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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with the Great Game programme on Channel One, Moscow, June 28, 2023

Question: President of the United States Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have said in their statements that Washington was not involved in any manner in the June 24, 2023 mutiny. They even claimed that they do not interfere in the domestic affairs of our country.

When the United States does not like something happening in Ukraine, the White House adopts a rather straightforward position, regardless of what Russia does, by treating Russia as an aggressor state, saying that there would be no war in Ukraine if not for Russia, and that Russia is to blame, no matter what happens.

If we follow this logic, the situation in which the Wagner Private Military Company came to play its particular role, paving the way to a mutiny would not have materialised if not for NATO's persistent efforts to advance towards the Russian border or the role the alliance, primarily the United States, currently plays in Ukraine. Would you agree that from an objective standpoint it was the US that triggered last week's events?

Sergey Lavrov: We have been hearing recurring assertions that the United States was not involved in any way whatsoever in these developments. But apart from public statements, we know how Washington orchestrates the response by its officials. We have reason to believe reports alleging that when it all started, or even the day before that, the Department of State rushed to instruct its foreign missions to refrain from commenting on this situation so that no one could argue that the United States was somehow involved. According to information at our disposal, and I tend to trust these reports, Kiev also received instructions at the same time warning the Ukrainians against seizing the opportunity to stage any acts of sabotage on Russian territory or other provocations. I cannot guarantee one hundred percent the accuracy of these reports, but they were quite reliable and plausible.

Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House, John Kirby, has said that the United States does not interfere in Russia's domestic affairs and does not intend to carry out regime change in our country. But knowing the track record of the United States as far as regime change is concerned, this statement has a hollow ring compared to other countries and territories about which the United States did not make any statements along these lines. There were American foundations and NGOs working in Russia just a few years ago. What did they do here? They went to great lengths to court and train the opposition. I do not think that we need to go into details on this subject. There is obvious double-dealing here.

I would refer the gist of your question to the so-called cancel culture phenomenon. The United States and the West in general have a knack for cancelling everything that fails to meet their interests. In this case, this is just another example of the way they cancel contemporary history, in particular when dealing with periods leading to conflict or crisis. NATO's expansion is a process – it planted the seeds which produced such an ugly yield.

As for more recent history, many things only happened as a result of the coup d'état in Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin said on many occasions that we had no intention of supporting the Crimean movement towards reunification with Russia under legitimate and legitimately elected presidents [in Ukraine]. After the coup was staged, the opposition leaders, nurtured by the Americans, went back on the agreement they signed with President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich to settle the crisis peacefully and to hold an early election. The first thing they did on the day of the coup was to announce their plans to terminate the status of the Russian language. Dmitry Yarosh demanded that Russians be expelled from Crimea. The so-called “friendship trains” with thugs were sent to the peninsula to storm the Supreme Council of Crimea. It was a powerful signal, including for our society, which has always had special feelings for the other Slavic nations, in particular Ukrainians and Belarusians.

The agreement was violated despite the guarantees given by France, Germany and Poland in February 2014. Nobody so much as lifted a finger to force the opposition to implement the commitment they had made the night before. Later, the ill-fated Minsk Agreements were violated as well but in a much more dramatic manner. The Minsk signatories (excluding President Putin) have admitted that they never intended to fulfil them, that they only needed more time to pour weapons into

Ukraine for use against Russia. It is a full confession. It has been made openly and in broad daylight. If the Minsk Agreements were implemented, there would have been no need for the special military operation. This is a fact.

Putting the blame on Russia and accusing it of an “unprovoked” aggression are an attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility, to lay the blame at somebody else’s door. This is obvious to everybody, just like the unscrupulous methods used by Western propaganda.

Question: You have mentioned the phrase, “unprovoked aggression,” used by the US administration. It is probably important for the version of events that they want to promote. The White House and President Joe Biden personally should have been aware of the consequences of NATO’s expansion. Why is the US administration behaving like this?

The memoir of William Burns includes the cables he sent to his bosses in the Department of State. They were explicit and dramatic, because he predicted the very serious consequences of NATO enlargement. Ambassador Burns was not a stranger but part of the system who suited everyone. After his term in Moscow, he was appointed Under Secretary for Political Affairs and later promoted to Deputy Secretary of State. He is the current Director of the CIA. He made his warnings.

Why were they disregarded? Why is the Biden administration and the congressional majority behaving like this?

Sergey Lavrov: William Burns is acting the way they all do when they return from the private sector to public service. They act in exactly the opposite direction compared to the assessments they made during that period.

We hear and see what the Americans and other NATO members are doing and saying. There are new doctrines out there that were approved at the Madrid NATO summit a year ago that proclaimed China a strategic adversary and a challenge, and Russia an immediate threat of the current period. I rely on the assessments provided by many of my friends who closely follow the evolution of the US position and what the collective West is doing in general. The logic that they see behind the US actions (there has to be some logic from the point of view of the people who approve and carry out the relevant policies) is as follows: we need to eliminate the rebel – Russia – who dared to break the ranks.

Question: So, this is not just about Russia, but about the international order as well?

Sergey Lavrov: First and foremost, if any other country were to resolutely

and firmly defend its national interests in such a way, I'm sure the West would turn against it, too. Their calculation is that this threat is “tactical,” but it is fraught with long-term and existential consequences, and if Russia wins (the way they see it) the threat becomes unacceptable. Hence, the mantras about the importance of inflicting a “strategic defeat” on Russia “on the battlefield.” My colleagues go on to add that this is also important to teach China a lesson. If you look at it from this perspective, the logic of the West, which they are not even hiding, becomes clear. They walk around telling everyone willing to listen that their goal is to keep the “rules-based order” intact. What are these “rules”? Examples abound, depending on the situation that suits the United States.

Question: Has anyone sent you the list of these “rules”?

Sergey Lavrov: No. No one ever sends it.

They said there was no need for a referendum in Kosovo, which declared independence, and that was all it needed to do. There was a referendum in Crimea, though, but it does not mean anything. In Kosovo, the principle of self-determination prevails, while in Crimea, it is the principle of territorial integrity that matters. This completely ignores the fact that the UN stipulates that the territorial integrity of all states whose governments represent the entirety of the people living in a given territory must be respected. What government in Kiev represented the interests of Crimea, Donbass and southeastern Ukraine over the past eight years? I have little doubt that this logic is deep-rooted.

Question: So, the logic behind it is that the hegemon is always right? Is that the underlying rule?

Sergey Lavrov: Of course. It occasionally shows itself, as a Freudian slip, in their statements. Even Josep Borrell, who is considered the head of European diplomacy, is, in fact, serving the interests of the United States in Europe. On his watch, the EU has become Washington's obedient follower. Remember him saying that Europe is a beautiful and blooming “garden” and everything around it is a “jungle?” I hope he wasn't talking about the United States, since the United States is not Europe. But the point is that no one dares to stand up to them. The “rules-based order” is all about them deciding what kind of globalisation system exists in the world, what its service mechanisms will be like, and how trade disputes are resolved. But after the West has overnight torn apart every principle that it had spent many decades drumming into the heads of the rest of the world (the free market, fair and honest competition, presumption of innocence, inviolability of

property, and more), and when they were confronted with the need to punish the Russian Federation, all of the above was weaponised.

The other day, our representative at the IMF Alexey Mozhin spoke publicly on this issue at an IMF meeting in Washington. His remarks triggered a deep thought process in most countries: “What if, come tomorrow, the Americans no longer like what we are doing?” No doubt, the response will be equally tough. But it is a healthy process. It dispels illusions and makes every self-respecting nation that wants to live according to its traditions, to respect its history and ancestors, and to rely on its national interests, follow our example by achieving sovereignty in areas that are vital for the survival of nations. This is not about autarchy. President Putin has said many times that we are open to cooperation. But as far as our former Western partners are concerned, we cannot rely on agreements with them, including legal agreements. This is the kind of a “struggle of the worlds” we’re living in.

Question: According to the White House and the State Department, they adopted a position of non-interference on the day of the uprising amid this “struggle of the worlds.” Allegedly, and on many different levels, they communicated their position to the Russian leadership and the Foreign Ministry. If so, why did they act the way they did? Were you reassured by that to some extent, or was it a tactical ploy?

Sergey Lavrov: One can talk at length about the reasons why they were so vocal in making their position known to the whole world. I agree with the analysts who believe that one of the reasons is their concern about what would happen to nuclear weapons. Nuclear powers are always concerned about this in uncertain situations. I think (I'm not going to make any claims) that the Americans are pushing too hard the idea that they had nothing to do with it. The Europeans did not say anything about their involvement either, but they were much more specific about their stake in this particular situation.

For example, Borrell said the main takeaway from what happened was that Ukraine must continue to receive armaments. He talked about some kind of a “crack” and that it was important to follow through. French President Macron said these developments highlighted the fragility and weakness of Russia and its army, so their policy to support Ukraine was the right thing to do. You can see the same line of thinking Josep Borrell was using. They said it during the very first minutes of the events. There were no more statements of that kind later, but reportedly the EU held ad hoc meetings to address the situation.

I find it hard to draw conclusions about their reasons. However, deep down I think just like in the case we discussed earlier, they are obsessed with preventing the formation of a democratic world order, a multipolar order, and they are using every opportunity to assert their hegemony. They see Ukraine as a tool to prevent the emergence of a multipolar world, in this particular case, to prevent the strengthening of the Russian Federation. Clearly, these designs are doomed. I have no doubt about that. But the fact that grown-up people, serious politicians, are driven by such ideas is causing concern for the fate of the European civilisation and the Western civilisation in general.

Question: Washington has lots of complaints regarding Russia. You don't need me to tell you that. One of them, which we have been hearing increasingly often lately, is that Russia is undermining strategic stability. How do you respond to that?

Sergey Lavrov: I'm not going to try too hard to answer this question. Let's just go over the facts and see who initiated the destruction of the international treaties that ensure strategic stability, starting with the ABM Treaty, the INF Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty and, of course, the START Treaty. The preamble to this treaty laid out the basic inalienable terms and conditions that helped conclude it, such as equality, indivisible security, and interconnectedness of the offensive and defensive strategic arms. All of that was torn apart overnight.

Every time it happened, we didn't just state the fact that the Americans had destroyed just another document. Not at all. Starting with the ABM Treaty, Russian President Putin and US President George W. Bush discussed this issue candidly as friends. Vladimir Putin told George W. Bush openly that if they went ahead and did it, we would be compelled to reciprocate to make sure that the US missile defence system stopped being impenetrable and there was no other way to deal with the situation, because otherwise the President of Russia would have been found at fault by his own country and the rest of humanity. The US president said they were not enemies or adversaries and promised that the missile defence system was not directed against Russia, but was there because of North Korea and Iran, adding that he would not look at Russia's actions as being directed against US interests. That's the way it was.

The finale occurred in 2018, when President Putin, in his Address to the Federal Assembly, talked about our response to the United States terminating the ABM Treaty. We took steps not to replace this treaty, but to compensate for its

absence. Former US Secretary of State and former national security adviser to the president Condoleezza Rice and American businessman Bill Gates came to Russia. They were received in the Kremlin by President Putin. I attended that meeting. The Russian President repeatedly returned to this issue. We agreed on some technical measures that the Americans could take at their (then planned) bases in Poland and Romania, where missile defence systems were deployed. We agreed to these measures and decided that this would make everyone feel more or less safe. But the Americans failed to implement it citing the fact that Poland was against it.

With regard to the INF Treaty, even after the Americans withdrew from it, President Putin said that we would observe a unilateral moratorium on the deployment of the ground-based missiles that were prohibited by the treaty until this class of missiles appears in the West (primarily in the United States and its allies). In addition, we then suggested that NATO come up with a moratorium of its own. We were moving in parallel with two unilateral legal acts. We suggested that the Americans visit the Kaliningrad Region, where our Iskander missiles are deployed, which the West suspected of being capable of carrying missiles to distances that are prohibited by the treaty in exchange for us visiting similar position areas in Poland and Romania. They flat-out refused to do so.

Question: How did they explain their refusal to do so?

Sergey Lavrov: They didn't. They said they didn't believe a word we say, and that was it. We told them to come and see for themselves. President Putin sent a special message to NATO members, primarily, the United States.

With regard to the Open Skies Treaty, we were accused of not letting someone in. The fact is that we did everything in a tit-for-tat manner. Vast swathes of land in some parts of Europe and North America were off-limits to our inspectors for a variety of reasons, mostly technical and logistical tricks that the Americans came up with. So, I cannot agree with the accusation that we destroyed the strategic stability system.

Question: Looking at the war in Ukraine and, more broadly, the situation around Ukraine as it relates to the international order, I have a question for you: who is Russia at war with? If you look at Ukraine, the ground troops are Ukrainian troops, but the weapons, the facilities and the intelligence (including the one that is provided live) are increasingly being provided by the West. Military operations are being planned by NATO generals and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. The West is providing for the Ukrainian military operations and is trying to weaken

Russia, preventing it from obtaining strategic materials or even dual-purpose materials. With that in mind, is it fair to say that by supporting Ukraine it is acting as its sponsor? Or should we confront the facts and acknowledge that Russia is at war with NATO and the collective West? Is this about Russia's confrontation with, as you earlier said, the golden billion, who have turned themselves into a crusader order?

Sergey Lavrov: Without a doubt, the West is Ukraine's sponsor. However, Ukraine is the West's sponsor in a different meaning of the word. It is a tool of war against us. This is not the first time we are bringing this to public attention. Providing his assessment of the situation on June 24, President Putin said we faced the economic, military and media machine of the West, which is how things really are.

You've cited examples showing that without the West this war would already be over and the goals of the special military operation would have been achieved a long time ago. To quote EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, who confided recently in a candid and even naïve manner that if someone wanted to stop the war, doing so was easy. All you need to do is stop supplying Ukraine with the weapons and everything will be over in two weeks or even sooner. Do they want the war to end like that, though? Mr Borrell said they can't afford to see Ukraine lose. The Russians must be defeated.

This was a confession. Any military analyst will confirm that this is the case. The West is waging a war against the Russian Federation.

There are many other examples, including the status of foreign nationals in Ukraine. Some are calling them mercenaries. There are grounds to believe that a number of countries have sent their military personnel there under the guise of mercenaries. Instructors, who are by definition regular military personnel, are operating in Ukraine, though not on the line of contact, it seems. But a vast number of specialists and instructors are at work there. I remember how during the Maidan (which began in 2013 and ended in a coup d'état) representatives of the CIA and other US special services occupied an entire floor in the building of the Security Service of Ukraine. There may be no doubt about it. Everything that they are trying to say as mantras (NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg often says NATO is not at war against the Russian Federation) sounds ridiculous and pathetic. To put it very mildly: grown-up people are telling outright lies. But that makes defending justice all the more important.

I mentioned the special military operation's goals set by President Putin. In addition to demilitarisation, it is to denazify Ukraine. In Ukraine, we are at war against the West and against Nazism, which has reared its head in that country and is being thoroughly cultivated by our Western colleagues.

Take, for example, their approach to talks. Every time this issue comes up, they say there is only one baseline for the talks, which is the Zelensky formula (10 items). Lately the West has been trying to use every avenue to talk the leading developing countries of the Global South into supporting this formula. They recently held a meeting in Copenhagen. It was supposed to be held secretly, but the information still got out. We asked our colleagues who attended it what the West and the Ukrainians wanted to accomplish by inviting the leading countries of the Global Majority.

The West's position is the only basis underlying the Zelensky formula. The president of Ukraine and his administration are saying there can be no other baseline whatsoever. If you take away add-ons like environmental, food and nuclear safety, it is about Russia withdrawing from all territories to the borders of 1991, the Russian leadership being put under a special (or already existing) tribunal, our country paying reparations, after which a peace treaty will be concluded.

The West says this is the only way out of the existing situation. In this war, Ukraine is upholding European and Western civilisation's values. Josep Borrell, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and other Western politicians have made a point of it.

No one has any doubt that Ukraine is run by a Nazi regime. I will not trouble myself or your viewers with examples. They are well known. This is a racist regime because the Russian language is banned everywhere you go in Ukraine, anyone who dares to break the law that states that Ukrainian is the only language that is allowed to be spoken can be subjected to physical violence. This means that Europe identifies with racism, Russophobia, and Nazism because it claims that the Kiev regime promotes European values. Since this is the case, we are left with no other choice than to prevent a revival of Nazism right on our borders.

Question: If I have a correct understanding of Vladimir Zelensky's position, the conditions you have mentioned are necessary just to begin talks, not for signing an agreement. If I understood him correctly, talks can only be held after Russia surrenders. But who would he talk with?

Sergey Lavrov: This is exactly what I have said, before the talks. The preliminary conditions include Russia's withdrawal to the 1991 border, criminal prosecution and reparations, after which they would be ready to talk.

Question: Can you name a serious power that would accept such conditions unless it had been defeated on the battlefield?

Sergey Lavrov: I cannot. But there are powers that are widely considered to be serious which support this logic. I am referring to those who have gambled their reputation and political future on Vladimir Zelensky. The West cannot back down from deadlock without losing face. On the other hand, they have learned to present their loss of face as an achievement.

Question: I will tell you a secret. Yesterday, I had a call from the US Embassy in Moscow. They asked my opinion about the current developments and how they could influence Russian diplomacy. They obviously hoped, or at least wanted to know if Russia was aware of the danger of continuing the war in Ukraine and the domestic consequences this could have. They wanted to know if Russia would change its stand regarding the Ukraine crisis after the failed mutiny and if it would become more flexible. How would you respond to that?

Sergey Lavrov: The answer has been provided by President Vladimir Putin. He has recently made several statements in which he provided explicit assessments of the situation and emphasised that in acting to stop the mutiny we did not abandon the goals of the special military operation or cede positions on the battlefield. There is no evidence of Russia's readiness to revise its stance, especially considering what we have been discussing here: the consistent Western efforts to create direct security threats for us and to provide lethal and increasingly more long-range weapons to Ukraine, as well as pressure and discrimination. The goal proclaimed in Ukraine is the elimination of everything that is Russian with regard to the people, the language and culture of those whose forefathers lived there for centuries, who developed these territories and built cities, and to whom monuments were erected in Ukraine. They are being dismantled now and replaced with the statues of Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevich and other Nazi accomplices. There is no way we can give up our goals.

As for the advice you were asked to provide on ways to influence Russian diplomacy...

Question: This was more about my perspective on whether there is a chance that Russia adopts a more flexible position.

Sergey Lavrov: Depends on what they mean. If this refers to capitulating as a condition for signing a Zelensky-style peace deal, there is no place for flexibility here. We have recently heard comments coming from Germany and France. They have pinned their hopes on some peacekeeping missions. President of Brazil Luiz Lula da Silva also made proposals along these lines, and the same applies to the African and Arab groups. In addition to this, Pope Francis plans to send his envoy to Russia, as well as to Kiev.

We have said on multiple occasions that Russia has never refused to negotiate. This is what President Vladimir Putin said one year ago. However, those who refuse to negotiate, and I am referring to Ukraine and the entire West, must understand that the longer they drag their feet on the peace settlement issue, the harder it will be to reach an agreement. Until recently, we have been emphasising our readiness to review any serious proposals and have never wavered from our position. But we have not received any proposals of this kind. By and large, all we see is empty talk about Vladimir Zelensky's so-called plan and the initiative to convene some kind of a peace summit.

Question: Without Russia.

Sergey Lavrov: Without Russia's involvement. They invited several third world countries to Copenhagen and tried to work them up to support Vladimir Zelensky's formula. I heard that they used some dirty tricks in the process. In response to reasonable objections from these countries questioning whether this plan, which as you were absolutely right to note means capitulation, can actually work, they were told that they do not have to support the plan in its entirety. They were told that the plan also sets forth provisions that do not deal with the war but focus on food, energy and nuclear security around the world. So let African, Asian and Latin American countries pick one provision each and support it. What a Jesuitical approach to single out provisions that are not outrageous and state the need to strengthen food and energy security, which is an obvious truth. Just go ahead and sign it, and we will take it from there, they say. You can see that this is foul play.

Question: And they would go on to say that these countries supported the Zelensky plan in its entirety, right?

Sergey Lavrov: Of course. They would go even further by saying that these countries volunteered to oversee specific provisions from this plan.

As for the question of being open to dialogue, there were no serious

proposals, you see. Not a single one. No one made any serious proposals, I mean no one in the West. Africans asked for a meeting, and we received them immediately. Now there is the Pope's envoy. We also talked with our Brazilian friends who sent President Lula da Silva's representatives here. For many months now, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President of France Emmanuel Macron have been making menacing statements promising to call Vladimir Putin on the phone. They said it so many times. If you want to call someone, just go ahead and do it. Why talk about it? If you use this megaphone diplomacy, your main goal is to improve your image among your voters, show that you adopted a principled position and want to teach everyone the way they must live. The French President has said recently that he has no reason to call President Putin, but if Putin wanted to have a telephone conversation, he would pick up the phone.

Compare all the public statements by Western politicians regarding contacts with Vladimir Putin and you will see that they are unworthy of our respect. If talking is what you are interested in, the President of Russia will never refuse any contacts.

Question: Would you agree to talk with your Western counterparts?

Sergey Lavrov: Of course, I would. Every time US Secretary of State Antony Blinken requested a conversation, which happened twice over the past eighteen months, I never refused. One time I picked up the phone and the other we had a 10-minute conversation on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali. There were requests on behalf of the US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. There are also contacts related to the operation of our embassies, including the Russian Embassy in the US and the US Embassy in Russia. We are trying to sort out the mess which was created by the Obama administration. They slammed the door by expelling dozens of Russian diplomats just three weeks ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration. They went on to confiscate five properties, and so on. This was when it all started. We are ready to engage in contacts.

As for the question on how long Russia can withstand what the American diplomats seem to have told you, this follows the same logic as their statements on supporting Ukraine "as long as it takes" without answering the question what they are after. If what they want is to end the military campaign, as the United States did in Afghanistan or in Iraq, this is one thing. But if the Americans want the campaign to result in the destruction of the Ukrainian army, this is a different matter. They were quick to withdraw from Afghanistan and Iraq when they got into a tight spot

there, and that was it. This is not about Ukraine for them.

Question: Has Russia had any contacts with Western countries of late, which did not get much publicity?

Sergey Lavrov: No, there have been no contacts of this sort. I think they have imposed a ban on such contacts.

For example, I was visiting the Ministerial Week at the UN General Assembly in September 2022. As usual, there were many requests for meetings. We respond to all these requests positively. The applicants included the then President of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades. He and I are old acquaintances. Each time he came to New York for the start of the General Assembly, there were meetings with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Mr Anastasiades, and the UN Secretary-General. The participants sought to devise further steps that could give a push to the Cyprus settlement and help it emerge from the blind alley where it finds itself today. We confirmed the meeting with the President of Cyprus in New York in September 2022. Later, however, someone apologised to us, saying that the EU did not advise him to meet with me. There were another two requests from European ministers (I do not want to name them). They also disappeared from the horizon. I think there is some kind of a ban over there: a step to the left, a step to the right...

Oh yes, I did have several meetings and telephone conversations with the Hungarian foreign minister.

Question: The one who recently attended the St. Petersburg forum?

Sergey Lavrov: He came to Russia for talks with me as the co-chairman of the Russian-Hungarian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation even before that. But this was an exception.

Question: You said, “a step to the right, a step to the left” in the context of the pressure being brought to bear on independent countries, including India, Brazil and China, concerning peaceful settlement in Ukraine. But it seems to me there is yet another front of political struggle that involves pressurising these and other countries, including Türkiye. They are urging more support for US unilateral sanctions and want others to stop supplying Russia with any dual-purpose items, let alone military equipment. What cannot be regarded as a dual-purpose item in this world?

Sergey Lavrov: We are dealing with the “rules” that the West invents and leaves unexplained to anyone else.

There was much noise when President of Russia Vladimir Putin and President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko announced an agreement on stockpiling a certain amount of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus and deployed nuclear-capable aircraft there. Our opponents claimed that this was irresponsible and that our “aggressive” steps did nothing to normalise the situation. This is a “rule” of theirs. But we are not breaching any international commitments, including under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, whereas the Americans and their NATO partners have kept nuclear weapons and tactical air bombs in five NATO countries for decades. Moreover, the alliance has a project known as Joint Nuclear Operations under which pilots from non-nuclear countries are trained to fly nuclear-capable planes and handle nuclear bombs. This is strongly at odds with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolay Patrushev talked over the phone with his US counterpart, who produced their regular narrative (as the current phrase goes) to the effect that they were concerned over Russia “meddling” in the affairs of Africa, Latin America, and so on. Mr Patrushev replied that we had absolutely transparent ties with those countries. Certainly, we maintained military-technical cooperation, but it did not violate any international obligations. But the Americans themselves almost openly say that they dictate to other countries what to do and make no bones about it. The American official replied that they were bringing democracy, while Russia carried the backlash of totalitarianism. So much for their philosophy.

The same is here. Not only is the West “allowed” to supply arms to Ukraine, it actually must arm it to the teeth, including with increasingly deadly and effective weapons like tanks, HIMARS launchers, and Storm Shadow missiles. Now they are discussing the supply of nuclear-capable F-16s. The British have already supplied depleted uranium artillery shells. Apparently, they can do that, as distinct from all other countries. No one has the right to supply even dual-purpose goods to Russia. You were right in saying that today it is hard to imagine what is not in the dual-purpose category. A war is in progress, people must have clothes, food, and medical support. However, this is the way things are. This is our Western colleagues' position.

Yet, by supplying weapons to the conflict zone, the EU countries are violating a number of international agreements, including the OSCE document on light and small arms, which calls on everyone not to supply weapons to conflict zones. There is a relevant legal document in effect within the EU, which urges its

members to refrain from actions of this sort. All of this is being disregarded.

Question: We understand the kind of pressure exerted on the countries that trade with Russia and consider themselves its partners. How successful is this pressure policy? In what ways does it impact China, India, Brazil, and Türkiye? Is it safe to say that Washington has succeeded in its sanctions pressure policy outside of its own bloc?

Sergey Lavrov: Washington with the EU and the other allies of the collective West (I mean the US's Asian allies) that are at its heel have succeeded in bringing to absolutely unimaginable lengths (and more is yet to come) their push to sacrifice the principles underlying the global economy, which they have touted and promoted and sometimes even imposed on everyone else for many decades. I have no doubt whatsoever that they will undermine their own reputation in the end.

These countries have on many occasions proven their inability to negotiate. I'm convinced that eventually everyone, even those who continue to entertain the illusion that it is possible to hold talks with them and to count on them honouring their commitments will come to realise that this is not the case. Everything will depend solely on the United States' selfish goals at a particular junction of its relations with a particular country.

How effective is that? Surely, it affects the position of individual countries. They have to take this under advisement. China, for example, is deeply invested in the global economy that is tailored to US standards. It adopted American rules and has beaten America at its own game. China has become an economic powerhouse that is much stronger and more effective than the United States which then started talking about restraining China.

Today, I read about new sanctions on supplying computer chips to the People's Republic of China. Quite a few sanctions were imposed earlier solely because China has become more competitive than its Western partners.

With regard to the impact of these sanctions on our relations with our partners from the Global Majority countries, like the countries you mentioned, China, India, Türkiye, our partners from the Arab countries and many others, we and our partners proceed from our national interests and from a balance of interests. When countries are guided by a balance of interests in their relations with each other, they can always find methods and mechanisms for implementing this approach.

Question: The last time I was in Washington was November 2022. But I

keep up with the American press and talk to people from the White House administration, Congress, and other people. Most of them are predictable. They have questions about the administration's position. If they didn't have any questions, they probably wouldn't be talking to me. It's a natural selection. Almost everyone says let the administration be slightly off in doing some things, overdo things occasionally, or mix up religious dogma with specific policies. None of that really matters. Most importantly, President Biden is clear that the United States is not a party to the conflict in Ukraine, one; that the president does not want a nuclear World War III, two; and that the United States is the most powerful country in the world, three. If the United States doesn't want a war, there won't be one. This is an important statement in the run-up to the elections. As you may be aware, the election campaign in the United States will begin in September. Voters are being told that they don't necessarily have to support them on the issue of Ukraine, but there is nothing to worry about. Whatever the authorities are doing is not threatening the prosperity of everyday Americans. It's not putting their security in jeopardy. It's a war. They are waging it at full Ukrainian throttle. But why should America be concerned about a lot of Ukrainian coffins if President Zelensky isn't losing sleep over it? The things that America is doing are on massive scale. It's not always crowned with as much success as they would like, but it doesn't threaten the country in any way. What do you think?

Sergey Lavrov: These may be fairly compelling arguments in terms of propaganda and brainwashing the base especially with regard to “we don't care about Ukrainian coffins if Zelensky is okay with it.” I think it's a “good” argument.

With regard to their reasoning to the effect that they are the most powerful nation on Earth and if they don't want a war there won't be one, what successes of American interventionism and interventionist policy back to Vietnam are there in the past few decades? There have been no successes. Their purported goals have never been achieved. A number of states have been broken up. Libya is a compelling example. Efforts to piece together Iraq have so far been unsuccessful, as well. In Syria, the Americans are hardly working on a noble cause as they are trying to create a physical infrastructure for Kurdish separatism, annoying, in the process, Türkiye, Iran, and other countries that are home to a Kurdish minority. I mentioned Afghanistan earlier. Okay, forget about Afghanistan and Iraq and all other Middle Eastern countries. Take Haiti. The Americans have had that country under their wing for a hundred years now. Long before the United Nations came

into being, they were helping Haiti create a state and a more or less decently functioning government system. They have so far been unable to accomplish anything. But they keep operating under the banner that they are a major powerhouse and things will always turn out the way they want. Clearly, they haven't wanted it very much so far. I'm not gloating, just stating the facts.

The fact that they claim to be able to single-handedly head off a nuclear war is laudable. Nobody wants that. But despite the desire to avoid a nuclear war, the system of checks and balances in the form of the treaties we just talked about – the ABM Treaty, the INF Treaty, and the START Treaty – was created for a reason. I didn't realise that reliance on dumb luck was part of the American tradition. I thought it was more of a Russian tradition. It turns out that the Americans have even outdone us in this regard.

Question: So, you think that the Biden administration is suggesting that the American public rely on the cross-your-fingers approach to nuclear war-related matters in the run-up to the presidential and congressional elections in the United States? In other words, are they playing with the destiny of the American people and not telling them the truth about the thing that matters most?

Sergey Lavrov: They have destroyed the international legal system of deterrence and strategic stability which is a fact. I have not heard the statements you just mentioned. But if they are telling the American people not to be afraid, and that there will be no nuclear war...

Question: They keep saying it.

Sergey Lavrov: It's good that they don't want a nuclear war. No one wants it. The system of agreements, which was destroyed by the United States, was there to mitigate the risks of a nuclear war and render them negligible.



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