

Sergey Lavrov's interview with the Xinhua News Agency

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***Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with the Xinhua News Agency (China), April 30, 2022***

[https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/1811525/](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1811525/)

**Question:** What do you think is at the root of the Ukrainian crisis? What can the international community do to solve this problem?

**Sergey Lavrov:** When we talk about the Ukrainian crisis, first of all we need to look at the destructive policy of the Western states conducted over many years and led by the United States, which set a course to knock together a unipolar world order after the end of the Cold War. NATO's reckless expansion to the East was a key component of those actions, despite the political obligations to the Soviet leadership on the non-expansion of the Alliance. As you know, those promises were just empty words. All these years, NATO infrastructure has been moving closer and closer to the Russian borders.

The West was never concerned about the fact that their actions grossly violated their international obligations not to strengthen their own security at the expense of the security of others. In particular, Washington and Brussels arrogantly rejected the initiatives put forward by Russia in December 2021 to ensure our country's security guarantees in the west: to stop the expansion of NATO, not to deploy armaments that pose a threat to Russia in Ukraine and to return the Alliance's military infrastructure to the 1997 configuration, when the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed.

It is well-known that the United States and NATO member states have always viewed Ukraine as a tool to contain Russia. Over the years, they have actively fuelled anti-Russia sentiments there, forcing Kiev to make an artificial and false choice: to be either with the West or with Moscow.

It was the collective West that first provoked and then supported the anti-constitutional coup d'état in Kiev in February 2014. Nationalists came to power in Ukraine and immediately unleashed a bloody massacre in Donbass, and set the course on the destruction of everything Russian in the rest of the country. Let me remind you that it was precisely because of this threat that the people of Crimea voted in a referendum for the reunification with Russia in 2014.

Over these past years, the United States and its allies have done nothing to stop the intra-Ukrainian conflict. Instead of encouraging Kiev to settle it politically based on the Minsk Complex of Measures, they sent weapons, trained and armed the Ukrainian army and nationalist battalions, and generally carried out the military-political development of Ukraine's territory. They encouraged the aggressive anti-Russia course pursued by the Kiev authorities. In fact, they pushed the Ukrainian nationalists to undermine the negotiating process and resolve the Donbass issue by force.

We were deeply concerned about the undeclared biological programmes implemented in Ukraine with Pentagon's support in close proximity to the Russian borders. And, of course, we could not disregard the Kiev leadership's undisguised intentions to acquire a military nuclear potential, which would create an unacceptable threat to Russia's national security.

In these conditions, we had no other choice but to recognise the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics and launch the special military operation. Its aim is to protect people from genocide by the neo-Nazis, as well as to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine. I would like to stress that Russia is acting to fulfil its obligations under bilateral agreements on cooperation and mutual assistance with the DPR and LPR, at the official request of Donetsk and Lugansk under Article 51 of the UN Charter on the right to self-defence.

The special military operation launched on February 24 is progressing strictly in accordance with the plan. All its goals will be achieved in spite of our opponents' counteractions. At the moment we are witnessing a classic case of double standards and hypocrisy of the Western establishment. By publicly supporting the Kiev regime, NATO member states are doing everything in their power to prevent the completion of the operation by reaching political agreements. Various weapons are flowing endlessly into Ukraine through Poland and other NATO countries. All of this is being done under the pretext of "fighting the invasion", but in fact the United States and the European Union intend to fight Russia "to the last Ukrainian." They do not care at all about the fate of Ukraine as an independent subject of international relations.

**The West is ready to jeopardise the energy and food security of entire regions of the globe to satisfy its own geopolitical ambitions.** What other explanation is there for the unrestrained flywheel of anti-Russian sanctions launched by the West with the start of the operation and which they aren't thinking of stopping?

**If the United States and NATO are truly interested in settling the Ukrainian crisis, then, first, they must come to their senses and stop supplying weapons and ammunition to Kiev. The Ukrainian people do not need Stingers and Javelins; what they need is a solution to urgent humanitarian issues.** Russia has been doing this since 2014. During this time, tens of thousands of tonnes of humanitarian cargo have been delivered to Donbass, and about 15,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid have already arrived in the part of Ukraine liberated from the Kiev regime, the DPR and the LPR, since the launch of the special military operation.

Second, it is essential that the Kiev regime stops cynical provocations, including in the information space. Ukrainian armed formations are barbarically shelling cities using civilians as living shields. We saw examples of this in Donetsk and Kramatorsk. Captured Russian servicemen are being abused with animal cruelty, and these atrocities are being posted online. At the same time, they use their Western patrons and global media controlled by the West to accuse the Russian army of war crimes. As they say, laying the blame at somebody else's door.

It is high time for the West to stop unconditionally whitewashing and covering up for Kiev. Otherwise,... **Washington, Brussels and other Western capitals should consider their responsibility for complicity in the bloody crimes perpetrated by the Ukrainian nationalists.**

**Question:** What measures has Russia taken to protect the lives and property of civilians? What efforts has it made to establish humanitarian corridors?

**Sergey Lavrov:** As I mentioned earlier, the special military operation is proceeding according to plan. Under this plan, the Russian military personnel are doing everything in their power to avoid victims among civilians. Blows are carried out with high-precision weapons, first of all at military infrastructure facilities and places where armoured vehicles are concentrated. Unlike the Ukrainian army and nationalist armed groups that use people as living shields, the Russian army provides the locals with all kinds of assistance and support.

Humanitarian corridors open daily from Kharkov and Mariupol to evacuate people from dangerous districts, but the Kiev regime demands that the “national battalions” in control of those areas do not release the civilians. Nevertheless, many are able to leave with the assistance of Russian, DPR and LPR servicemen. During the special military operation, the hotline of the Interdepartmental Coordination Headquarters of the Russian Federation for Humanitarian Response in Ukraine has received requests for assistance in evacuating 2.8 million people to Russia, including 16,000 foreign citizens and employees of UN and OSCE international missions. In total, 1.02 million people have been evacuated from Ukraine, the DPR and LPR, of which over 120,000 are citizens of third countries, including over 300 Chinese nationals. There are over 9,500 temporary accommodation facilities operating in Russian regions. They have space for rest and hot meals, and everything that may be necessary. Newly arrived refugees are provided with qualified medical and psychological assistance.

Russia is taking measures to ensure civilian navigation in the Black and Azov seas. A humanitarian corridor opens daily, a safe lane for ships. However, Ukraine continues to block foreign ships, creating a threat of shelling in its internal waters and territorial sea. Moreover, Ukrainian naval units have mined the shore, the ports and territorial waters. These explosive devices disconnect from their anchor lines and drift into the open sea, so they pose a serious danger to both the fleets and the port infrastructure of the Black Sea countries.

**Question:** Since the special military operation was launched in Ukraine, Western countries have adopted a large number of unprecedented sanctions against Moscow. How do you think these sanctions will affect Russia? What are the main countermeasures taken by Russia? Some say that a new Cold War has begun. How would you comment on that?

**Sergey Lavrov:** It is true that the special military operation was used by the collective West as a pretext to unleash numerous restrictions against Russia, as well as its legal entities and individuals. The United States, Great Britain, Canada and EU countries do not conceal that their goal is to strangle our economy by undermining its competitiveness and blocking Russia’s progressive development. At the same time, the Western ruling circles are not embarrassed by the fact that anti-Russian sanctions are already beginning to harm ordinary people in their own countries. I mean the declining economic trends in the United States and many European countries, including growing inflation and unemployment.

It is clear that there can be no excuse for this anti-Russian line and it has no future. As President Vladimir Putin said, Russia has withstood this unprecedented pressure. Now the situation is stabilising, though, of course, not all risks are behind us.

In any case, they will not succeed in weakening us. I am confident that we will restructure the economy and protect ourselves from our opponents’ possible illegitimate and hostile actions in the future. We will continue to give a fitting and adequate response to the imposed restrictions, guided by the goal of maintaining the stability of the Russian economy and its financial system, as well as the interests of domestic businesses and the entire nation. **We will focus our efforts on de-dollarisation, de-offshorisation, import substitution, and promotion of technological independence.** We will continue to adapt to external challenges and step up development programmes for promising and competitive industries. During the period of turbulence, our retaliatory special economic measures needed to ensure the normal functioning of the Russian economy will be continued and expanded. As a responsible player on the international market, Russia intends to continue scrupulously fulfilling its obligations under international contracts on export deliveries of agricultural products, fertilisers, energy carriers and other critical products. We are deeply concerned

about a possible food crisis provoked by the anti-Russian sanctions, and we are well aware how important the deliveries of essential goods, such as food, are for the socioeconomic development of Asian, African, Latin American, and Middle Eastern countries.

I will be brief as regards the second part of your question. Today we are not talking about a new “cold war,” but, as I said earlier, about the persistent desire to impose a US-centric model of the world order coming from Washington and its satellites, who imagine themselves to be “arbiters of humankind’s fate.” It has reached the point where the... **Western minority is trying to replace the UN-centric architecture and international law formed after World War II with their own “rule-based order.” These rules are written by Washington and its allies and then imposed on the international community as binding.** We must realise that the United States has been carrying out this destructive policy for several decades now. It is enough to recall NATO’s aggression against Yugoslavia, attacks on Iraq and Libya, attempts to destroy Syria, as well as the colour revolutions that Western capitals staged in a number of countries, including Ukraine. All of this came at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives and resulted in chaos in various regions of the planet.

The West tries to crudely suppress those who carry out an independent course in their domestic and foreign policy. Not just Russia. We can see how bloc thinking is being imposed in the Asian-Pacific Region. We can recall the Indo-Pacific strategy promoted by the United States, which has a pronounced anti-China tendency. The US seeks to dictate the standards according to which Latin America should live, in the spirit of the outdated Monroe Doctrine. This explains many years of the illegal trade embargo on Cuba, sanctions against Venezuela, as well as attempts to undermine stability in Nicaragua and other countries. The pressure on Belarus continues in the same context. This list can go on.

**It is clear that the collective West’s efforts to oppose the natural course of history and solve its problems at the expense of others are doomed. Today the world has several decision-making centres; it is multipolar.** We can see how quickly Asian, African, and Latin American countries are developing. Everyone is getting a real freedom of choice, including where it comes to choosing their development models and participation in integration projects. Our special military operation in Ukraine also contributes to the process of freeing the world from the West’s neocolonial oppression heavily mixed with racism and a complex of exceptionalism.

The faster the West accepts the new geopolitical situation, the better it will be for the West itself and for the entire international community.

As President Xi Jinping said at the Boao Forum for Asia, “We need to uphold the principle of indivisible security, build a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, and oppose the pursuit of one’s own security at the cost of others’ security.”

**Question:** Russian-Ukrainian talks have attracted close attention of the international community. What are the main obstacles to the talks today? How do you regard the prospects of a peace treaty between the two parties? What kind of bilateral relations does Russia intend to have with Ukraine in the future?

**Sergey Lavrov:** At present the Russian and Ukrainian delegations are holding discussions on the possible draft almost daily, via videoconference. This document should contain such elements of the post-conflict situation as permanent neutrality, the non-nuclear, non-bloc and demilitarised status of Ukraine, as well as guarantees of its security. The agenda of the talks also includes denazification, recognition of the new geopolitical reality, the lifting of sanctions and the status of the Russian language, among other things. Settling the situation in Ukraine will make a significant contribution to the de-escalation of the military and political

tensions in Europe and the world in general. The establishment of an institution of guarantor states is envisaged as a possible option. First of all, they will be the permanent members of the UN Security Council, including Russia and China. We share information on the progress in the talks with Chinese diplomats. We are grateful to Beijing and other BRICS partners for their balanced position on the Ukrainian issue.

We are in favour of continuing the talks, although the process is difficult.

You are right to ask about the obstacles. For example, they include the militant rhetoric and incendiary actions of Kiev's Western patrons. They are actually encouraging Kiev to "fight to the last Ukrainian," pumping the country with weapons and sending mercenaries there. Let me note that the Ukrainian security services staged a crude bloody provocation in Bucha with the help of the West, to complicate the negotiation process among other things.

I am confident that agreements can only be reached when Kiev starts to be guided by the interests of the Ukrainian people, and not the advisors from far away.

Speaking about Russian-Ukrainian relations, Russia is interested in a peaceful, free, neutral, prosperous and friendly Ukraine. Despite the current administration's anti-Russian course, we remember the many centuries of all-embracing cultural, spiritual, economic and family ties between Russians and Ukrainians. We will definitely restore these ties.