are, how much they know about this situation -- I've tried very, very hard not to do that here. I hope it shows and make for a better discussion and if you're not familiar with the Russian situation or the Soviet Union situation, I still think you'll enjoy the heck out of this interview. Garry is brilliant, he's a great thinker, he's a very high performer of course-- there are so many interesting stories in this one as well.

And if you're a specialist in this area, I hope you'll find this discussion interesting as I've tried to hit on different angles about what makes Garry such a unique individual, both in Russian politics and in general, and holds a special place on the world's stage, especially right now. His books are [Winter Is Coming](#) and [Deep Thinking](#). Today we're going to learn a lot about what it takes to become a chess champion, what can be applied or what can't be applied from chess to politics, and the situation that we're dealing with with authoritarian governments today in Russia and around the world. So, enjoy this episode as much as we did, here with Garry Kasparov.

You know, Garry, it's funny. In the beginning of this interview, you had mentioned, "Oh, I wasn't sure if the KGB had hacked my phone," because we had a little trouble getting connected. And it was funny because it's very possible that that type of thing would happen to you, right?

GARRY: Look, I was born and raised in the Soviet Union, so I'm used to living under 24/7 surveillance and then of course I was politically active opposing Putin's regime. So, I knew that almost everything if not everything I did and spoke, somehow was known because Putin is a KGB guy. I want to remind our listeners that it was Putin's direct quote that there is no former KGB. Once KGB is always KGB. I prefer to be suspicious rather than sorry afterwards.

JORDAN: Yeah, there's some crazy stuff and your book [\*Winter Is Coming\*](#) -- great title by the way, you know, being a Game of Thrones fan.

GARRY: Yes.

JORDAN: You know the culture well to which you speak, for sure. Your life is like a James Bond movie with -- so far -- less shooting and explosions, but not by too much. You were born with a different name though -- Garik Weinstein. Why did you change your name or did you change your name? How did that work out?

GARRY: Look, my father was a Jew -- Kim Weinstein. My mother was Armenian -- Klara Kasparova. It was a tragedy in our family. My father died when I was seven and I lived with my mother and her parents five years after my father died. So, we decided just to change my name because I was part of this -- of Kasparov's family. People had a lot of stipulations that, "Garry's family -- Garry's mother decided to change his name because it helped him in the Soviet Union," but trust me, changing from Jewish to Armenian in Baku -- in Azerbaijan -- was not a big deal.

JORDAN: Yeah, it's kind of like, "Oh, okay, which group, right now, am I going to join, that's going to be less of a disadvantage?"

GARRY: But it was a practical consideration because I spent a lot of time with my grandfather and he had three daughters. He obviously also wanted to have a son. It was purely a family arrangement. I never denied my Jewish roots. At the end of the day, I grew up in Baku, which was a multicultural city. You may call it the southern outpost of the Russian empire, so that's why my native tongue was Russian. By language, by culture, by education, I'm Russian. As you may consider a Brit born in Sri Lanka or a French born in French Africa. And when the empire collapsed, we all moved from Baku, which became a part of independent Azerbaijan, up way north to Moscow, the capital of the country where I was born.

JORDAN: You've ascended to the heights of two incredibly competitive fields, one of those fields being chess, the other one being politics, and we'll get into both of those. It seems to me that in USSR, the Soviet Union, you get these impressions in your head as an American kid that the communist countries -- they take their kids at a super young age, they put them into some sort of training camp for stuff like this -- is that what happened? How close am I to reality here?

GARRY: No. Maybe it's the case in North Korea or in China, though I doubt about China. In the Soviet Union, there were many programs. I have to say that I benefited from centralized programs of selecting talents. By the way, chess was never part of the Russian educational system -- Soviet educational system. Chess was rather treated in the Soviet Union as the very important ideological tool to demonstrate intellectual superiority of the communist regime over the decadent West.

So that's why the primary purpose of this election was to find great talents and to make sure that the domination of the Soviet chess school continues from generation to generation. It was not difficult to spot my talent because I was so bright at age seven already. I immediately went into this network. By age 10, I

was already a very strong player -- a first category player -- and I was picked up as one of the students -- the youngest students of a famous school run by a former world champion who became my mentor, Mikhail Botvinnik.

JORDAN: When I was a kid, you just sort of play around with stuff. Were you immediately drawn to chess like, "This is what I've got to do. This is amazing. I'm going to play this all day and all night?"

GARRY: We all need a little bit of luck to select what we can do best in our lives. I cannot tell you exactly when this happened that I saw my parents -- my mother and father -- looking at a chessboard. It was probably in wintertime 1968, 1969. So they tried to solve a puzzle from one of the new local newspapers. Even in America, many newspapers carried this little section with chess puzzles. And I was fascinated by these magical pieces. These very intricate combinations -- I couldn't figure out how they move but eventually I did it and I made even a suggestion the next day and that was the beginning of my romance with the game of chess that has been lasting almost half a century. I loved the game immediately and it happened that it was a perfect match like a match made in heaven for the way I could make decisions. I wouldn't say I'm very good at many other things.

For instance, people believe that I should be great in mathematics. I'm pretty good. By the way, I graduated school with gold medals. I was the best in my class in Baku. It was not passion. I felt always much more comfortable with history, philosophy -- being humanitarian, which sounds a bit odd to non professionals because they believe that chess players must be good in mathematics since chess is about calculation. To the contrary, it has many other elements like fantasy, imagination, intuition -- I can tell you that making decisions at the chessboard was an absolute perfect choice. I couldn't do anything better than in the game of chess.

JORDAN: You've mentioned that chess helps you make decisions. What do you mean by that? What are you thinking about when you

look at other decisions? Do you see a chessboard somehow, in your head?

GARRY: No, it's not just about seeing the chessboard in my head. Obviously, I'm out of professional chess for 12 years. When I was in the midst of my professional career -- at my peak, I could even dream in chess because it was very important just to be fully concentrated. But, I even had another book, [\*How Life Imitates Chess\*](#), where I spent dozens of pages explaining how we make decisions.

We're all different so the way we make decisions depends very much on our character, on the way we build from our nature -- some people are more aggressive, some people are less aggressive but just more conservative -- so, we always look at even the same position from different angles. Some people are just better built to play chess, some people are better built to do other things. For instance, I'm very good at anticipating big pictures. I know I'm much worse in working with small details -- with micromanagement. And I made sure that my chess playing style would incorporate my strengths and will make a deadly weapon against all my opponents.

JORDAN: That's really interesting for me to see because whenever I hear about athletes and things like that, often -- depending on the sport of course -- they'll say something like, "Well, you know, this is just like a game of tennis where I'm negotiating this contract with this other side. Even people who unnecessarily just athletes -- and I consider chess a sport for the purposes of this conversation.

GARRY: Good, thank you very much, yes. It's great to hear that.

JORDAN: You probably burn a ton of calories.

GARRY: You do burn a lot of calories.

JORDAN: Because of your brain, yeah.

GARRY: Also because the chess competition typically is much longer. It's not just one day. It normally lasts for days.

JORDAN: Oh, I didn't know that.

GARRY: Oh, yeah, but look, the typical tournaments where I play -- they last a couple of weeks. And when I played the world championship match with Karpov, it was three months and the longest one we played lasted for five months.

JORDAN: How is that possible? What are you doing the whole time? Are you playing 20 games of chess or do you just -- each move takes three hours?

GARRY: The first match we played 48 games and then we had three games a week with the time outs, it's a huge pressure on you because even between the games, you cannot take a rest. You're preparing for other games, you still live on the impressions from the previous games. It's very demanding. I always call chess one of the most aggressive forms of psychological warfare because you have to dominate your opponent.

JORDAN: So this isn't like a basketball game where it's -- "Okay fine, best out of seven," or looking at soccer -- as you probably call it football -- you can have a fluke win. Even with the shoot outs or even in a tournament style. But 48 games -- you know who's better after 48 games.

GARRY: Look, actually the match was close with no result because that was the last match that was played for six wins for one side -- draws not counted. Karpov had a very good start so I was trailing forward to nothing. Then many, many draws and then he won the fibs game but he failed to deliver the final blow. I began winning. So, I won three games -- two in a row -- and after game 48, [00:10:39] just thought that was too close, too dangerous -- Karpov was exhausted, especially psychologically.

He didn't look good because he probably was losing faith that he could win one game that for many months he couldn't

deliver this final blow to me. And, they stopped the match and then we played another match -- 24 games -- next fall. I won that match and then I won the next match. We had two more matches and I always retained my title. So we played 5 matches with Karpov, 144 games in total -- that's probably the longest marathon in the history of any sport.

JORDAN: This is a strange dynamic, I would imagine, because after you play against somebody for so long, you probably don't like them very much, right? They're dominating you, you're dominating them, but yet you're spending so much time with these people at this elite level, that you have to have some affection or at least respect for the other side. Do you get along with people like that, or are you like, "If I never see that Karpov guy again, it's too soon?" How do you feel about it?

GARRY: Respect, yes. Absolutely. You must respect your opponent, otherwise you will not be able just to perform well. Underestimating your opponent is one of the worst mistakes one can make. Liking is another story, especially because me and Karpov were very different.

He was a darling of the communist system, always protected by the system, his rise was connected to the search of the Soviet authorities for someone who could beat Bobby Fischer, who took the title from the Soviets -- which was taken in the Kremlin in the early '70s -- in 1972 when Fischer beat Spassky -- as a direct insult. Chess was treated as the very important ideological tool. So, Karpov got full support, he beat all the players on the way to Fischer, Fischer then walked away, you know, retired. He didn't play the match, Karpov became the world champion and he was in the top four nearly 10 years when we met.

Though I didn't show my rebellion colors at that stage, but Soviet authorities could sense that I was not a loyal party soldier as Karpov was. And also, let's not forget he was Russian -- ethnic Russian -- and I was half Armenian, half Jewish, from the deep south of the Soviet Union in Baku. It was the Caspian

Sea side, where I was born. Karpov, for decades -- even today -- he's still a loyal soldier of the regime. He's still a member of the parliament -- Putin's parliament now -- he has supported annexation of Crimea. So, he's always with the regime and the irony is that I'm on the other side, opposing it.

JORDAN: Yeah, you sure are man. And I'm definitely going to ask you some questions about that in just a few minutes here. First though, when you were playing chess as a kid, you were always -- I think -- younger than everybody, right, in most of these matches?

GARRY: Oh, absolutely. Yes. I have to say that was a very strange phenomena for me that I entered chess competitions at a very early age -- at seven, eight, nine. At that time, my opponents were 15, 16, 17 years old, so they were older. And then at age 14, 15, I entered already professional competitions. I was the youngest participant of the Soviet National Championship in 1978, at age 15. So I played in the top few of the elite Soviet chess.

It's a bit strange now, being 54, just looking back. I'm no longer playing but even in the last few years of my professional chess career, I played already opponents that were younger. Today I am looking at some of the young players, for instance Magnus Carlsen, current world champion in the region, who was born at the very end of my -- last match I played with Karpov, I played in 1990. Sounds a bit odd but it tells you how things have changed.

JORDAN: Yeah, no kidding. When you were younger than all of your opponents, was that an advantage or a disadvantage? Because I'm thinking you might have had more energy physically, but these guys might be a lot more experienced.

GARRY: Of course when you face older kids in the competition -- like, you're 10 and your opponents are 15, 16, 17 -- that's more of a disadvantage because they're stronger, you're still not matured, even with your talent you cannot compensate for the lack of

experience. Now, when you are 17, 18 -- and I was already one of the top players in the world -- facing older opponents, then it's already balanced. Because on one side they have more experience but on the other side, you have more energy.

Today when you look at the average age of the top players, it went down quite dramatically. Because you don't need to play in the tournaments for years and years to gain the experience that you can actually get by sliding your finger on the screen or just clicking the mouse. The average player -- I'm talking about average professional player -- at age 15, 16, today, knows much more about chess than Bobby Fischer 50 years ago.

JORDAN: Really?

GARRY: Not because he or she is more talented than Fischer -- it's ridiculous to imagine -- but simply because of the amount of information that is available is there. So, Fischer opened new horizons, then it was Karpov, then it was myself, and then other great players. So now, you don't have to learn it by playing by moving the pieces. You can simply look at the computer screen. It doesn't make them better players, but it tells you that they can play a different kind of chess because they learned already from the great revelations of mistakes of the great predecessors. The same for instance, if you have any college student studying physics, he or she definitely knows more about the subject than Newton or even Einstein.

JORDAN: Right, that makes sense.

GARRY: Simply because there's more information available and so many great things happened. These geniuses opened new horizons for us in their respective science.

JORDAN: Absolutely, that makes perfect sense. Now when you were first starting off, when you were eight or nine and you're playing in these tournaments, I assumed you started a few years before that. Were there similarly talented kids or are you just an outlier

where people are like, "What the hell is this nine-year-old kid doing here?"

GARRY: It was pretty clear that my talent was unique because I was just making giant leaps forward. At age seven I was already third category player, at age eight, second category, nine, first category, and at the end of the year -- of 1973 -- I even became a candidate master, which is a pretty solid achievement. So, there were other kids, still older -- I don't think I competed with kids of my age. By age 10 or 11, I was already considered an exceptional player, and by age 12, I became the youngest Soviet national champion under 18. So by age 12, I won under 18 championship and by age 13, I won it twice in a row.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: I was talking to my friend James Altucher, who you know --

GARRY: Yeah.

JORDAN: He's a grandmaster of chess. He's been a master of chess for decades or something.

GARRY: He's a legitimate chess player. We played a game of chess with him after the interview.

JORDAN: Yeah, and he said you just demolished the strategy that he's been using for decades and it basically demolished his game, ruined this master strategy that's been working for him, and he had to rethink everything. And this was like a game you were casually playing after an interview.

GARRY: Okay, there's a huge gap between a player even of his caliber and a retired world champion.

JORDAN: Yes, of course. I don't think his ego was damaged, I think he was thrilled to be sitting across the table from you.

GARRY: The difference between chess computers -- and I'm not talking about supercomputers, I'm talking about a free chess app that you can download at your laptop. The difference between programs like Stockfish and Komodo -- the best chess engines that are available in the open market -- and Magnus Carlsen, it's probably the same as between Magnus and Altucher.

JORDAN: Oh, really?

GARRY: You can't imagine how strong are these computers now. If you look at the Elo rating -- so basically, Magnus is in 2800 category -- 2815, and the best computers are playing at something like 3300 now.

JORDAN: Oh, my gosh.

GARRY: The player of Altucher's strength would be at 22, 2300.

JORDAN: Wow, so he's a really strong player then. No doubt.

GARRY: He's a good player. Again, I said a legitimate player. It's still many, many thousands of players between 2800 and 2200. Probably tens of thousands of players, but I don't know the exact number. The interesting thing is that chess actually is far more popular today than when Fischer played Spassky or when I played Karpov. This is another misunderstanding. People keep asking me why chess is no longer popular as it used to be and my answer is, "Absolutely not. It's much more popular. Simply look at the number of people who are involved in the game. Look at the kids." For instance, a few months ago I was in Nashville, Tennessee, at the U.S. Supernational -- 5,600 kids from all over the country took place. The reason we don't see it is because if in 1972 there was no CNN, no cable TV, and PBS story about [00:23:03] was everywhere. In '85, when I played Karpov, there was CNN but it was just the beginning of cable TV and no Internet. Today, chess, though being probably 100 times more popular than when Fischer played Spassky or 50 times as popular as when I played Karpov, chess is a part of the public space that is one million times bigger because of so many other

distractions. So, even being much bigger than it used to be, chess looks much smaller in this big picture that has so many other things that are available just through one click on your mobile device.

JORDAN: Of course, and looking at television coverage, it can be huge all over the world but very few people, at least in the United States -- nobody's watching chess on ESPN. It's just not a thing.

GARRY: By the way, in the U.S., even soccer is not very popular as it looks on television, though I think it's one of the biggest games in the country. But because it's not on television, you don't see how popular the game is. And in chess, again, I simply look at the number of kids that are joining the program, the number of schools that are adopting the program as a very important educational tool to improve the skills of the kids -- because I have Kasparov Chess Foundation that was formed in the United States 15 years ago and I have several entities of Kasparov Chess Foundation around the world.

JORDAN: What do you think now that you see things like Deep Blue, which I think James Altucher actually worked on -- supercomputers beating chess champions. How did it feel when you got beat by that? Were you like, "Wow this is progress," or were you like, "Damn, we're all screwed. These robots are going to kill us?"

GARRY: No, it's progress. By the way, I'm always objective about the way I played chess. Whether I won or lost, I knew that objectivity was a very important element of staying on the top. I'm not just telling people that whatever's happening with machines taking over some of the jobs -- it's a part of our history -- the history of civilization. From early days -- not even 100 years ago -- people tried to come up with machines -- with some mechanisms -- to improve leading standards and just to make our work process more efficient. And now we could see that machines just moving from the manufacturing side, from replacing manual jobs, into some menial parts of cognition. It's a natural step forward and I think we have to look for the ways to incorporate

it into our working process than mourning and spreading the doomsaying predictions.

JORDAN: Of course, yeah. Look, you're a super fascinating guy. That's one of the reasons I wanted to get you on, especially after I read the book [\*Winter Is Coming\*](#). Obviously you don't need to work another day in your life but instead of coasting it and living on easy street, you're speaking out against arguably the most dangerous thing to vocally be against, which is Vladimir Putin and oppressive regimes around the world.

GARRY: It's probably part of my Soviet education or cultural background. I grew up in this intellectual environment where doubts about the moral validity of the Soviet regime was widespread. I've been traveling abroad since I was 13 and I could immediately collect this information and just put it together and just realize that something was wrong in the country where I was born and raised. Then fighting Karpov and the Soviet system that was behind him made me even more aware about these challenges. And I believed it was my duty as the world champion -- the young world champion in the mid '80s -- to join the protect democracy movement that was formed under Gorbachev's years and help my country move away from communism into the free world. And then I just thought that was it.

In the '90s I was less active but when I saw Putin rising, I just immediately realized that my country was in great danger and the world as well because I heard him saying clear and loud, "Once KGB, always KGB. The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century." I saw him as one of the first act as Russian president, to restore the Soviet anthem, which is a very important, symbolic gesture, telling the world and of course people who are born in the Soviet Union, that was his -- call it geopolitical dream -- what Putin could do if given the chance.

I've been saying for years that Putin was our problem but eventually it will be everybody's problem because that's what I

read in the books about other dictators. When they run out of enemies in their own country and the economy is no longer serving them well, they look for foreign aggression -- for adventures out of the country to blame enemies elsewhere for the collapse of the economy and social infrastructure.

JORDAN: So basically, the changing of the national anthem back to the Soviet national anthem is kind of a metaphor for, "Hey guess what? We're going back to Soviet times."

GARRY: It was kind of a statement. It was not yet there because Putin, I think, was quite opportunistic and if you go all the way back to the '30s when people say, "Oh, how can you compare anybody to Hitler?" because I did it many times. I said, "Look, we are not talking about Hitler from history books. We're talking about Hitler from 1933, '34, '35, '36. Read newspapers -- New York Times, London Times, Le Monde, Toronto Star -- they all thought about him as being an autocratic leader but nobody thought about him being able to start this armageddon. All dictators -- they grab what they're allowed to grab. They don't ask, "Why?" they always ask, "Why not?" And the policy of appeasement, hoping that, "Oh, maybe you'll be satisfied with this piece and will not move forward."

That was a disaster in the '30s and that's what I've been warning would be a disaster with Putin. Seventy years later, as I predicted, eventually Putin went beyond Russian borders. So he attacked neighboring countries in 2007 -- first attack 10 years ago in Estonia -- cyber attack. And then he decided that he could start attacking other countries in the vicinity of Russia -- so, former Soviet Union like Republic of Georgia. And he believed that he was in the position to dictate the terms to the free world, saying that, "Let's go back to the 19th century or early 20th century where big powers could decide for small countries. Forget about all this consensus, all these arrangements, all these diplomatic negotiations. It's about big guys deciding for others and I'm not going just to play by the rules."

JORDAN: Sadly, you've been a very accurate prophet when it comes to Vladimir Putin. And it's interesting that the regime used to support your chess opponent and you were on the other side then. You're definitely on the other side now and it seems like Putin plays political chess really well so you're just the guy to talk about this stuff.

GARRY: I'm always reluctant to accept Putin as the political or geopolitical chess player.

JORDAN: Really?

GARRY: Look, I always say that I have to defend the integrity of my game.

JORDAN: Okay.

GARRY: And the reason I'm saying it is that chess is the 100 percent transparent game. I have my pieces, you have your pieces. So we play the game. I don't know what you have in mind but I know exactly what resources you can use to do harm to me and vice versa. Now we're talking about Putin the dictator and dictators don't like transparency. They hate transparency. That's why I always say Putin is more likely a poker player. And, I have to give him credit, he's a very good poker player. Because he doesn't have -- he never had a strong hand. In poker you can win with a weak hand if you can bluff, if you can raise the stakes, and if you know how to read your opponent's mind, especially if your opponent is weak, or indecisive, and misreads your intentions, as it happened with Bush 43 and especially with Obama. And I'm not even counting many European leaders.

So Putin realized that even with a weak hand -- having a pair of fives -- he could keep bluffing, he will win since nobody wanted confrontation. Everybody believed that by giving up here and there, they could satisfy Putin's appetite, not recognizing that confrontation with the free world, for many years, or has become Putin's main chip in the Russian domestic political

casino. He has nothing else to offer to Russian public but the idea of Russian greatness and Russia being a fortress of good surrounded by the world's evil and Putin as the White Knight -- the only one who can protect it.

JORDAN: Right. You're arguing that Putin is not a master strategist but, like you said, a poker player who's just maybe playing aggressively in the face of opponents.

GARRY: He's a tactician. He's a tactician. Again, dictators who are in power for so long, they cannot afford the luxury of being strategists, because if you're a strategist, you start thinking long term. But, a dictator has to survive and he knows that if he looks weak or too dreamy, he could be shot or stabbed by his own guys. So that's why it's all about, "I survive tonight, maybe tomorrow morning, and we'll see what happens." They're very good at that. "I could make plans but these plans should be connected to what I do tonight, tomorrow morning, to make sure I'm still in the game, and then I'll find something else," because he's not abiding by the rules. He doesn't care what happens after him.

And this is one of the fundamental problems of the free world, facing Putin and other dictators. Because today, we keep forgetting that the strength of democracy is more like chess. We can strategize, we can rely on institutions that will continue even when the president or prime minister just goes away and somebody else is in the office. So, going back to the '40s, we could see that many of the key institutions that secure the survival of the free world and eventual victory in the Cold War, were built by Harry Truman's administration, like NATA, CIA, National Security Council, The Voice of America -- the propaganda outlet that helped to work in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union -- Marshall Plan for Europe, and it's those four institutions that couldn't bring immediate benefits to the administration but it was like investing in the future.

Many presidents that followed Harry Truman -- they just worked not for immediate benefits of the administration but

definitely recognizing that it's an ongoing struggle. And so from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan, U.S. foreign policy was fairly consistent. There was some deviation but they knew that there was an enemy -- existential enemy -- and they had to be vigilant and to keep their act together. And then since 1991, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. foreign policy worked more like a pendulum, swinging from one side to another, which definitely created a lot of frustration in the free world and a lot of anxiety -- even joy -- on the other side because the bad guys realized that the United States no longer had the same commitment as before.

JORDAN: Yeah, there's this irony in all of this where he knows the West will always back down so he can do whatever he wants. This is sort of standard practice for dictators, who it seems like you're saying -- dictators even though they say, "All right, I'm now in power until 2035," they're planning that way outwardly but inwardly they're just trying to survive until the next morning. That's interesting. I had never thought of that.

GARRY: Exactly. And again, he knows that he's in power to the rest of his life. Now, this is bad news. But the good news is he also doesn't know when and how his life will end. Dictators know a lot but they cannot read their own fortunes.

JORDAN: Yikes. That would be a crazy way to live. Another irony here is that Putin used to root for you in chess tournaments when he was in East Germany working for the KGB. Do you know about this?

GARRY: Look, I read it but one of Putin's colleagues that said it. Don't forget that the story was publicized in Russia at the time when it was not clear whether Putin wanted to be seen as the old fashioned Soviet guy. Maybe I'm too suspicious, too paranoid -- maybe he rooted for me because I was younger and he also was a younger generation. Maybe he thought that it would be good for the country. I don't know but I have my own doubts that it was a real story because everything we learn about Putin from sources close to him, is kind of a fake story called fake news --

which is a typical KGB operation of misleading and misinforming and creating the wrong image.

JORDAN: What sort of image would it create to know that he rooted for you back in his KGB days in East Germany? What would that do for his image?

GARRY: It depends on the timing when the story was released, that's what I said.

JORDAN: Right, yeah.

GARRY: Maybe in the '90s -- it was definitely because it was New Russia and it was Boris Yeltsin's time, democratic Russia -- maybe that was good for him. That would give him better connections to new government -- better image that he was a reformist who could be rooting for the underdog. I don't know but since I never heard him actually saying that, to me it still could be fake news. When two people facing each other in a major competition, sometimes it's not political at all and it could be purely psychological and maybe for some reasons he was rooting for me. Though again, I have my doubts. In 1996 I was in St. Petersburg invited by Mayor Sobchak -- Anatoly Sobchak.

JORDAN: Yes.

GARRY: And Vladimir Putin was his deputy. Sobchak invited me, it was just a few months before elections where Sobchak lost. And by the way, Putin runs his campaign. That's a lesson he learned from the campaign, that reelections are unpredictable. So that's why Putin never participated in reelections and never participated in any debate in his life. I was there spending a few hours with Sobchak, I had lunch with him -- it's amazing that I couldn't recall seeing Putin's face around, which tells you about the KGB guy. He's one of the top officials in Sobchak's town hall. I'm there as a guest of honor and he's nowhere around. So that's why I have my doubts that if he really was rooting for me, that could be a good opportunity to actually show up and say, "Whoa, hey Garry, I am so happy you're here."

JORDAN: Oh, yeah, and since he wasn't there and didn't bother, maybe he never cared.

GARRY: Maybe he was there but I couldn't see him because again, if the KGB guy doesn't want you to see him, I'm sure they can be around without you noticing them.

JORDAN: He was under the table the whole time. Plot twist.

GARRY: Yes.

JORDAN: It's clear that you bring the same intensity to politics as you do -- or did -- to chess. What did chess teach you about politics, political maneuvering -- what overlap is there?

GARRY: That was the first question I've been asked and asked many times every since, after I left my professional chess in 2005. So whether playing chess would be helpful in navigating in Russian politics -- and my answer instantly was no because in chess we have strict rules and unpredictable results -- fixed rules and unpredictable results. And in Putin's Russia, it was exactly the opposite. Rules change all the time but results stay the same.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah, good point. Wow, I hadn't even thought about it like that but you're right. The rules seem to be quite flexible. There was a phrase I used to hear -- "Nothing is true," or, "Nothing is allowed, everything is possible." Something like this.

GARRY: Peter Pomerantsev, yes. Great book.

JORDAN: So why is it that you don't want to be introduced as a former Russian presidential candidate. I read that and it just seems like a strange thing to not want on the resume.

GARRY: When we are talking to an American audience or a European audience, the moment you say former presidential candidate, people think, "Oh. It's a real political battle. The man was

engaged in a presidential campaign," which means you can create your political party or your organization, you can participate in debates, you can do fundraising, you can meet your voters -- nothing from this menu is available and nothing was available in Putin's Russia. It was more like a statement to demonstrate that you couldn't run against Putin unless Kremlin approves your candidacy.

They just stopped me by not allowing me to have a meeting in Moscow because by the rules, you have to bring 500 people in the hall and you have to register them, they have to support you -- I hope you don't doubt that I could afford to rent a proper place in Moscow -- which I did. After many refusals, we actually got one and the night before our meeting, which was close to the deadline of registration, they cancelled the contract, returned the money saying, "Technical reasons." The day after my scheduled meeting there, they had one of Putin's puppets running the very same meeting in the very same place.

JORDAN: Right, so whatever technical reason they had to cancel your meeting was fixed within a day.

GARRY: They don't care. That's why when you say presidential candidate, it gives the wrong impression that in Putin's Russia you can compete against him politically. Putin had never participated in a single political debate in his life. It's always him talking to the people like all dictators did. He talks to people, answering the questions that have been selected. Everybody knows that all these so-called direct lines are being rehearsed for weeks. People have been selected, every question has been rehearsed. That's the way a dictator communicates with his people.

JORDAN: So you were never a candidate because of all the B.S. involved.

GARRY: I would be very happy to compete with any of Putin's cronies and of course debating with him but it's impossible because he doesn't debate. He's a dictator. He doesn't care. All he wants is just to make sure that he pretends that he participates in kind

of a political competition. But at the end of the day, whatever the process, he must be the winner at the end. So that's why they change -- here and there -- these tiny details. But at the end of the day, it's all Putin the victorious.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Back in the '90s, you were shouting from the rooftops about the fall of communism and the dangers here. Nobody believed you, which sucks. How do you manage the energy then and now of being one of the only ones delivering a very unpopular/unlikely message to a bunch of people who don't want to hear it?

GARRY: Look, I don't think I'm alone -- the only one.

JORDAN: No.

GARRY: There were many people -- many great people, many brave people that marched with me in our peaceful rallies in Moscow, in St. Petersburg, and other Russian cities. Most of them are in exile, many of them in jails, and some of them are a great leader like Boris Nemtsov, the former deputy prime minister who was murdered more than two years ago in front of the Kremlin. These people -- they shared my vision of the future of our country. Since Boris has gone and the very few people -- if anyone -- is left who could be as loud and conspicuous as myself and I feel it as my duty to speak on their behalf because there are many millions of Russians that have no voice, they live under dictatorship, and for them, taking to the streets or just making protest is risky -- is really risky. I didn't think before that I would have to live in exile but four and a half years ago I had no other choice but to leave my country since I was already part of the criminal investigation for my political activities. And late Boris Nemtsov gave me his wise advice just to leave the country saying, "You'd better be outside and just to the job rather than being arrested here." Unfortunately he didn't follow this advice himself.

JORDAN: Yeah and he ended up dead in the street within the view of the Kremlin, right?

GARRY: Yeah, it's about 150 yards from the Kremlin and that was more like an execution. Nobody believes that it could be done by anyone rather than one of the KGB guys because it was shot in the middle of the bridge that leads straight to the Kremlin gates. There are more video cameras there than in Fort Knox and of course, none of them worked that night.

JORDAN: Right, they were all off.

GARRY: Oh, they're all off and so the kangaroo court that actually tried alleged killers that -- in my view -- were not part of this crime. They didn't even ask or didn't demand Russian security that controlled the bridge and the cameras, the video footage because they were simply told, "Not available." Period.

JORDAN: Geez. Unbelievable. And a lot of people that you used to work for similar causes, such as democracy in Russia, are dead -- meeting similar violent ends in Moscow or elsewhere, usually via a hitman. I mean, how concerned are you for this, personally?

GARRY: I am concerned. That's why I live outside of Russia and I try to limit some of my foreign travel -- not visiting places where I believe that KGB could have an easy ride just doing some of their dirty jobs. That's the question that makes me and especially my family very uncomfortable. So we live in New York, I have to just around the world, just to places where people invite me to do speeches and different appearances. I have to limit my travel map, eliminating places where I don't feel secure. Though, of course, we know that Putin's enemies could be in real danger even in the U.K., yet nothing has happened on U.S. soil.

JORDAN: Is it true that you don't fly russian airlines unless you absolutely have to?

GARRY: That was the case 12 years ago. I tried to avoid flying Aeroflot when I was in Russia fighting Putin -- so recognizing that in the plane you could be offered some food or drink that may not be complementary to your health. But now it's no longer the case. I'm out of Russia for four and a half years so I don't have to fly Aeroflot and don't have to think about it.

JORDAN: Yeah, I heard you used to bring your own food on the plane.

GARRY: Living in Putin's Russia, you have to be cautious and just make some precise calculations about what you do next. But again, I tried to limit my Aeroflot flights. They were very short flights so I could definitely make sure that I was out of anger. But it was sort of a minor problem because in 2007 I was arrested for the first time. Now spending five days in Putin's jail -- that's far more dangerous than Aeroflot.

JORDAN: Yeah.

GARRY: That was a first warning. So I was arrested a few times, beaten -- and I just realized in 2013, they started this massive criminal case against a bunch of political activists that even though I was never covered and I could take a lot of risk, but it was too much. Especially considering that I have a family and I decided to follow Boris' advice -- Boris Nemtsov's advice -- and leave the country.

JORDAN: And even now though, I mean, looking at what happened to Alexander Litvinenko who was poisoned with radioactive polonium, which literally can only come from certain places in Russia --

GARRY: Yeah, absolutely.

JORDAN: That's got to keep you up at night at some level.

GARRY: I don't drink tea with strangers. It's about being cautious as much as you can. I try to make sure that, again, I limit my contacts with people that I'm not 100 percent confident to the

absolute minimum and just to be with someone -- this meetings. But again, living in the States, I'm fairly comfortable that I can avoid the worst. Again, because I don't drink tea with strangers. I could probably feel now where the danger comes from. Though again, this is something that you cannot stop. I always quote a phrase of Colonel Abel from Bridge of Spies -- great movie.

JORDAN: Yeah.

GARRY: Recent movie. When he was asked by his lawyer -- by Donovan --

JORDAN: "Are you worried?"

GARRY: "Are you worried? Would it help?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

GARRY: "Would it help?"

JORDAN: Exactly. I knew exactly which line you were talking about.

GARRY: Exactly. Yeah, exactly.

JORDAN: You can worry all you want and that might kill you faster than polonium 212.

GARRY: Eh -- 210.

JORDAN: 210, oh, well.

GARRY: Off by two...

JORDAN: I was off by two protons or --

GARRY: Yes, exactly. Yes, yes.

JORDAN: -- two neutrons. Looking at the show trials and the telephone justice and things like that -- this is something that boggles my mind. Coming from a law and legal background myself, it would just be so humiliating and judges in the United States, as you know -- in the West in general -- are often at odds with governmental power and authority. It's unthinkable to us as westerners, that a judge would get a phone call from some government lackey minister and make decisions that way or say, "Oh, I guess there's no evidence of this murder," even though you know that everyday when you walk to work, there's 87 video cameras recording you. What are these people doing? Are they just as scared as everyone else or are the cronies? I mean what's going on here with the legal system?

GARRY: It's a dictatorship. I understand it's sounds inconsiderable for people who were born and raised and still live in a free world That's the judge -- who looks like a judge is not the judge. He or she is a clerk. They're just following instructions. We had so many cases -- they were small cases by current standards. Ten years ago -- I call it vegetarian times because for chanting, "Down with Putin," you can go to jail for 5 or 10 days. Now you will end up in jail for five years...

Those are the differences in numbers. It's like quantitative differences, but qualitative differences, there are none because the trial was a mockery from the very beginning. I think one of the key cases was at early days when I was arrested. I had video demonstrating that I was arrested in a different place and I was arrested by the riot police, and the head guy there, just lying under oath -- a police officer saying, "I arrested him." I said, "What do you mean? I never met you." He said, "No, I arrested you." I said, "Where?" "Oh, I arrested you at 1:30 at Mayakovsky Square." I said, "But there's a video! I was arrested 45 minutes earlier by riot police at a different square." And then the judge said, "No, I trust this guy because he's wearing a uniform." Fullstop.

JORDAN: Geez.

GARRY: That's in the court papers. That's 2007. Now, imagine what's happening now, 10 years later.

JORDAN: Right, because Russia only had eight years of democracy, which means that this has already backslid that much more.

GARRY: But it's very important. This is the way that they pretended to follow the law but at the end of the day, this is a core element of Putin's law. "We always trust the man in uniform," and so many people now are in jail. So many people just suffered immensely because the men in uniform -- in Putin's Russia -- is always right.

JORDAN: That's why it's so much easier to install a dictator than to remove one, because you believe what they're going to say. It's scary, the politicians that we trust the most to do what they say, are often the dictators and they're the ones who say that they're going to do the most horrible things. And so, we have to be really careful with this. Even in democracy and things like that. Do Russians understand they've lost so many of their freedoms? I don't mean to sound insulting or condescending but it seems like nobody would put up with this and yet I look at the United States as well and I feel like we've lost a ton of our freedoms -- we lose more here and there -- and we might just sit back and take it too. In fact, we are.

GARRY: Let's start with the United States. I live in the United States, three out four of my kids are U.S. citizens, so that's why I do care about the future of this great country. I actually -- I can tell you that to the country -- I think America now is awakening. I think that we should -- believe it or not -- we should praise Donald Trump for making it clear that the danger was real. For so many years I have been trying to tell Americans that nothing is for granted. And -- well it's your problem. In Russia, in China, in North Korea, elsewhere -- in America, it's all carved into stone. Really. Are you sure? It's all about fighting for your freedom, for your rights and now, like, truly amazed to see the potential of the country that is awakening. By the way, one of the greatest things that happened is how the courts -- the law

courts and the appeal courts -- they turned down Trump's executive order.

JORDAN: Refugee ban.

GARRY: Exactly, refugee ban. Okay, Supreme Court may restore it but it's a legal process. It was, by the way, a big shock in Putin's Russia how to actually interpret it because the idea of Putin's and other dictators is to say, "America -- it's not a democracy. At the end of the day, it's all fake. It's a cover up. The man who wins the elections will do whatever he or she wants to do. The man in the White House -- whoever sits there -- will decide for the rest of the country and nobody can stop him." Really. Now you could look at the situation with the travel ban. It was a big hurdle for Putin's propaganda machine because the judge in Seattle just turned down -- or just stopped this ban -- and the judge was not arrested, was not dismissed. And instead of doing something horrible to the judge, Trump administration had to go to appeal court and lost again.

That's the demonstration of how democracy works -- that the separation of power is not a fake. It's real. It doesn't mean that a country is safe because you have someone in the White House who can still do a lot of damage to the country and probably will as long as he stays in the office. Still it shows that the checks and balances installed by the founding fathers are very much in place. But of course the mechanism is rusty and you have to work on it but it sends a good signal to people in Russia or in other places that democracy is a living thing. It's an institution that has to be revived all the time. Each generation should add something to make sure that the mechanism is functioning properly. It's a funny paradox that is, again, hard to explain to Americans or Europeans.

In the late '80s, early '90s, when the Soviet Union was about to collapse, it was a fairly simple process -- that's why I predicted it a few years in advance, because I could see that the system was exhausted and people didn't want it anymore. Because the system couldn't provide anything for them. People looked

outside of the Soviet Union -- they looked to the West, thinking, "Oh, the West has democracy and the West has much better living standards. So let's have democracy. Let's vote and that will bring us higher living standards."

Democracy was installed, people voted for Yeltsin once and twice, but instead of receiving immediate benefits, many of them saw even harder times. Economic hardship was all over the place. The country was on the verge of collapse. So, many of them thought, "Oh, it was not real democracy because it didn't bring automatically an improvement in our lives." And Putin gradually took over one piece of freedom after another. But because of the high oil prices have been rising rapidly, Putin could build some social infrastructure and offer something -- in small numbers but it guaranteed steady improvement of people's lives.

And for many of those who were born in the Soviet Union and who had no ideas about checks and balances and separation of powers, they saw an improvement of their lives, they still kept voting, and that's why Putin believed that preserving the voting mechanism was important for him. They thought, "Oh, maybe it's democracy. We live in democracy because we still vote, there's some kind of quasi-political life, but at the end of the day, we could see a steady and gradual improvement of our lives."

JORDAN:

It's been said, and I think this was in your book actually, that -- we have to trust our institutions here in the United States and in the West and not individual leaders and individual people because what one of the primary differences is between communism and capitalism or at least between totalitarian states and democratic states is that communism -- it has this sort of autoimmune disorder that it puts into society, right? It doesn't do the killing itself, it just weakens the institutions, weakens the judges, weakens all of the people and the balance of power so much that then you can't fight off anything else like a dictator or an authoritarian. There's nothing in place to stop it at that point. You catch a cold and you die.

GARRY: Absolutely. But also, let's not forget that the Trump phenomenon is not unexpected because it happens when the country is frustrated and the country has no vision of the future. People are just upset and they look backwards. Most of the Trump voters -- they looked backwards for these golden days. They're paralyzed. They don't see any immediate benefits for them in the future. They are willing to buy any story that comes out of a populist who just doesn't care about lying and misleading people and just telling them whatever they want to hear.

JORDAN: So is it a difference then that we have between appeasing Putin and World War III? Because I see a lot of isolationist folks trumpeting this trope all the time. "Well you have to either appease him or we're going to go to war with Russia." Do you think that Putin would back down if he was properly challenged?

GARRY: How about reading history books? That's exactly what we heard in the thirties.

JORDAN: Yeah.

GARRY: Appeasement or World War II.

JORDAN: Right.

GARRY: So we got both. No, appeasing a dictator is the way to actually make his appetite so big that he will cross the red line -- ultimate red line. The choice between appeasement and the war, between appeasement and deterrence. Because a dictator, at a certain point, is not strong enough to go full monty because it's not just about him, he his generals, they have colonels, they have majors, they have other members of the elite -- they all have doubts and in 1937, 1938 Hitler was not ready to start a war because the country was not ready. The top people, top brass -- military brass -- or top bureaucrats -- they had big doubts that Germany could afford a war. But every day a dictator stays in

power, every new concession the free world makes to him, creates a new memento, so he looks invincible. He looks too powerful and nobody can oppose him and when he decides to go crazy, there's no one around to stop him.

JORDAN: Is there anything else that I have not asked you that you want to make sure you bring home?

GARRY: I have to say that I'm an optimist. Even looking at the latest development between Trump and Putin, I still believe that humanity has a purpose. We don't know exactly what is the purpose but things should get better. But it's all about us to make the difference. That's a very important message. No one else is going to change things now. People just don't recognize that we are empowered by the great technology. Each of us has a device in our pocket or purse that is a thousand times more powerful than Cray's supercomputer in 1976. So, so many great things we can do by being engaged. So, my message is always let's get engaged so we can do many things by promoting new ideas, by creating some new social networks, and making sure that our future will not be decided by crazy paranoid guys that are looking always back, trying just to push us in the wrong direction.

JORDAN: Garry, thank you so much. This has been really, really great, really enlightening -- love the conversation, the overlap --

GARRY: Thank you very much. So, okay. So, you are not challenging me for the game of chess.

JORDAN: No, I am not going to challenge you to the game of chess. You'd have to show me what all the pieces do. That's my level of chess. Wow, that was interesting, man. That took a totally different turn -- just really glad when that happens sometimes. And this was a really good outcome, I think. Garry is an interesting guy, fascinating guy, high performer, former presidential candidate -- almost presidential candidate -- and author of [\*Deep Thinking\*](#) and [\*Winter Is Coming. Winter Is Coming\*](#) is a book about the Putin situation. [\*Deep Thinking\*](#) is

about AI creativity. I would love to have him back and talk more on that as well.

And I want to say a big thank you or spasibo to the KGB or rather the FSB -- then again, once KGB always KGB. Lackey that is tasked with listening to this episode of The Art of Charm podcast, I hope you've enjoyed this and please check out our other episodes. I think you'll really enjoy the show, konechno. And a shout out to the Jack Barsky episode, speaking of KGB. If you like this kind of stuff, if you're into the whole intrigue thing, look for the episode we did with Jack Barsky. He was a KGB agent that came to America posing as an American, lived undercover for 20 years, and recently got caught. And I'll let you listen to the episode to find out some of the other details on that one.

Great big thank you to Garry Kasparov. The book titles again, of course, [Deep Thinking](#) and [Winter Is Coming](#). Of course those will be linked up in the show notes for this episode. If you enjoyed this one, don't forget to thank Garry on Twitter. We'll have that linked in the show notes as well. And tweet me your number one takeaway from Garry Kasparov. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. And as usual, we'll be replying to your questions and feedback for Garry on Fan Mail Friday.

If you're looking for the show notes, tap your phone screen, they should pop up. And don't forget the AoC challenge, designed to make you a better networker, a better connector, a better thinker -- that's at [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or text AoC to 38470. That's A-O-C to 38470.

We're going to take you through networking skills, connection skills, help you develop personal and professional relationships -- It's free. That's the point. It's a great way to get the ball rolling and get some forward momentum and shake off a little rust. And we'll email you our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show as well. That includes some great stuff, ready to apply, right out of the box. Practical applications, drills, exercises on reading body language, nonverbal communication,

the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, persuasion tactics, networking and influence strategies, everything that we teach here at The Art of Charm. It'll make you a better at all of those skill sets. So text A-O-C to 38470 or just go to [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge).

For full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to [theartofcharm.com/podcast](http://theartofcharm.com/podcast). This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo, Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor, show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty, theme music by Little People, transcription by [TranscriptionOutsourcing.net](http://TranscriptionOutsourcing.net) -- I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else, either in person or shared on the Web. Word of mouth is everything so share the show with your friends and your enemies, stay charming, and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.



