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## Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with TASS news agency, Moscow, March 28, 2023

**Question:** I have a question about Russia-US relations. It was reported earlier that the parties had “some contacts” regarding the New START Treaty. Are these contacts still on, and what kind of a disaster has to happen for Moscow and Washington to finally sit down and discuss the new international order?

**Sergey Lavrov:** There are no contacts concerning the New START Treaty with the Americans. They keep sending us notes, protesting and saying we have no right to make the decision we have made. These are legally void arguments. We made it very clear through the President's remarks and the Foreign Ministry statement that the Americans undermined the fundamental principles underlying the treaty, which are set out in the preamble and explicitly state that Russia and the United States will develop cooperative relations based on mutual trust and respect and ensure indivisible security as part of their efforts to maintain strategic stability. There is no need to convince anyone that these principles have been trampled upon and scrapped by the current US administration.

Are you aware of what else they are accusing us of? We announced that even though we suspended the treaty we will comply with its measurable indicators as long as it remains valid, that is through 2026. They claimed that Russia was allegedly trying to cherry pick the obligations under the treaty that it will comply with. This isn't so.

We have suspended this treaty in full. Our decision to comply with the strategic offensive arms ceilings set in the treaty is nothing more than a gesture of goodwill.

With regard to your question about what needs to happen for us to resume contacts with the United States, they must mend their ways and go back to civilised principles of maintaining relations between states, including the principles

enshrined in the New START Treaty. Of course, they must be guided by the UN Charter principles, which stipulate the need to respect the sovereign equality of states. Their actions are directly at odds with this principle. An all-out hybrid war has been declared on Russia. In a situation where the United States is pursuing this kind of policy, I don't see what needs to change, except in the US establishment and the collective West, which has been brought to Washington's heel.

Hopefully, someday reason and the logic of dialogue rather than confrontation will prevail, the logic of the balance of interests rather than seeking solutions to one's geopolitical goals through hybrid or other wars. So far, we have not seen any sign of the United States being open to thinking about the need to return to the source enshrined in international legal documents, primarily the UN Charter.

**Question:** In recent weeks, the subject of Transnistria has been intermittently making headlines or going low-key. What is your forecast concerning Transnistria? Could the situation arise where Russia will need to intervene to protect the Russian world in that region?

**Sergey Lavrov:** Transnistria is home to 220,000 Russian citizens. Of course, we are responsible for them. Our peacekeeping contingent is stationed there, as well as a military force that stands guard at the huge Cobasna ammunition depot. We have a mandate that was agreed upon with all parties a long time ago. We are convinced that this mandate remains fully valid and we will continue to be guided by it.

Speaking of the overall situation in Transnistria, it has worsened as a result of the President Sandu-led Moldovan government's policy that is openly spearheaded against Russia, the Russian people and Transnistria.

The so-called separatism is now a punishable offence. However, we do not see any separatist sentiments in Transnistria. We see Transnistria's leadership firmly committed to fulfilling the 5+2 agreements that are aimed at a full and mutually acceptable settlement of Transnistria's status.

Unfortunately, the 5+2 format has been essentially frozen largely due to the West, which decided to take the settlement process into its own hands and impose it on Tiraspol. It is fully supportive of the confrontational, short-sighted and dead-end policy pursued by President Maia Sandu.

The Ukrainian leadership is playing an extremely negative and subversive role as well. In violation of its status as a 5 + 2 format mediator, it sided with

Chisinau and is in every possible way supporting its belligerent and destructive aspirations towards Transnistria as it builds defences and fortifications between Ukraine and Transnistria and demonstrates in every way its readiness to intervene in this process, including with the use of force.

To reiterate, Russia is responsible for security in Transnistria in full accordance with the mandate of our military personnel. We will be guided by this mandate.

**Question:** I have a question about Ukraine which people often ask journalists. What will become of Ukraine and will anything be left of it?

**Sergey Lavrov:** Any reasonable human being concerned about the future of the people who live in Ukraine or other post-Soviet countries for that matter is asking this question. There's no need to go over the timeline of this crisis that followed the bloody anti-constitutional coup, when the West decided once again to threaten Russia by nurturing Nazi theory and practice.

In this particular case, this is being done through the leadership of Ukraine, which grabbed power unlawfully. We are aware of the manifestations of Russophobia and outright racism when everything that is Russian is outlawed, and Nazi organisations are directly supported by the authorities. They are openly doing march pasts, sometimes in the presence of guests from Western countries, and flaunting stripes that reproduce insignia of the SS divisions banned by the verdict of the Nuremberg Tribunal.

Another question is important in this regard. Who is fighting for what? President of Ukraine Zelensky is "honestly" pursuing his predecessors' policies. The first proactive move by the putschists was the demand to cancel the regional status of the Russian language and banish Russians from Crimea.

Then the people who set up shop in the government and were recognised by the West had something to say as well. For example, then Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk described as "subhuman" the Russians in southeastern Ukraine who disagreed with the coup. Subsequently, Poroshenko became President of Ukraine and flaunted his ideas claiming that the Ukrainian regime would definitely defeat the people who opposed the coup and that the children of Ukrainians who are loyal to the regime would go to excellent kindergartens, schools and universities, whereas the children of the Ukrainians who did not accept the coup would sit in the basements.

When Zelensky was recently asked what he thought about the people in

Donbass, he said they were “species” adding that if a citizen of Ukraine feels part of the Russian culture and the Russian world then, for the sake of the future of their children and grandchildren, they should clear out for Russia.

Now, with the support of Europe, the United States and the collective West in general, Vladimir Zelensky and his camarilla demand the return of the territories that were within the borders of Ukraine in 1991, when it became independent. I would like to ask those who pander to such demands: how are they going to feel about what will happen to these people? Theoretically, even though it doesn't bear thinking about. However, those who are invoking this should think about how these people, if they suddenly find themselves again within the borders of Ukraine as it was in 1991, will feel when they are called “species” or “subhuman” and when they are told to forget everything that is Russian or make off to Russia?

Unlike those who are fighting for such a destiny for Ukraine under the current Nazi leadership, we are conducting our special military operation for the sake of the people who are being oppressed in violation of every conceivable international regulation or principle, and in violation of the very foundations underlying independent Ukraine, whose declaration of independence explicitly states that they want to be a neutral, non-aligned state and will be such. It directly declares the provision of all the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking citizens and, in general, of all ethnic minorities, and their desire to live in peace and harmony with their neighbours. All of that has been crossed out and thrown to the neo-Nazis who rule the roost in Kiev.

We know what we are fighting for. We want to free these people from any threat that the current Ukrainian authorities can create for their lives, traditions, or families. History and geography cannot be chosen. We cannot leave these people to the mercy of Nazis and racists.



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