

Meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club

Vladimir Putin took part in the plenary session of the jubilee, XX meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.

October 5, 2023 20:25 Sochi

The theme of this year's meeting is "Fair multipolarity: how to ensure security and development for all."

The moderator of the discussion is Fyodor Lukyanov, Scientific Director of the Valdai International Discussion Club.

* * *

F. Lukyanov: Good evening, dear colleagues, dear friends!

I am pleased to welcome you to the 20th annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.

Today, as before, we have a great honor, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin is participating in our meeting - I am pleased to introduce you.

Vladimir Vladimirovich, we have the 20th meeting. Valdai is 19 years old, and the meeting is 20th, it happens. When we look at the Valdai archives, it feels like it's a chronicle of a tipping time. The time has fallen out really very

interesting. It is very honorable for us that all these 20 meetings have never been, in my opinion, so that you miss and do not meet with your Valdai colleagues. There are those in the hall who have met you before, and for the first time, there are those who are for the first time.

I will be very happy to invite you to present your opinion today.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

Dear participants of the plenary session! Colleagues! Ladies and gentlemen!

I am glad to welcome you all to Sochi for the anniversary, as just mentioned by our leading, twentieth, annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.

Our, or, we can say, your forum, which traditionally brought together politicians and scientists, experts and public figures from many countries of the world, once again confirms the high status of a demanded and intellectual platform. Valdai discussions are always a reflection of the most important processes of world politics of the XXI century in their entirety and complexity. I'm sure it will be so today - it was already, probably, in the previous days, when you discussed with each other, it will continue to be so, because we are faced, in fact, with the task of building a new world. And at such defining stages, the role and responsibility of intellectuals like you, dear colleagues, is extremely great.

Over the years of the club's work, both in the world and in our country, as it has just been said, there have been serious, if not huge, colossal changes. By historical standards, the term of twenty years is not so long, not so long. But when it falls into the era of breaking the entire world device, time seems to shrink.

And I think you will agree that more events have happened in these twenty

years than in other times in many, many decades, and these qualitative changes require fundamental changes in the very principles of international relations.

At the beginning of the 21st century, everyone hoped that states and peoples had learned lessons from the costly, destructive military-ideological confrontation of the last century, realized its harmfulness, felt the fragility and interconnectedness of our planet, and made sure that the global problems of mankind require joint action, the search for collective solutions. And selfishness, conceit, neglect of real challenges will inevitably lead us, will lead us to a dead end, as well as an attempt by the stronger ones to impose their own ideas and interests on others. It was supposed to be obvious to everyone - it was supposed to be, but it turned out that it wasn't so, no.

When we first met at a club meeting almost twenty years ago, our country was at a new stage of its development. Russia has overcome the most difficult period of recovery after the collapse of the USSR. We have joined the processes of building a new, as it seemed to us, more just world order with all our energy and goodwill. Fortunately, our country is able to make a huge contribution to them, as we have something to offer our friends, partners, and the whole world.

Unfortunately, some people misunderstood our readiness for constructive interaction - they understood it as obedience, as an agreement that the new order will be built by those who proclaimed themselves winners in the Cold War, in fact, as recognition that Russia is ready to follow in someone else's fairway, is ready to be guided not by its own national interests, but by other people's interests.

All these years we have warned more than once: this approach leads not just to a deadlock, it is fraught with an increase in the threat of military conflict. But no one was going to listen and hear us, no one wanted to. The self-honesty of our so-called partners in the West, you know, was just off the

charts, it's impossible to say otherwise.

The United States and its satellites have firmly taken a course towards hegemony - military, political, economic, cultural, even moral, value. It was clear to us from the very beginning that attempts to establish a monopoly were doomed to failure. The world is too complex and diverse to be subordinated to one scheme, even if behind it is the power, the huge power of the West, accumulated over centuries of colonial policy. After all, your colleagues - many are absent here, but they do not deny that the welfare of the West has been largely achieved thanks to the robbery of colonies over the centuries. It's a fact. In fact, this level of development was achieved by robbing the entire planet. The history of the West is essentially a chronicle of endless expansion. Western influence in the world is a huge military-financial pyramid, it always needs new fuel to maintain itself - natural, technological, human resources belonging to others. That's why the West just can't stop and wasn't going to do it. Our arguments, exhortations, appeals to reason, proposals were simply ignored.

I have already talked about this publicly - and to our allies, our partners. After all, there was a moment when your humble servant just made an assumption: maybe we should join NATO? But no, NATO does not need such a country. No. The question is, what else? We thought that we were already here, our own, sorry, as people say in our people, bourgeois. What else? There is no more ideological confrontation. What's the problem? Apparently, the problem is in geopolitical interests and arrogant attitude towards others. That's the problem, self-confidence.

The constant increasing military and political pressure has to be answered. I have repeatedly said that we have not started the so-called "war in Ukraine". On the contrary, we're trying to finish it. We did not stage a coup d'état in Kiev in 2014 - a coup d'état, bloody, unconstitutional. Wherever it happens, we always immediately hear all the world's means of [mass information], subordinated primarily, of course, to the Anglo-Saxon world: it is impossible,

it's impossible, anti-democratic. And here you can. Even the money was called the amount of money that was spent on this coup. Everything is possible.

At that time, we were supporting Crimeans and Sevastopol residents. We did not arrange a coup d'état, nor did we intimidate Crimeans and Sevastopol residents with ethnic cleansing in the Nazi spirit. It was not us who tried to force Donbass to obey with the help of shelling and bombing. We didn't threaten to deal with those who want to speak their native language. Listen, all the informed, literate people here. Well, you can brains, sorry for the moveton, powder millions of people who perceive the real reality from the media. But you know what happened: for nine years they bombed, shot, used tanks. The war, the natural war against Donbass was unleashed. And no one counted the dead children in Donbass. No one in other countries, especially in the West, cried for the dead.

The war launched by the Kiev regime with the active, direct support of the West has been going on for the tenth year, and the special military operation is aimed at ending it. And she recalls that unilateral steps, whoever takes them, will inevitably be retaliated. Action, as you know, gives rise to opposition. This is what any responsible state, a sovereign, independent and self-respecting country, does.

Everyone is aware that in an international system where arbitrariness reigns, where everything is decided by someone who thinks he is exceptional, sinless and only right, anyone can be under attack simply because a country will not like a hegemon who has lost a sense of proportion and, I will add, a sense of reality.

Unfortunately, we have to state that our counterparties in the West have lost their sense of reality, all possible facets have passed. In vain.

The Ukrainian crisis is not a territorial conflict, I want to emphasize it. Russia

is the largest, largest country in the world. We have no interests in terms of winning back any additional territories. We still have to master and master Siberia, Eastern Siberia and the Far East. This is not a territorial conflict or even the establishment of a regional geopolitical balance. The question is much broader and more fundamental: it is about the principles on which the new world order will be based.

Lasting peace will be established only when everyone feels safe, understands that their opinion is respected and that there is a balance in the world, when no one is able to force, at will, force others to live and behave as the hegemon wants, even if it contradicts sovereignty, true interests, traditions, and the foundation of peoples and states. In such a scheme, the very concept of any sovereignty is simply denied, thrown away, sorry, in the trash.

It is obvious that adherence to bloc approaches, the desire to drive the world into a situation of constant confrontation "we are them" is a vicious legacy of the 20th century. This is a product of Western political culture, at least its most aggressive manifestations. I repeat, the West always needs an enemy - a certain part of the West, Western elites. We need an enemy, the fight against which can be explained by the need for force and expansion. But it is also needed to maintain internal control in a certain system of this very hegemon, inside the blocs - within NATO or other military-political blocs. There is an enemy - everyone should rally around the boss.

It's not our business, how other states live. But we see how in many of them the ruling elites force societies to adopt norms and rules that citizens themselves - at least a large number of citizens, and in some countries, we can say for sure, the majority of citizens do not want to accept. And they are forced, constantly inventing reasons for this, finding external culprits of growing internal problems, inventing and inflating non-existent threats.

At the same time, Russia is a favorite topic of such politicians. We are

certainly used to it already, historically we are used to it. But they are trying to sculpt the image of the enemy from all those who are not ready to blindly follow these Western elites. From anyone: from the People's Republic of China, in certain situations, at a certain point and from India, they tried the same - now they flirt, of course, we understand it perfectly, we feel and see the situation in Asia, everything is clear. The Indian leadership, I want to say, is independent, very nationally oriented. I think these attempts make no sense, but nevertheless they continue. From the Arab world they try to sculpt the enemy, also selectively, they try to act carefully, but nevertheless, in general, it all comes down to it - and even from Muslims they try to make some hostile environment. And so on. In fact, anyone who behaves independently, follows their own interests, instantly turns into an obstacle for these Western elites that must be removed.

Artificial geopolitical structures are imposed on the world, closed block formats are created. We see this in Europe, where the snoring line of NATO expansion has been carried out for decades, as well as in the Asia-Pacific region and South Asia, where they are trying to break the open and inclusive architecture of cooperation. The block approach, let's call things by their proper names, is a restriction of the rights and freedoms of states to their own development, an attempt to drive them into a certain cage of obligations. This is to a certain extent - and this is an obvious thing - the removal of part of sovereignty, and then - and very often - the imposition of decisions in areas other than security, and above all in the economy, as is now the case between the United States and Europe. There is no need to explain - if necessary, we will talk about it in more detail during the discussion after my opening speech.

To do this, international law is trying to replace "order" - what "order"? - based on certain "rules". What "rules", what kind of "rules" they are, by whom they were invented, is completely incomprehensible. It's just nonsense, nonsense. But they're trying to introduce this into the minds of millions of people. "We have to live by the rules." By what rules?

And in general, if I may, our Western colleagues, especially from the United States, not only arbitrarily establish such "rules", but also teach at the same time who and how to follow them, who and how should behave at all. It's all done and said, as a rule, in a frankly boorish form. It's still the same manifestation of this colonial thinking. All the time we hear, all the time it sounds: you have to, you have to, we seriously warn you...

Who are you anyway? What right do you have to warn someone? It's just amazing. Maybe for those who say so, maybe it's time for you to get rid of the squeak, stop behaving towards the world community in a way that perfectly understands its tasks, your interests, and really still get rid of this thinking of the era of colonial rule? I want to say so: wipe your eyes, this era is long over and will never come back, never.

I will say more: over the centuries, such behavior has led to the reproduction of the same thing - big wars, for the justification of which various ideological, or even pseudo-moral justifications were invented. It's especially dangerous today. Humanity has the means that are known to easily destroy the entire planet, and the incredible manipulation of consciousness leads to a loss of sense of reality. Of course, you need to get out of this vicious circle, you need to look for some way out. As I understand it, dear friends and colleagues, you are going to the Valdai platform for this.

In the Foreign Policy Concept of Russia, adopted this year, our country is described as an original state-civilization. This formulation accurately and sensibly reflects how we understand not only our own development, it - the basic principles of the world order, which we hope to win.

In our understanding, civilization is a multifaceted phenomenon. Of course, it is interpreted differently. There was also a frankly colonial interpretation: there is a certain "civilized world" that serves as a model for the rest, everyone should follow these standards, samples, and those who disagree - those will be driven into "civilization" with a baton of an "enlightened" master.

These times, as I have just said, are over, and our understanding of civilization is completely different.

First of all, there are many civilizations, and none of them is better or worse than the other. They are equal as expressions of the aspirations of their cultures and traditions, their peoples. For each of us, it's our own. For me, for example, these are the aspirations of our people, of which I was lucky to be a part.

Outstanding thinkers around the world, adherents of the civilizational approach have reflected and continue to reflect on the concept of "civilization". This is a complex phenomenon. Without plunging into the philosophical depths - this is probably not the place, not the time for such reasoning - let's try to describe it in relation to today, I will try to do it substantively.

The main qualities of the state-civilization are diversity and self-sufficiency. Here are the two main components, in my opinion. Any unification is alien to the modern world, every state and society want to develop their own path of development. It is based on culture and traditions, strengthened in geography, historical experience, both ancient and modern, and in the values of the people. This is a complex synthesis, in the process of which a distinctive civilizational community arises. Its heterogeneity, diversity is the key to sustainability and development.

Russia has been formed over the centuries as a country of different cultures, religions and nationalities. Russian civilization cannot be reduced to one common denominator, but it cannot be divided, because it exists only in its integrity, in spiritual and cultural wealth. Maintaining the lasting unity of such a state is not an easy task.

For centuries, we have had the hardest trials. We have always overcome them, sometimes at a very high price, but have always learned lessons for

the future, strengthening our national unity and the integrity of the Russian state.

Today, this experience is truly invaluable. The world is more and more diverse. Simple ways of managing, combining everyone under one comb, as we say, to which some states are accustomed, cannot cope with all the complexity of the processes.

What is very important to add at the same time? A truly effective and durable state system cannot be implanted from outside. It grows naturally from the civilizational roots of countries and peoples, and Russia in this regard is an example of how this happens in life, in practice.

Civilizational support is a necessary condition for success in the modern world, in a world that is disorderly, unfortunately, dangerous and has lost its orientations. More and more states come to this conclusion, aware of their own interests, needs, opportunities and limitations, their identity and degree of interconnectedness with the world around them.

I am convinced that humanity is not moving towards fragmentation into competing segments, not towards a new block confrontation, whatever it is motivated, not towards the soulless universalism of the new globalization - but, on the contrary, the world is on the way to the synergy of civilization states, large spaces, communities that are aware of themselves as such.

At the same time, civilization is not a universal design, one for all - this does not happen. Each of them is different from the others, each is culturally self-sufficient, draws its own ideological and value principles from its own history and in its own traditions. Respect for oneself stems from respect, of course, for others, but it also refers to respect from others. Therefore, civilization does not impose anything on anyone, but also does not allow anything to impose on itself. If everyone adheres to this rule, it will ensure harmonious coexistence and creative interaction of all participants in international

relations.

Of course, defending your civilizational choice is a huge responsibility. This concerns responding to external encroachments, establishing close and constructive relationships with other civilized communities and, most importantly, maintaining internal stability and harmony. After all, we all see that the international environment today, as I said, unfortunately, is both unstable and quite aggressive.

And another very important thing. Of course, you can't betray your civilization to anyone. It's also the way to general chaos, it's unnaturally disgusting, I would say. For our part, we have always tried and try to offer solutions that take into account the interests of all. But our interlocutors in the West seem to have forgotten at all that there are such concepts as reasonable self-restrictions, compromises, willingness to give in something in order to achieve an acceptable result for all. No, they are literally obsessed with only one thing: to push, to push, and at any cost, here and now their interests. If it's their choice, let's see what happens.

The paradox is that tomorrow the situation may change - that's the problem. For example, there will be internal political shifts after the next elections. Here the country insists on something, pushes at all costs some actions - and tomorrow there are internal political changes, and with the same pressure and unceremoniousness, a completely different, sometimes the opposite.

The most striking example is the Iranian nuclear program. One Administration [of the United States] pushed one decision, another came - everything was turned around, and everything rolled in the opposite direction. And how to work in such conditions? Where are the landmarks? What to rely on? Where are the guarantees? Are these the "rules" we are told about? It's just nonsense.

Why is all this happening and why doesn't it bother anyone? Because strategic thinking has been replaced by following short-term compensating interests, not even countries and peoples, but by changing groups of influence. Hence the incredible by the previous standards of the Cold War irresponsibility of the behavior of political elites, who often have forgotten both fear and shame and consider themselves absolutely sinless.

The civilizational approach opposes such trends because it is based on the fundamental, long-term interests of states and peoples. Interests that are dictated not by the momentary ideological conjuncture, but by all historical experience, the heritage of the past, on which the idea of a harmonious future is based.

If everyone is guided by this, in my opinion, there will be much fewer conflict in the world, and the methods of their resolution will become much more rational, because every civilization respects, as I have already said, others and does not try to change anyone according to its own ideas.

I read with interest, dear friends, the report prepared by the Valdai Club for this meeting. It says that today everyone strives to understand, to present the image of the future. This is completely natural and understandable, especially for the intellectual environment. In an era of radical changes, when the whole usual way of life collapses, it is very important to realize where we are going, what we want to achieve. And, of course, the future is created today, not only before our eyes - by our hands.

Of course, when it comes to such giant, incredibly complex processes, it is difficult or almost impossible to predict the result. Whatever we all do, life will make and will certainly make its own adjustments. But at least we need to be aware of what we are striving for, what we want to achieve. And there is such an understanding in Russia.

First. We want to live in an open, interconnected world in which no one will

ever try to erect artificial barriers to people's communication, creative realization and prosperity. There should be a barrier-free environment - that's what we should strive for.

Second. We want the diversity of the world not to be simply preserved, but to be the foundation of universal development. The imposition of any country or people, how to live, how to feel, should be prohibited. Only real cultural and civilizational diversity will ensure the benefit of people and the balance of interests.

Third. We are for maximum representativeness. No one has the right and can rule the world for others or on behalf of others. The world of the future is a world of collective decisions made at the levels at which they are most effective and the composition of participants who can really make a significant contribution to the solution of a particular problem. Not one decides for everyone, and not everyone even decides about everything, and those who are directly concerned about a particular issue agree on what and how to do.

Fourth. We are for universal security and lasting peace built on respect for the interests of all: from great, large states to small countries. The main thing is to free international relations from the block approach, from the legacy of the colonial era and the Cold War. We have been talking for decades about the indivisibility of security, that it is impossible to ensure the safety of some at the expense of the safety of others. Indeed, harmony in this area is achievable. You just have to throw away pride, arrogation and stop looking at others as second-class partners or as outcasts or savages.

Fifth. We are for justice for all. The era of exploitation of anyone, I've already said it twice, in the past. Countries and peoples are clearly aware of their interests and opportunities and are ready to rely on themselves - and this multiplies their strength. Everyone should have access to the benefits of modern development, and attempts to limit it for any country or people

should be considered an act of aggression, just like that.

Sixth. We are for equality, for the difference in the potentials of different countries. This is an absolutely objective factor. But no less objective is the fact that no one else is ready to obey, to put their interests and needs in dependence on anyone, and above all on the richer and stronger.

This is not just the natural state of the international community, it is the quintessence of all the historical experience of mankind.

These are the principles that we want to adhere to ourselves and to which we invite all our friends and colleagues to join.

Dear colleagues!

Russia was, is and will be one of the foundations of the world system, ready for constructive interaction with all those who strive for peace and prosperity, ready for tough opposition to those who profess the principles of dictatorship and violence. We are confident that pragmatism and common sense will prevail, and the multipolar world will be established.

In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude to the organizers of the forum, as always, for the thorough, high-quality preparation, and I want to say my gratitude to all participants of the anniversary session for your attention.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

F. Lukyanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, thank you very much for such a detailed presentation of general issues, conceptual, because now really at the Valdai Club and in many other places everyone is trying to understand the

framework that will replace those that no longer work, and so far we have not very successful. We know what no longer exists, but we don't really understand what will happen. Your points are, I think, the first case of such an attempt, at least to lay out the principles very clearly.

If you can, you can't do your performance. Of course, a very interesting part dedicated to civilizations and the civilizational approach. You once said, for a long time, however, a very bright phrase that Russia's borders do not end anywhere. If Russia's borders do not end, then the Russian and Russian civilization, apparently, have nothing to talk about. How to understand it? Where is she?

Vladimir Putin: You know, this was said for the first time in a conversation with one of the former presidents of the United States at my house, in Ogaryovo, it was said jokingly, of course, when he looked at the map of the Russian Federation.

We all know, I want to repeat it once again: Russia remains the largest country in the world in terms of territory. But seriously, then, of course, it primarily has a civilizational meaning. There are many of our compatriots, the Russian world is global, Russian is one of the official languages of the UN. In Latin America alone, now we have met with parliamentarians, 300 thousand of our compatriots live. They are everywhere: in Asia, Africa, and Europe, of course, in North America.

Therefore, to be serious, I repeat, in the civilizational sense, of course, there are no borders, just as there are no borders of all other civilizations. Take India or China - how many representatives of China live in other countries of the world and how many representatives of India live in other countries of the world! It all intersects, interacts with each other. And it will be very good if this interaction is natural and friendly, aimed at strengthening this state.

F. Lukyanov: So civilization for you is not a territory, but people?

Vladimir Putin: Yes, of course, first of all they are people. Surely there will be a lot of questions about Ukraine now. Our actions in the same Donbass are primarily and mainly dictated by the protection of people. That's the whole point of our actions.

F. Lukyanov: In this case, can you describe a special military operation as a civilizational conflict? You said it wasn't a territorial conflict.

Vladimir Putin: This is first of all... I do not know what kind of civilization is defended by those who are on the other side of the front line, but we protect our traditions, our culture and our people.

F. Lukyanov: Okay. Since we immediately moved to Ukraine: today, in my opinion, a big European event begins in Spain, Vladimir Zelensky and a number of other important people went there. The issue of continuing support for Ukraine is being discussed. Now, as we know, in the United States, some hitch has occurred due to the crisis in Congress. That's why in Europe, it seems to me, they felt that they would have to take over the financing.

Do you think they will cope? And what do we expect from it?

Vladimir Putin: We are waiting for the manifestation of at least some sprouts of healthy meaning. As for whether they can cope or fail, they need to be asked. Of course, they will cope, I do not see any problems - the problem is to expand production in order to increase the amount of money that is sent to the war and prolong this conflict. But there are, of course, problems, they are, I think, understandable, known for this audience.

If in the United States, as you said, there is a hitch, it is rather technical, political and technical, so to say, which is that there are problems with the budget, a large debt load, you need to balance the budget. Question: what to balance? Either by supplying weapons to Ukraine and reducing budget

expenditures, or by cutting social spending? But no one wants to cut social spending, especially the position of the opposition parties, the opposition party in this case, is strengthened. That's all.

But in the end, they'll probably find the money, print more. They printed more than nine trillion dollars in the post-covid period and in the covid period, so it costs nothing for them to print something else and scatter it around the world, increasing food inflation. They'll do it for sure.

As for Europe, the situation is more complicated, because if in the United States we still see economic growth in the previous period of 2.4 percent of GDP, the situation in Europe is much worse. There in 2021, the growth of the economy was 4.9 percent, this year it will be 0.5. And then only at the expense of the southern countries, at the expense of Italy and Spain, which showed a small growth.

Yesterday we talked with our experts about this: I think that the growth in Italy and Spain is primarily due to the increase in real estate prices and a certain rise in the tourism sector. And in the main economies of Europe - stagnation, there is a minus in all industries. In the Federal Republic [Germany] - minus 0.1, in the Baltic countries - minus two, minus three even, in Estonia, in my opinion, minus three, in Holland, in Austria - everywhere minus. Especially a big disadvantage in the field of industrial production: if not a disaster, then a very serious condition in the field of real production, especially in the chemical industry, in glass, in metallurgical.

We know that due to relatively cheap energy resources in the United States and some administrative and financial decisions, many industries from Europe simply move to the United States, close in Europe and move to the United States. This is well known, this is what I hinted at when speaking here from this rostrum. The burden on the population of European countries is also growing, this is also an obvious thing, this is the data of the European statistics itself. The standard of life is falling, in the last month it has

decreased, in my opinion, by one and a half percent.

Can or not Europe? Maybe. At the expense of what? Due to the deterioration, further deterioration of their economy and the lives of citizens of European countries.

F. Lukyanov: But we don't have a rubber budget either. Can we do it unlike them?

Vladimir Putin: We are coping so far, and I have reason to believe that we will cope in the future. We had a surplus of over 660 billion rubles in the third quarter of this year. This is the first one.

Second. In the end, according to the results of the year, we will have a certain deficit - somewhere around one percent. And for the coming years - on the 2024th, 2025th - we expect that the deficit will be somewhere around one percent. Our record low unemployment - three percent - has been established and stabilized.

And what is very important is the key point, maybe we will return to it again, but I consider it an important, fundamental phenomenon in our economy - we have naturally begun a structural restructuring of the economy. Because what we used to receive from European countries by import - a lot was closed for us, and we, as well as in 2014, having introduced certain restrictions on the purchase of Western, European, first of all, agricultural goods, were forced to invest in the development of agricultural production within the country. Yes, inflation jumped, but then we ensured that our producers increase the production of the goods we need. And today, you know, we provide ourselves completely for all major agricultural products, for the main types of food.

The same is now happening in the field of real production in industry, and the main growth is given by the manufacturing industries. Oil and gas revenues

have fallen, but they also give plus three percent, and non-oil and gas revenues, and primarily in the processing industries, - plus 43 percent, and this is primarily the steel industry, optics, electronics. We have a lot to do in the field of microelectronics. We're really still at the beginning of the journey, but it's already growing. All together gives plus 43 percent.

We have rebuilt the logistics, mechanical engineering is growing and so on. In general, we have a stable, stable situation. We have overcome all the problems that have arisen since the imposition of sanctions against us and have begun the next stage of development - on a new basis, which is extremely important.

It is very important for us to maintain this trend, not to miss it. We have problems, including the labor shortage, that's right. This is followed by some other questions. But we have a growing real disposable income of the population. If they fell in Europe, they have grown by more than 12 percent.

Here there are questions related to inflation, and it has grown - now 5.7 percent, yes, but the Central Bank and the Government are taking concerted measures to neutralize these possible negative consequences.

F. Lukyanov: You mentioned the restructuring that is taking place.

Some opponents will say that this is the militarization of the economy. Are they right?

Vladimir Putin: Look, our defense spending has increased, but not just on defense, but on defense and security. They have grown about twice: there were about three percent, now they are about six - for defense and security. But at the same time, I want to emphasize this, I have already said and have to repeat: we have a budget surplus in the third quarter of over 660 billion rubles, and this year there will be a deficit, but only one percent. It's a quite healthy budget and a healthy economy.

Therefore, it is not so to say that we spend too much money on guns and forgot about oil. I want to emphasize that all, all previously announced development plans, the achievement of strategic goals and all the social obligations undertaken by the state to the population are fully implemented.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you. That's good news.

Vladimir Vladimirovich, in addition to the conflict in Ukraine, to which we will certainly return again, literally the last days or weeks of the events in the South Caucasus. President of the European Council Charles Michel said in an interview yesterday that Russia had betrayed the Armenian people.

Vladimir Putin: Who said it?

F. Lukyanov: Charles Michel, President of the European Council.

Vladimir Putin: You know, our people say: whose mare would moan, and yours would be silent.

F. Lukyanov: Cow.

Vladimir Putin: A cow, a mare - it doesn't matter, an animal, in short, some kind.

Is that all? I interrupted you, I'm sorry.

F. Lukyanov: Please.

Vladimir Putin: Do you understand what happened and what happened recently? After the famous events and the collapse of the Soviet Union, we know that there was a conflict, ethnic clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis began, they began in the city of Sumgait, then spread to

Karabakh. All this led to the fact that Armenia - not Karabakh, but Armenia - has taken control of the entire Karabakh and seven adjacent territories, seven districts of Azerbaijan. This, in my opinion, is almost 20 percent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. And all this lasted for many decades.

I must say that - I will not reveal any secret here - we have offered our Armenian friends to compromise many times over the past 15 years. Which ones? To return to Azerbaijan five districts around Karabakh, to keep two and thus preserve the territorial link between Armenia and Karabakh.

But our Karabakh friends told us from time to time: no, it will create certain threats for us. We, in turn, said: listen, Azerbaijan is growing, the economy is developing, it is an oil and gas producing country, there is already more than 10 million [people] population, let's compare the potentials. While there is such an opportunity, we need to find this compromise. For our part, we are confident that we will carry out the relevant decisions within the framework of the UN Security Council, guarantee the security of this naturally emerging Lachin corridor between Armenia and Karabakh, and guarantee the security of Armenians living in this territory.

But no, we were told: no, we can't do it. And what are you going to do? Let's fight. All right. The matter eventually came to armed clashes in 2020, and then I also offered our friends and colleagues - by the way, President Aliyev will not be offended by me, probably, but at some point an agreement was reached that the Azerbaijani troops would stop.

To be honest, I thought the issue was resolved. I called Yerevan and suddenly heard: no, let them leave that small share of Karabakh where the Azerbaijani troops went. That's all. I say: listen, what are you going to do? Again, the same phrase: let's fight. I say: listen, in a few days they will go to the rear of your fortifications in the Aghdam area, and everything will end, you understand? - Yes. - What will you do? - We will fight. All right. That's how it turned out.

In the end, we agreed with Azerbaijan that after entering the Shushya line in Shusha itself, the fighting will be stopped. A corresponding statement was signed in November 2020 on the suspension of hostilities and the introduction of our peacekeepers. And the next, very important point: the legal status of our peacekeepers was based solely on this statement of November 2020. No status of peacekeepers has never arisen. I won't say why now. Azerbaijan believed that this was not necessary, and it was pointless to sign without Azerbaijan. Therefore, the entire status was based, I repeat, exclusively on the statement of November 2020, and the rights of peacekeepers were only one thing - monitoring compliance with the ceasefire. That's it, our peacekeepers didn't have any other rights there. Just watching the ceasefire is everything. But this wobbly state lasted for some time.

Now you have mentioned the President of the European Council, Mr. Michel, who is respected. In Prague in the autumn of 2022, under the auspices of Mr. Michel, then French President Macron and Mr. Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan gathered and signed a statement from which it follows that Armenia has recognized Karabakh as part of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Moreover, the heads of delegations, the leaders of Armenia directly named the territory of Azerbaijan in square kilometers, which, of course, includes Karabakh, and stressed that they recognize the sovereignty of Azerbaijan within the framework of the Azerbaijan SSR, which was once part of the USSR. And as you know, Karabakh was also part of the Azerbaijan SSR. That is, in fact, the main, absolutely key issue, which was the status of the Karabakh, was resolved. When Karabakh declared its independence, no one recognized this independence, not even Armenia, which, frankly, is strange for me, but nevertheless it was a decision - they did not recognize the independence of Karabakh. But here in Prague, they recognized that Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan. And then, in early 2023, the same thing was repeated for the second time at a similar meeting in Brussels.

You know, so, between us, although between us - it probably doesn't fit, but nevertheless if we came [to an agreement]... By the way, no one told us about it, I personally learned it from the press. Azerbaijan has always believed that Karabakh is part of its territory, but by defining the status of Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, Armenia has made a qualitative change in its position.

After that, at one of the meetings, President Aliyev came up to me and said: well, you see, everyone admitted that Karabakh is ours, your peacekeepers are there on our territory. You see, even the status of our peacekeepers has undergone a qualitative change immediately after the determination of the status of Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. He says: your military is on our territory, and let's now negotiate their status on a bilateral basis. And Prime Minister Pashinyan confirmed: yes, you now need to negotiate on a bilateral basis. That is, Karabakh has left. You can say anything about this status, but it was a key issue - the status of Karabakh. Everything has revolved around this over the previous decades: how and when, who and where will determine the status. That's it, Armenia decided it - Karabakh officially became part of Azerbaijan. This is the position of the modern Armenian state.

What should we do? Everything that happened in the recent past - a week, two, three years ago, and the closure of this Lachin corridor and so on - was inevitable after the recognition of Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Karabakh. It was only a matter of time: when and in what way Azerbaijan would bring constitutional order there within the framework of the constitution of the Azerbaijani state. What do you say? How else to react to this? Armenia has admitted, and what should we do? To say: no, we don't admit it? That's nonsense, right? Some kind of nonsense.

I will not now talk - I think this is incorrect - about the nuances of our discussions, but what happened in recent days or in recent weeks was an inevitable consequence of what was done in Prague and Brussels. Therefore, Mr. Michel and his colleagues should then think when they persuaded, apparently - I do not know, we should ask them themselves - somewhere

behind the scenes, behind the backstage of the Prime Minister of Armenia, Mr. Pashinyan, should have to take such a step together think about the fate of the Armenians of Karabakh, they would have somehow at least scribe something about what and how awaits them in this situation, some order of integration of Karabakh into the Azerbaijani state, some order related to ensuring and security, and respect for their rights. There's none of that. There is only a statement that Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan, that's all. And what should we do? If Armenia itself decided so, what should we do?

What were we doing? We used everything we had in the legal sense to ensure the humanitarian component. As you know, our people died there, by the way, defending the Armenians of Karabakh, our peacekeepers. We provided humanitarian assistance, medical care, and ensured their exit.

If we return again to our European so-called colleagues, at least now let them send humanitarian aid to support those unfortunate people, I can't say otherwise, who left their native, inhabited places from Nagorno-Karabakh. I think they'll do it. But in general, by and large, of course, it is necessary to think about their fate in the long term.

F. Lukyanov: Is Russia ready to support these people?

Vladimir Putin: I just said: we supported them.

F. Lukyanov: Those who left.

Vladimir Putin: Our people died there, protecting them, covering them with themselves and providing humanitarian support. After all, we have there, in the center of our peacekeepers, all the refugees came there, under the protection of our peacekeepers. Thousands gathered there, women and children mostly came there.

And so, of course, we are also ready to provide [assistance], Armenia does

not cease to be our ally. And if there are humanitarian issues, and they are, we will, of course, discuss them and are ready to provide support and assistance to these people. It goes without saying.

I just told you how events developed, briefly, but in general, the main thing I said.

F. Lukyanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, another such nuance in this regard. Now the Azerbaijani leadership is very harshly cleaning up those who were on duty in Karabakh, the leaders. And there are different people there, including those who are well known in Russia, like Ruben Vardanyan, for example.

Vladimir Putin: He renounced our citizenship, as far as I know.

F. Lukyanov: He refused, but he was. Can we somehow call on the Azerbaijani leadership to show mercy, I don't know?

Vladimir Putin: We have always done it and now we are doing it. I talked, as you know, on the phone with President Aliyev, but we talked about whatever happens before - and he always assured me that whatever happens, he will ensure both the security and rights of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. But now there are no Armenians left, everyone has left. Do you know that everyone is gone? There are simply no Armenians there - maybe a thousand and a half - that's all. That's it, there's just no one there.

As for the former managers - I don't know, I don't want to go into details, but I understand that they don't want to see them especially in Yerevan. But I assume that the leadership of Azerbaijan in this case, when all issues of territorial character for Azerbaijan are resolved, will still proceed from humanitarian considerations.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Colleagues, please ask those who want to ask questions.

Professor Feng Shaolai is one of our "veterans."

Feng Shaola: Thank you very much.

Feng Shaola, East China University of Education, Shanghai.

Dear Mr. President, I am very glad to see you again!

The October international conference dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative will be held in Beijing. At the same time, for almost ten years, the initiative to interface the Eurasian partnership with the Belt and Road Initiative, which you defined together with Chairman Xi Jinping.

My question is the same: in the new environment, what new ideas and what specific proposals have you already prepared?

Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: We are really returning to this topic, and some are even trying to sow doubts that both our Eurasian development project - the Eurasian Economic Union - and Chairman Xijnping's initiative "One Belt, One Road" may not coincide in interests, may enter into some kind of competition among themselves. That's not true, I've already talked about it many times. On the contrary, we believe that one project harmoniously complements another.

What's going on? And in relation to China, in relation to Russia - but in relation to Russia to a greater extent today, and in relation to China long before the events in Ukraine - some partners, we know who exactly, began to impose various kinds of sanctions. All this at some points turned into some

kind of trade war between China and the United States, restrictions were imposed, including those related to logistics.

We are interested in establishing new logistics routes, and China is also interested. The volume of trade is growing. We are now talking about the North-South corridor. China is building some routes through the Central Asian states. We are interested in supporting this, we are building appropriate roads and railways. This is all the subject of our negotiations. That's first.

Secondly, all this is complemented by what is called the sphere of real production. We supply the necessary goods to the People's Republic of China, China supplies us with the necessary goods, and we are building both logistics and production chains that certainly fit into the goals that President Xi Jinping has set for the Chinese economy and fit into our development tasks - especially in the modern world - of our economy and partnerships with other countries. This clearly complements each other.

I will not list specific projects now, there are enough of them, including between China and Russia. We built the bridge, you know, we have other logistics plans. We are developing relations, as I said, in the field of real production. All this together will be the subject of our bilateral contacts and negotiations and within the framework of a multilateral format. This is a very large and very capacious, capital-intensive work.

I want to emphasize once again, I want to emphasize this [attention]: all this work has never been built against anyone. It has a creative beginning and is aimed exclusively at achieving a positive result both for us - Russia and China - and for our partners around the world.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Richard Sakwa.

R. Sakwa (as translated): You talked about changes in international politics, the emergence of sovereign states that defend themselves, they are autonomous actors in international politics. Indeed, it's happening. This is happening within the framework of BRICS Plus, a meeting of the SCO was also held a few months ago.

Thus, the world is changing, international politics, states, post-colonial states are changing. And now these states have made it clear that they want to actively participate in the international community.

Nevertheless, international politics is formed within the framework of the system that was established in 1945 - within the framework of the UN. Do you see any contradictions between the change in international politics and the paralysis of the UN system, international law? How can Russia help overcome this so that the UN works better? How to resolve contradictions in international politics in a more peaceful way so that they are directed to the future?

Vladimir Putin: You are certainly right, there are certain contradictions between the framework that were created by the countries - the winners of World War II in 1945, and the changed conditions in the world today. 1945 is one situation in the world, today is completely different. And, of course, these legal norms should change in accordance with the changing world.

Here it is possible to treat this differently, it can be said that the UN and modern international law, which is built on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, are outdated and subject to demolition, and something new must be created. But here, of course, there is a danger that we will eliminate the existing system of international rules, these rules, the international law on the basis of the UN Charter, and nothing new has been created yet - and we will not create, and there will be just general chaos. Its elements already "tend to be." But if the UN Charter is completely sent to the landfill of history without replacing it with anything, chaos is inevitable and can lead to very

serious consequences.

Therefore, I believe that it is necessary to follow the path of changes in international law in accordance with the requirements of today and with the change in the situation in the world. In this sense, of course, countries that acquire significant weight in international affairs and simply, by virtue of their potential, have the opportunity and influence on the solution of key international issues should be represented in the UN Security Council.

What countries are these? This is India - more than one and a half billion people, in my opinion, already a population, more than seven percent economic growth, in my opinion, - 7.4 or 7.6 percent. It's a global giant. Yes, there are still a lot of people who need help and support. But nevertheless, high-tech exports are growing at a gigantic rate. So it's a powerful country, it's becoming more powerful from year to year under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

Or Brazil in Latin America - the population is huge, the growth of influence is colossal. South Africa. How not to take into account their influence in the world? So, their weight in making key decisions on the international agenda should also increase.

But, of course, this should be done in such a way that there is a consensus on these changes so that it does not destroy the existing international legal regime. This is a complex process, but, in my opinion, it is necessary to go in this direction, along this path.

F. Lukyanov: So you think that the existing international legal regime exists? Isn't it destroyed yet?

Vladimir Putin: It's definitely not completely destroyed. After all, you know, what's going on? Let's remember the very first years of the UN. What was our Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Gromyko, then called? He was called "Mr. No."

Why? Because there were a lot of contradictions, and the Soviet Union very often used its veto power. But it made sense and meaning, it didn't bring it to conflicts.

In our recent history, we have very often heard from Western leaders that the UN system is outdated, it does not meet the needs of today. Especially when it started to sound? In the period of the Yugoslav crisis, when without any sanctions of the UN Security Council, the United States and its allies began to bomb Belgrade, ruthlessly and fearlessly, even got to the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Belgrade.

Where is this international law? No, they said, no international law that was, is not necessary, it is outdated. Why? Because I wanted to act without regard to this international law. Then, when Russia began to take some action, they said: how so? Disgus! Russia violates international law and the UN Charter!

Unfortunately, there have always been attempts to adapt this international law. Is it good or bad? That's very bad. But at least there is something that is a landmark.

My only concern is that if it is swept into the basket at all, removed, then there will be no landmarks. It seems to me that we need to follow the path of permanent gradual changes. But you have to do it, of course. The world has changed.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Sergey Karaganov.

S. Karaganov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, I am one of the "veterans" and founders of the club. I am in a state close to happiness, on the day of his 20th anniversary because... Old people, generally speaking, should say that "it was better with us" - it was not better with us, now it's better, more fun,

more interesting, brighter, more multicolored. So thank you for your participation, too. My question is this...

Vladimir Putin: As for "more fun," it seems to me that it sounds bold.

S. Karaganov: When it's more interesting, then it's more fun.

Vladimir Putin: You have more fun, to be honest, I'm not very good.(
Laughter.)

S. Karaganov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, and outside Russia, and now one simple issue is being discussed quite sharply at the [Valdai] club. I will formulate it as follows - from myself, of course, not from everyone. Isn't our doctrine of the use of nuclear weapons outdated? It seems to me that it is certainly outdated, and it even looks frivolous, created in other times and maybe in a different environment, and even follows old theories. Deterrence no longer works. Isn't it time for us to change the doctrine of the use of nuclear weapons towards lowering the nuclear threshold and go, of course, firmly, but quickly enough up the ladder of escalation of deterrence, sobering of our partners?

They are insolent, they bluntly say that "because you have such a doctrine that you will never use nuclear weapons" - and we thus unwittingly allow them to expand and carry out a completely monstrous aggression.

This is one question, and it contains another. The world in the coming years - even when we win in one way or another in Ukraine or around Ukraine - the West will still live very difficult times: new centers are rising, new difficulties will arise. After all, we need to put back the same fuse that was nuclear deterrence and that has held the world for 70 years. Now this West, forgetting history and fear, is trying to eliminate this fuse. Shouldn't we change our policy in this area?

Vladimir Putin: I know your position, I have read some documents, your articles, notes. And I understand your feelings.

Let me remind you that in the Russian military doctrine there are two reasons for the possible use of nuclear weapons by Russia. The first is the use against us, that is, it is a so-called counter-strike. But in practice, what does it mean? The missiles were launched, our SPRN system detected, recorded, let us know that the target is the territory of the Russian Federation - all this happens in seconds, so that everyone understands - and already understanding, knowing the information that Russia is being hit, we, for our part, respond to this aggression.

I want to assure everyone that today the answer is absolutely unacceptable for any potential aggressor, because from the moment of detection of the launch of missiles, wherever it comes from, from anywhere in the World Ocean or from any territory, in response to a counterattack, so many hundreds - hundreds - of our missiles appear in the air that no enemy will have a chance of survival, and in several directions at once.

The second reason for the use of these weapons is the threat to the existence of the Russian state, if even conventional weapons are used against Russia, but the very existence of Russia as a state is threatened.

Here are two possible reasons for the use of weapons you mentioned.

Do we need to change that? And why? Everything can be changed, I just don't see the need for it. There is no situation in which, for example, today something would threaten Russian statehood and the existence of the Russian state, no. I think no person in his right mind and clear memory will think of using nuclear weapons against Russia.

Nevertheless, your point of view, other experts, people who are patriotic, are very worried about what is happening inside the country, around us, are

worried about what is happening on our line of contact in the Ukrainian direction - I understand everything, we look carefully and treat, believe me, with respect for your point of view, but I do not see such a need to change our concept. A potential opponent knows everything, knows about our capabilities.

Another thing, for example, I already hear calls, say, to start testing nuclear weapons, to return to testing. Here's what I'd say. The United States has signed the relevant international act, document, treaty banning nuclear weapons testing, and Russia has signed it. Russia has signed and ratified, and the United States has signed, but has not ratified.

Now we have almost finished work on modern types of strategic weapons, which I mentioned and which I announced a few years ago.

The last successful test of "Burevestnik" was carried out - a global-range cruise missile with a propulsion nuclear installation. We actually finished work on Sarmat, on a super-heavy missile. The question is that we just need to purely administratively and bureaucratically complete some procedures, move on to their mass production and putting on combat duty. We will do it soon.

As a rule, experts say that this is a new weapon and it is necessary to make sure that the special warhead will work without failures, and it is necessary to conduct tests. I'm not ready to say now whether we really need to do or don't need to do the tests. But to behave mirrorly in relations with the United States, I will repeat once again, when the United States signed, but did not ratify, and we signed and ratified - in principle, it is possible to behave in a mirror with the same United States. But this is a question of the deputies of the State Duma. In theory, this ratification can be withdrawn. If we do that, it will be quite enough.

F. Lukyanov: Now in the West, some openly express such a position that such

active support for Ukraine is due to the fact that Russia somehow did not respond convincingly enough for the whole year and a half to the escalation on their part.

Vladimir Putin: I don't know, convincingly, not convincingly. But now since the beginning of the so-called counteroffensive - this is the latest data - only since June 4, Ukrainian units have already lost more than 90 thousand people - these are sanitary and irrevocable losses, 557 tanks, almost 1,900 armored vehicles of various classes. Convincing, not convincing?

We have our own understanding of what is moving and how. We understand where and what we need to do, where and what we need to add. We are calmly going to achieve our goals, and, I am sure, we will achieve them - the implementation of these tasks that we set for ourselves.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Radika Desai.

R. Desai (as translated): Mr. President Putin, thank you for another, I would say, historically important and thoughtful speech. I'm always very impressed when I listen to you.

I have a question and a personal request. The question concerns my country - Canada. As you know, the Parliament of Canada just made fun of itself when they applauded the Ukrainian Nazi veteran of the Parliament of Canada. More than 440 people were breeding, and no one wondered: is it right?

As you know, Prime Minister Trudeau has apologized, it seems, twice, the Speaker of Parliament has resigned. And for me, it really shows the scale of how far the Western position has come. They are so focused on their ignorant concepts that they even forgot how much Russia has done to defeat Nazism.

They do not understand that if it were not for Russia's contribution, World War II would have ended in a different way: there would have been no victory. They forgot how much Russia has done to win, 30 million lives have been lost - a huge figure, it is difficult to even imagine this scale.

Could you comment on this, what do you think about it?

And my personal request to you, it concerns me personally. I'm sorry if I say something wrong, but it concerns my friend, a friend of many of us here and my husband Dimitris Constantakopoulos. And this is Boris Kagarlitsky's question. As you know, he was detained, and he is concerned about his personal condition.

And I have several reasons why I'm talking about it. Several petitions have been signed in Western countries, of course, a lot is said on this case, but we do not sign these petitions because we do not agree with their content, because they are completely anti-Russian. And we have a letter to you, and we hope that you will read it, and we hope that you will understand that we are addressing you as friends of Russia.

Of course, we are in a difficult position because we do not agree with our friend's position, but we remember how much we learned from him. He has an excellent knowledge of Russian history, and he has always been committed to Russia. And this is our personal appeal to you: please do it personally.

Thank You.

Vladimir Putin: You know, to be honest, I don't know in detail who Kagarlitsky is - that's how my colleague [F. Lukyanov] tells me. Of course, I'll take your paper, look and react, I promise you, okay?

As for your question, God sees, we did not agree that this question would be,

but I was waiting for it, I will honestly tell you. And what's more, I took information about what really happened. This is not an ordinary event for us.

Let me remind you that this division, in which the Ukrainian Nazi you mentioned served, was created by Hitler's command on April 28, 1943. The Nuremberg Trial - not us yesterday or in the conditions of today, but the Nuremberg Tribunal declared the SS division "Galicia", in which this Ukrainian Nazi served, criminal and responsible for the genocide of Jews, Poles and other civilians. This is the decision of the International Nuremberg Court of Justice.

Let me remind you that this decision was made by independent prosecutors and judges - in the end, judges, of course, on the basis of the data provided by prosecutors of different countries. This organization has been declared criminal.

Let me remind you the words - I specifically took this paper with information to be specific and evidence-based - that the speaker of the Canadian Parliament said: "Today in this hall there is a Ukrainian-Canadian veteran of the Second World War who fought for the independence of Ukraine against the Russians. I am proud to say that he is a hero of Ukraine and a hero of Canada, and we are grateful to him for his service."

First, if the speaker of the Canadian Parliament says that during World War II this Canadian-Ukrainian or Ukrainian-Canadian Nazi fought against the Russians, he cannot but understand that he fought on Hitler's side, and not on the side of his own homeland - Canada, or was a fascist collaborator - in any case fought on the side of the Nazi troops. Let's say he doesn't know that. I don't want to offend the feelings of the Canadian people in any way. We treat Canada, no matter what, with respect, especially people. But if he doesn't know that Hitler and his henchmen fought against Russia during the war, he's an idiot. So he just didn't go to school, he doesn't have basic knowledge. And if he knows that this man fought on Hitler's side, and calls

him a hero of Ukraine and a hero of Canada, then he is a scoundrel. Either so or so.

That's the kind of people we have to deal with, these are our opponents today from some Western countries.

But what else is important, in my opinion? The Speaker of the Parliament of Canada says: he fought the Russians and - there [in the document] further quote - today continues to support Ukrainian troops fighting against the Russians. In fact, he put on one board Hitler's collaborators, SS troops and today's Ukrainian combat units fighting, as he said, against Russia - he put them on the same board. This only confirms our thesis that one of our goals in Ukraine is denazification. So, it is still there and admits, this nazification of Ukraine. And our common goal, I think, is to achieve denazification.

And, finally, of course, it looks absolutely disgusting that everyone applauded this Nazi, and especially the President of Ukraine, in whose veins the veins of Jewish blood flows, a Jew by nationality, stands and applauds the Nazi - not just follow the Nazis, not just an ideological follower, but a man who destroyed the Jewish population with his own hands. He personally destroyed it, because the German fascists created this SS division "Galicia" primarily to destroy the civilian population, and the decision of the Nuremberg Court so it is recorded. They were blamed for the genocide of Jews, Poles - about 150,000 Poles were killed, Russians, of course, Roma at all, no one considered them - they were not even considered people. One and a half million Jews have been killed in Ukraine - just think about this figure. What, wasn't that? What, doesn't anyone know that? Yes, everyone knows, everyone knows. Wasn't there a Holocaust?

And when the President of Ukraine applaud a man who personally exterminated Jews in Ukraine with his own hands, does he want to say that there was no Holocaust? Isn't that disgusting? All means are good, as long as they fight against Russia, such people. And all means are good if they are

used in the fight against Russia. I can imagine that there is just an irresistible desire to defeat Russia on the battlefield, to achieve its strategic defeat. But is it possible to do it at such a price? I think it's just extremely disgusting. And I very much hope that not only we here, in a narrow circle, at the Valdai Club will talk about it, but that somehow public organizations, those who care about the future of humanity, will still formulate their position on this issue clearly, unequivocally and with condemnation of what happened.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

I saw Gabor Stir. Gabor Stier - I saw it somewhere, and now I've lost it.

Styr: Gabor Stier from Hungary.

Mr. President, this time I will not ask about what will happen to Odessa, although many people in Hungary ask what the neighboring country will be called.

Vladimir Putin: Did you mean Odessa? Last time they asked.

H. Stir: Yes, last time, [but] I have another question.

Vladimir Putin: Please excuse me.

G. Stir: Mr. President, we know that you will be interested in history, so now I would like to approach the current reality from this point of view. If we talk about history, we know how important the fact that Peter the Great opened the "window to Europe" to the European part of the Russian identity was for the development of Russia.

Of course, now Europe is in decline and is doing everything to make Russia dislike it. But I, a European, am seriously scared sometimes to hear

statements that some European cities need to be subjected to atomic bombardment.

What does Europe mean for Russia today? Because it's not a question of what problems we have. What does Europe mean for Russia today? Will Russia turn away from it completely? Don't you think it would be a mistake to wall up this "window"?

If we're talking about history, then one more question. New Russian history textbooks caused a serious discussion in Hungary, more precisely, lines about 1956, describing what happened as a kind of "color revolution". Do you also think that 1956 was not a real revolution? And do you agree with another controversial comment in the book that the withdrawal of troops from Central Europe in 1990-1991 was a mistake?

I remember, I know that in Vladivostok you said that the introduction of tanks was a mistake, in 1968 and in 1956. But if it was a mistake, then do you think that the withdrawal of troops is also a mistake?

Vladimir Putin: Do you think this is a question? This is probably a reason for writing a thesis. You said that you would not mention Odessa, although you mentioned it. I abstained last time, but I can say that Odessa is, of course, a Russian city. A little Jewish, as we are talking now. A little bit. But now we will not discuss this if you are determined to talk about another topic.

First of all, the "window to Europe." You know, now colleagues have said: the world is changing, and climbing all the time into the "window" back and forth, tearing your pants is not the best thing to do. And why climb out the window when there are other doors? This is the first one.

Second. Without a doubt, the civilization code of Russia, as well as Europe, is based on Christianity. And this certainly unites us. But we're not going to impose ourselves on Europe if it doesn't want to. We don't refuse, we don't

slam it. Did you say, do we regret or not? Why should we regret it? It's not us who shut the door for joint communication, it's Europe that fences itself off from us and creates a new "iron curtain", it's not us who create it, but the Europeans create it - at a loss and at the detriment of themselves.

I have already said, I can repeat: the economy of, say, the United States is growing - 2.4 percent, and the European economy is entering recession, has already gone. Some European figures, who are not exactly positive, somehow friendly to our country, give the right diagnosis: well-being was based on cheap energy from Russia and on the development of the Chinese market. Europe's well-being was based on these factors. Of course, high technology, hardworking and disciplined working class, talented people - all this, of course, is true. But there are fundamental factors that Europe itself refuses.

I spoke about sovereignty in my opening remarks. You understand what the matter is, because sovereignty has multi-vector dimensions. Why do we talk all the time, and I always say that Russia cannot exist as a non-sovereign state? It will just cease to exist at all. Because it's not just about military and other security issues, it's also about other components.

What happened to Europe? Many European leaders, so that they do not accuse me of rudely embezzling or insulting someone, many Europeans themselves say that Europe has lost its sovereignty. For example, in the economic locomotive of Europe - in the Federal Republic, leading politicians have repeatedly emphasized that after 1945 Germany was never in the full sense of the word a sovereign state.

What does this lead to in practice, including in economic life? The United States provoked, and I think I don't even doubt it was they who provoked the Ukrainian crisis when they supported the coup d'état in Ukraine in 2014. They couldn't help but understand that it was a red line, we said it a thousand times. No, we climbed. Here we get today's situation.

And I suspect it's not by chance. They needed this conflict. The result: Europe had long lost part - not completely, but a significant part - of its sovereignty, was forced to immediately stand behind its sovereign and follow his policy, to switch to a policy of sanctions and restrictions against Russia. She was forced to understand that it was to her harm, and now all energy resources - a significant part of these energy resources - are bought from the United States 30 percent more expensive.

We have imposed restrictions on Russian oil, and what is the result? This is not as obvious as for gas, but the result is the same: they reduced the number of suppliers, in turn began to buy from a reduced number of oil suppliers at more expensive prices, and we sell our oil to other countries at a discount.

Do you understand what happened? The competitiveness of the European economy has fallen down, and the competitiveness of their main economy in fact in terms of the economic component of the competitor - the United States - has increased sharply, and other countries, including Asia, has also increased. As a result of the loss of part of their sovereignty, they were forced to make decisions to their own detriment.

Why do we need such a partner? Of course, it's not useless. But I want to draw attention to the fact that we are largely withdrawing from the fading European market and increasing our presence in growing markets in other regions of the world, including Asia.

At the same time, of course, we are connected with Europe by numerous centuries-old ties in the field of culture and education. I repeat: all this is based on Christian culture. But even here, Europeans don't really please us. They destroy their roots based on Christian culture, they just tear them out mercilessly.

That's why we're not going to close anything - neither windows nor doors, but

we're not going to break there, to Europe, if Europe doesn't want it. He wants to - please, we will work together. It seems to me that you can talk endlessly, but the main points, in my opinion, I noted.

Now about the textbook and the "color revolutions," 1956. I won't hide it, I haven't read the textbook in this part. And about the withdrawal of troops. Of course, these are also historical facts, and then, in 1956, many Western countries fueled the problems that took place, including the mistakes of the then Hungarian leadership, and the militants were trained abroad, transferred to Hungary. But in my opinion, it is still difficult to call it some kind of "color revolution" in its pure form, because there was still an internal basis for serious protest within the country itself. This, in my opinion, is an obvious thing. And then it is hardly necessary to transfer today's wording to the middle of the last century.

As for the withdrawal of troops, I am deeply convinced that it makes no sense with the help of troops to suppress internal trends in a particular country, in the people to achieve those goals that they consider a priority for themselves. This applies to European countries, including Eastern European countries. There was no point in keeping troops there if the peoples of these countries did not want to see them on their territory.

But how it happened, under what conditions all this happened, how - this, of course, raises many questions. Our troops went straight into the open field. Do many people know about it? Just in the open field, with families. Is that normal? At the same time, any obligations, any legal consequences of the withdrawal of these troops were also not formulated by either the Soviet or Russian leadership.

The Western partners did not make any commitments at all. At least we returned to the issue of NATO expansion or non-expansion to the east. Yes, everything was promised, our American partners do not deny it, verbally, and then they ask us: where is the piece of paper? No paper. And that's it,

goodbye. Did you promise? It seems like they promised, but it's worth nothing. We know that they don't even have a piece of paper. They're ready to throw away any piece of paper. But at least something would be recorded on paper and something could be agreed upon when the withdrawal of troops.

To agree on security issues in Europe, to achieve some new design in Europe. After all, the same German Social Democracy, Mr. Egon Bar, had proposals, I once talked about it, to create a new security system in Europe, which would include Russia, the same United States, and the same Canada, but not NATO, but together with all - for Eastern and Central Europe. In my opinion, this would solve many of the problems of today.

And he then said, the grandfather was smart, he said exactly: otherwise, you will see, everything will be the same, only closer to Russia. He was a German politician, an experienced, literate and intelligent man. No one listened to him: neither the Soviet leadership, much less in the West and the United States. Here we now have what he said.

Withdrawal of troops - yes, it was pointless to keep it. But the conditions for withdrawal - this was exactly what we had to talk about and achieve the creation of a situation that might not have led to today's tragedies and today's crisis. I guess that's it.

Have I answered your question? If you forgot something, please.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Once they started talking about Germany, Stefan Huth.

Sh. Huth (as translated): My name is Stefan Huth, I'm from Germany.

I would like to talk about what you just mentioned - the special military

operation in Ukraine. It is often said that this is an anti-fascist operation, that it is necessary to liberate the people of Ukraine from the Nazis, it is necessary to liberate the country and so on.

Against this background, it is not entirely clear how this can be. It turns out that we are in contacts at a high level, between parliaments, and even German parties are in contacts.

We also have parties that are inherently deeply racist. Of course, they have no sympathy for the Russian people, and they do not understand at all that Russia is a multinational country, as you said in your speech.

Here's what I would like to understand: what do you expect, what does your Government expect from contacts with the parliaments of other countries, with other parties - with parties that have a similar sense, almost fascist? Do you understand that anti-fascism in Europe also does not support your policy? The European anti-fascist movement does not support Russian actions.

Vladimir Putin: Excuse me, please, I would like to ask you to specify: what do you mean when you talk about fascist forces and fascist parties, about their attitude to Russia and so on? Please, directly specifically, otherwise we will speak in half-tones, or better straight.

Sh.Hut (as translated): So, the head of the AfD, Tino Khrutalla, held an official meeting with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in 2020. It was an official meeting. And part of the AfD, in fact, is founded by the fascist movement, and anti-fascists in Germany do not quite understand the meaning of such contacts and do not understand the meaning of Russia's policy towards such parties.

Vladimir Putin: And what do you see and what confirms the fact that you said that they are based in their activities on some fascist, pro-fascist National

Socialist ideas? Can you tell me exactly what it's about?

S. Huth (as translated): Björn Höcke, for example, is directly related to the fascists, he regularly goes to demonstrations in Dresden on the anniversary of the events, and he goes out with the fascists. This is a representative of the "Alternative for Germany" party, which is directly related to the fascist movement, and this is often talked about. He doesn't hide that it's the right-wing party.

Vladimir Putin: I see. Look, you started with Ukraine and asked me if it was true that we publicly declare that we are striving to denazify the Ukrainian political system. But we were just discussing the situation that developed in the Canadian parliament, when the President of Ukraine stood and applauded the Nazi, who killed Jews, Russians and Poles.

Isn't this a sign that there is a system in Ukraine that we have the right to call pro-Nazi? The leader of the state stands and applauds the Nazi, and not just some ideological follower of Nazism, but a real Nazi, a former SS soldier. Isn't this a sign of the nationalization of Ukraine and doesn't it give us the right to talk about its denazification?

But you can answer: yes, this is the head of state, but this is not the whole country. And I'll tell you: you said about those who go to rallies together with pro-fascist elements. Is this the whole party that goes to these rallies? Probably not.

Everything that is pro-fascist, pro-Nazi, is certainly condemned by us. Everything that is devoid of these signs, but on the contrary, is aimed at establishing contacts, is supported by us.

As far as I know, an attempt was made on one of the leaders of the Alternative for Germany. Only now, during the election campaign. Does that mean what? About the fact that representatives of this party use Nazi

methods or are these Nazi methods used against them? After all, this is a question waiting for its painstaking researcher, including in your person and in the person of the general public of the Federal Republic itself.

As for the anti-fascist forces, we have always been with them, we know their position towards Russia. We are grateful to them for this position and, of course, support it.

I think that everything that is aimed at revival, at maintaining relations between us, should be supported, and this can certainly be a light at the end of the tunnel of our current relations.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Alexey Grivach.

A.Givach: Thank you for the opportunity to ask a question. He also has a research character. We are working on the latest developments in the gas sector.

Just over a year ago, we all witnessed an incredible, unprecedented act of international terrorism against European cross-border critical infrastructure. I mean the Nord Stream explosions.

You have commented on this topic a lot, including the demonstrative negligence of European investigators and politicians in assessing this situation. We can say that we see a brilliant lack of any clear reaction - condemnation of this fact by the leadership, such as Chancellor Scholz or President Macron. Although the companies of these countries can be said to have been directly affected by these actions, as they were and are shareholders, co-owners of these assets and co-investors of these projects.

But at the same time, recently there have been numerous "plums" that are directly or indirectly trying to lay the blame: allegedly the investigation comes to such conclusions that Ukrainian comrades are behind these acts and deeds. In this regard, I have two questions for you.

First: was there any reaction from these gentlemen - politicians, your European vis-vis-ins - in some direct contacts, and not in official speeches, which were not, in my opinion, or, as they say, through diplomatic channels?

The second question: what can and will be the consequences if the so-called European investigation, the investigative authorities of European countries still blame the Ukrainian side for these events and actions in one form or another?

Vladimir Putin: The first thing I would like to draw attention to is that long before these explosions, the President of the United States publicly said that the United States would do everything to stop the supply of Russian energy to Europe through these pipeline systems. And he smiled meaningfully and said: now I will not say how it will be done, but we will do it. First.

Second. The destruction of these infrastructure facilities is undoubtedly an act of international terrorism.

Third. We are not allowed to investigate, despite our proposals and repeated calls to do so.

Next. There are no results of the investigation and, apparently, there will be no.

And finally, answering the question of who is to blame, it is always necessary to answer the question of who is interested in it. Of course, the American supplier of energy carriers to the European market is interested. Americans have been wanting this for a long time, and they have achieved it, and with

whose hands it no longer matters.

There is another component of this whole problem. Of course, if it is ever revealed who did it, it should be brought to justice. This is an act of international terrorism. But one branch of Nord Stream 2 remains, it is intact, and it can be used to supply 27.5 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe. This is only a decision of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Nothing else is needed. Today the solution is that tomorrow we turn the valve, and that's it - the gas has gone. But they don't do it, because, as we say, the "Washington Obl Committee" does not allow - to the detriment of its own interests.

We continue to supply gas to Europe through Turkish Streams, and it seems that the Ukrainian territorial groups are aimed at damaging it. Our ships are guarded by pipeline systems laid on the bottom of the Black Sea, but they are constantly attacked with the help of drones, which are prepared, including with the direct participation of English-speaking specialists and advisers. We hear it on the air: where these unmanned semi-suppressed boats are being prepared, we hear English speech - this is an obvious fact for us. Who's there in the end - draw your own conclusions.

But deliveries continue, including through the territory of Ukraine. We transit through the territory of Ukraine and pay money for this transit - so, for a minute. I've already talked about it. We hear that we are aggressors, that we are so, so bad. But the money, apparently, does not smell - they get money for transit, with pleasure, they cash it all: am, and that's it.

We behave openly, transparently, we are ready to cooperate. They don't want to, they don't. We will increase the amount of liquefied natural gas produced and sold. We will send it to other markets. We will build new pipeline systems where they want to see our product, where it is absolutely competitive and raises the competitiveness of the economies of those countries, I have already talked about this, where our products come.

As for the investigation, we'll see. In the end, I sewed in a bag, as people say, not to be hidden: in the end, it will still be clear who did it.

F. Lukyanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, you yourself mentioned about transit through Ukraine. Part of our public is perplexed: why are we doing this? This money, so that they are, why do we pay them?

Vladimir Putin: We pay money because it is a transit country, and we deliver in transit through Ukraine only because we fulfill our contractual obligations to our counterparties in Europe.

F. Lukyanov: But it also strengthens the defense capability of our opponent.

Vladimir Putin: But this also strengthens our financial condition - we get money for it.

F. Lukyanov: I see. Thank You.

Mohammed Ihsan has been pulling his hand for a long time.

M. Iskhan (as translated): Thank you.

It is an honor and a great opportunity for me to hear your speech.

I would like to switch to the Middle East, move away from the topic of the international system and Ukraine. I am from Iraq, and soon the Prime Minister of Iraq will come to Moscow on a visit. I am grateful to you for taking it personally.

Now there are numerous problems related to our country. We employ both Rosneft and Gazprom. They invested heavily in Iraq, and in Kurdistan in particular.

Do you think that there is now an opportunity to help the parties to the conflict in Kurdistan achieve a peaceful solution and peacefully resolve all the problems that now exist, since there are other countries in the region that would like, for example, to escalate the conflict, like to add fuel to the fire?

Now I would also like to say that we have already come to the end of 2023, and don't you think it's time to personally help all parties to the conflict in Syria, including talking to the government, the Kurds, regional forces, and all regional parties, and finally putting an end to this conflict?

Thousands of Syrians have left their homes. They are humiliated, and there is no peaceful solution to the conflict on the horizon. I think no one but you can do it now. Most of the parties to the conflict respect Russia, respect President Putin, you have very good relations with them. I think it's time not to intervene, but to mediate between all parties in Syria.

Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: You have just said that even the parties to the conflict in some states of the Middle East, including Syria, respect and treat us with respect. I can tell you: this is because we ourselves respect everyone.

As for Syria, we are supporters of the peace process, including under the auspices of the United Nations. But we cannot replace the contracting parties. We can only create conditions and to a certain extent, if it is acceptable to all, act as guarantors of these agreements, including with the participation of our direct partners in this process. I mean Iran and Turkey - within the framework of the Astana process.

We did it, all this had positive consequences, and now everything that has been achieved, and achieved, thank God, a lot - I mean first of all the ceasefire - has been created for the peace process. All this was done by us and our partners with the goodwill of the Syrian leadership. But, of course,

there is still a lot to do.

It seems to me that external interference and an attempt to create some quasi-state associations on the territory of Syria do not lead to anything good. The displacement of Arab tribes that have traditionally lived in certain territories in order to create these quasi-state entities is a difficult story that can lead to the prolongation of the conflict.

But we are nevertheless ready to contribute in every possible way to increasing the level of trust, including between the central authorities of Syria and the Kurds living in the east of the country. It's a complex process. Here, you know, I try to be very careful, because every word matters. This is the first one.

The second is that concerns Iraq. We have very good relations with Iraq, and we welcome the visit of the Prime Minister of Iraq to Russia. Indeed, there are many issues of mutual interest, and, of course, first of all they lie in the field of energy. But there is another issue that is very important in the economic sphere - logistics. I will not go into details now, but we know that there are several options for the development of logistics transport directions on the territory of Iraq. In general, they all suit us, we only need to choose the most optimal projects. We are ready to take part in their implementation.

Mr. Prime Minister is coming, and we will be happy to discuss all these issues, including those related to regional security and security within Iraq itself. For many, many decades, we have maintained the closest, closest and most trusting relationship with Iraq. We have a lot of friends there, and we want and strive to ensure that a situation of stability comes in the country and that the economy and social sphere develop on the basis of this stability.

We are waiting for the arrival of Mr. Prime Minister. I am sure that this visit will be very productive and timely.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Taisuke Abiru, please.

T. Abiru: Sasakawa Foundation, Japan.

The last time I was given the opportunity to ask a question was in 2018, five years ago. But after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Japan participated in sanctions against Russia, and Russia announced the suspension of negotiations on a peace treaty between the two countries, as a result of which Japanese-Russian relations reached an impasse. I personally don't see any good prospects for improving the situation in the near future.

Nevertheless, Russia and Japan are neighbors. I believe that it is always necessary to keep the dialogue window open. In this sense, I believe that the time has long been to resume the dialogue between our countries at the level of at least experts.

If Japan comes up with such an initiative, Mr. President, will you support this initiative?

Thank You.

F. Lukyanov: Today our "window openings" are popular, have you noticed?

Vladimir Putin: I'm a 4th grade carpenter, I know how to build windows, don't worry.

F. Lukyanov: Do you know how to expand?

Vladimir Putin: We will expand if necessary. If it is in our national interests, we will also work on it.

About Japan. You said that you asked a question in 2018, and after the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine, everything changed. Fighting in Ukraine began not after 2018, but in 2014, but just in Japan they preferred not to notice it. And the more acute phase really began in 2022, but the fighting itself began in 2014 with the bombing and attacks of armored vehicles on Donbass - that's where it all began. I said this in my opening remarks.

Now about our relationship. It was not us who imposed sanctions against Japan, it was not us who slammed this "window", in this case to Asia. Japan did it. We didn't do anything.

If you think that the time has come for some dialogue to take place, and you think it is possible for the Japanese side to take some initiative, it is always good when there is some kind of dialogue.

You asked me if we were ready to answer it? We are ready if there is such an initiative on the part of the side that closed these "doors" or the "window". If you think it's time to open this "window" - please. We never said we were against it. Do it.

F. Lukyanov: Alexander Rakovich.

A. Rakovich (as translated): Your Excellency!

I'm a historian from Belgrade, Serbia. It is my privilege to be here, see you and talk to you.

I have a question about your opinion on the current relations between Russia and Serbia and the current position of Serbs in the Balkans. Are we, Serbia and Russia, the goal of Western politics because we stand for Christianity?

Mr. President, I have two books with me that I brought from Belgrade for you.

Please take them to your library. I will provide these books to your protocol service after our session.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you very much. I will definitely take the books. Thank you.

As for whether Russia and Serbia are a target for some circles in the West? Yes, it's a fact. You don't need any special evidence here, it's just a fact. Why is Serbia such a goal? To be honest, I don't understand.

Just as Russia in the early 90s was ready to do anything to build after the collapse of the Soviet Union - believing that times have radically changed, to make virtually any sacrifices - in order to build its relations with Western countries. What did we get? Support for separatism and terrorism in the Caucasus, directly: political, information, financial, and even military. You know, at that time I was first the director of the FSB, I was surprised to see what was happening, I thought: why, we're kind of all together now, why are they doing it? But they didn't do it shy. There is no answer, to be honest, even so far.

I believe that this is just some lack of education, or that, a lack of understanding of trends, a lack of understanding of how the world works, how Russia works, what it can lead to. It's just a desire to crush, crush, crush - nothing but force. After all, sanctions are also a force, only in a different form. Complete lack of desire to find any compromises. And these shouts I said: you must, you must, we warn you, is also a force and an attempt to use the element of force. It's the same. That's what it's all about.

And with regard to Yugoslavia first and then Serbia: why? Serbia also seemed to be ready for everything, she wanted to agree on everything. No, we need to add, add. You know, I've heard many times: we need to crush, it's a weak link. That's the philosophy. Why exactly did the Serbs have to be crushed? To be honest, I don't know.

Even more, when there were some frank conversations, I still had normal relations with some leaders, when I was told "I need to crush", I said "why?" - there's no answer. Just like that, the philosophy has developed, a paradigm, it is necessary to solve it like this - to crush it.

But the Serbs are not the same people, the history is not the same, the culture is not the same. You know, I'll say, maybe, a heavy thing: you can destroy, you can't crush and subdue the Serbs. They don't understand that either.

But I hope that sooner or later there will come an understanding of this component in European politics and the world in general, there will come an understanding that it is still necessary to negotiate more constructively, and not to try to crush.

A. Gupta (as translated): Mr. President, thank you very much for your speeches, they are very informative. I'm from New Delhi. Thank you very much for your positive assessment of India's role.

I have a question about the G20. A G20 declaration has been developed, we are very grateful for your work. The G20 also has some reference: "One world, one family, one future," which is related to the civilizational approach, I think you talked about. Just like Russian civilization, you promote the approach of Russian civilization, so India describes itself, calls itself a civilizational state, a civilization state. Thus, it is necessary to establish a dialogue between civilizations, and not to follow the path of confrontation of civilizations - this is what was once popular in the Western world.

Now leaders like you, Prime Minister Modi, are putting forward their initiatives. They will help to create a dialogue among civilizations that can be positive and help to create the principles of international relations you mentioned.

The question is: what do you think about the G20 declaration and what is your view of the future of the G20?

Thank You.

Vladimir Putin: First of all, I want to confirm what you said about Indian civilization, Russian civilization - that's exactly what I said in my opening speech. India is certainly the oldest world civilization, powerful, huge and with great potential.

Russia is also a separate civilization. Look: we have more than 190 peoples, nationalities, ethnic groups in Russia, more than 270 languages and dialects. Of course, isn't it a civilization? And India is a multi-confessional, multinational country, a huge simple one. We among all civilizations - these are not the only world civilizations - need to establish a dialogue, a balance of interests and mechanisms to maintain this balance.

As for the work of the G20, it is certainly the success of the Indian leadership and personally Prime Minister Mr. Modi. This is a success, and the Indian leadership was able to find and achieve this balance, including in the declaration. Some kind of closed associations, they do not have much perspective, and the balance changes.

But what do I think is the success of the G20 in India? The fact that the Prime Minister managed to depoliticize the decisions taken at the G20, and this is the only right approach, because the G20 was once created as a platform for discussing economic rather than political issues. The politicalization of the G20 is just the right way to its self-destruction, and the Indian leadership managed to avoid it, and this is certainly a success.

As for the fact that some closed associations, they are flawed, it seems to me that this thesis is difficult to refute, because the balance of power is changing. Look, until recently everyone watched with shudder, what will

happen as a result of the meeting of the "s seven": as if the largest economies of the world are gathering, what are they now solved there, what will be the consequences for the world economy?

Even before the expansion, the BRICS economy accounted for more than 51 percent of world GDP. Accordingly, the economy of the "singled" was smaller. And now, after the adoption of additional members by the BRICS organization, the volume of the economies of the BRICS member countries has become even larger than the members of the "semer", so the real balance of forces and potentials is very important.

In this sense, open areas are always better, always more promising, always more valuable, because they create conditions for finding compromises and mutually acceptable solutions. But if we talk about the results of the work of the G20, I want to repeat once again and I would like to finish the answer to your question: this is certainly the success of Prime Minister Modi.

F. Lukyanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, and you didn't go to BRICS, you didn't go to the G20 either. Don't you feel a little deprived that you can't go wherever you want?

Vladimir Putin: Those who were deprived of any social payments in the first years of Soviet power were called Deprived people, right? We do not need social benefits, we are a self-sufficient state and we are on this path.

F. Lukyanov: Some of them were also deprived of civil rights there.

Vladimir Putin: Yes, they were deprived. And we defend our rights, and I'm sure we will ensure them. This is the first one.

Secondly, why should I create any problems for our friends during these events? I - and we are adults, we understand: I have come - there will be political attacks, political shows, all this will be aimed at disrupting the event.

And why?

First of all, we are interested in ensuring that BRICS went well, smoothly and with the results, the G20 passed at the right level. That's how it all happened, and we're quite satisfied with it.

And finally, the third - after all, there are enough things to do at home.

F. Lukyanov: So you are not offended by the President of South Africa?

Vladimir Putin: Well, you, this is our friend.

F. Lukyanov: Is he on you?

Vladimir Putin: And for what? No, we agreed with him, he came to Russia twice, we met with him, talked for a long time. There are no problems, and I believe that he conducted BRICS brilliantly, frankly, did not even expect such diplomatic art from him. Because if you followed the discussion, it was not easy to solve the issue of expanding the BRICS, and he did it. He so politely, tactfully, repeatedly returned to the same topic, once, and two, and three - and finally, a consensus was reached. This is a positive result, we welcome it.

F. Lukyanov: Next year you will be in his place. Do you already know who we are going to accept?

Vladimir Putin: Next year - yes, we are presiding over BRICS, and, of course, we will strive to take the baton from South Africa. For the first time we will hold a summit with the participation of new members of the organization. We have planned 200 events within the framework of BRICS, during the year, I am sure, a lot of positive work will be done to strengthen the organization, which is becoming more and more authoritative, powerful, and this will certainly benefit both the members of the organization and the entire

international community.

It was born in Russia, BRICS. I'll remind you how it was. First, we offered to meet the three of us: Russia, India and China - and agreed that we would meet on a regular basis. That's how RIC emerged - Russia, India, China. Then Brazil expressed its desire and readiness to join these discussions - the BRIC turned out. And then South Africa, South Africa - and it turned out to be BRICS.

Now we have come to expansion and expanded the number of members of the organization. In my opinion, this is very important, it indicates an increase in authority and, most importantly, the desire to join a format that does not oblige anyone to anything, does not impose anything on anyone, but simply creates conditions for finding compromises and solving those issues in which all participating countries are interested. We are happy about this, we believe that this is a positive process.

F. Lukyanov: Shall we take Algeria?

Vladimir Putin: Algeria is our friend, certainly a traditional friend in the Arab world, in northern Africa. We believe that this would benefit the organization, but we should certainly work out these issues with all our friends within the BRICS, in contact with the Algerian leadership itself, to do it calmly, not creating problems for the organization, but creating only additional ways for common development.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you.

Dayan Jayatilleka.

D. Jayatillek (as translated): Thank you, Mr. President.

I represent Sri Lanka. I was the ambassador to the Russian Federation.

The Western bloc decided to equip Ukraine with long-range missiles, cluster munitions that can reach the territory of the Russian Federation, and they also wanted to provide F-16.

Obviously, you are now faced with war, imperialism, proxy war, and, as you have already said, there are also Nazi elements here.

From a historical point of view, Mr. President, imperialism was fought on the battlefield. These are Chinese communists, communists in North Korea and Vietnam. They defeated the United States. As for imperialism, it was criticized most of all by Lenin.

The question is: in the face of this challenge, this threat from these forces, it may be time to reassess 1917, because the Chinese, Vietnamese, North Koreans were children of this year. Don't you think it's time to reconsider the events of these years, as well as U.S. relations with its allies, both with France and with China during the Chinese Revolution? Here's my question.

Vladimir Putin: Excuse me, please clarify what? And who needs to reconsider - Vastaka has a difficult question - since 1917?

F. Lukyanov: If I understood correctly, my colleague asks: isn't it time to reconsider in a more positive way the attitude towards the revolution, to the Communists and that period of our history?

Vladimir Putin: To reconsider the attitude to the period of our history in 1917?

F. Lukyanov: 1917 and beyond. I'm sorry to interpret it, but I understood it, yes.

Vladimir Putin: Why interpret when there is an author of this question?

D. Jayatilleke (as translated): Let me briefly explain what I'm talking about.

Since we are attacked by imperialism and elements of fascism, and since in history there have already been cases of successful victory over imperialism in China, Korea, Vietnam, and texts about imperialism were written by Lenin, it may have come to criticize the events of 1917 less and restore the historical status of those events - like the French, American and Chinese revolutions.

Vladimir Putin: To criticize the events of those years, including in Russia itself, as I understand it?

Yes, you're right. They are right in the sense that it is necessary to engage less in criticism, and more to engage in a deep, in this case even scientific, analysis of the realities that took place at that time, which are happening now. Yes, you're right.

The only thing to give in-depth assessments, including those related to ideology. Now I will speak my own opinion, each of those present here can argue with him. It is also necessary to give correct assessments of the ideologicalization of interstate relations and geopolitical interests. In addition to relations between classes, relations within the framework of the so-called class struggle... We did not attach importance - and even after the events of 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we were still in the paradigm of class relations and ideological relations and did not notice that there were purely geopolitical interests.

These are the relations of the West with the People's Republic of China. There was a moment when they tried - and unsuccessfully - to squeal China and the Soviet Union, Russia. Because China was the weakest - it's not scary [was]. Now that China has begun to grow, under the leadership of the same

Communist Party and today President Xi Jinping, its power is increasing almost every day - that's it, now there is a return... And then, when they tried to use China, then they forgot about all ideological differences, and now they are being revived again. But in fact, at the heart of U.S. policy towards China is geopolitical fears. China's power, growing power is what scares, not that some human rights are violated there or the rights of national minorities. Does it really bother anyone? No, it's just a tool to fight China, that's all. The same goes for Russia.

And in general, globally - yes, it is necessary to give general, deeper assessments. In any case, I agree with you that it is indiscriminate to throw everything into the "dump of history", everything that happened under the leadership of the communist parties of that time, which you said, of course, it is indiscriminate to smear all this with one paint inexpedient and even harmful. In this sense, I agree with you.

F. Lukyanov: Well, since they started talking about China, Mr. Liu Gang.

Liu Gang (translated): Mr. President, I represent the Xinhua Institute from China.

At the last meetings of the Valdai Club, we talked about BRICS, and this is very important. We also saw that after the United States and some Western countries escalated sanctions against Russia, the global South did not follow suit and showed strategic independence. During the BRICS summit in August this year, six countries became new members of BRICS, and the global South has reached a new level of its history of cooperation.

China and Russia are important developing economies. What can our countries do to expand cooperation within the global South? What are the main areas that need to be strengthened? And what should be done in the face of new sanctions by the United States and some Western countries? What else can Russia do to cope with this challenge?

Thank You.

Vladimir Putin: Already today, cooperation between Russia and the People's Republic of China is certainly a very important factor stabilizing international life. This is the first one.

Second. In order for this influence to grow, first of all, it is necessary to pay attention to maintaining the pace of our economic growth. This year in Russia there is economic growth - I do not remember whether I spoke or not, but I talked about some aspects, if I said, I will repeat: economic growth this year will be about 2.8, or maybe three percent, I say it very carefully, but closer to three percent. For our economy, for the economic structure that Russia has, this is a good result. We completely overcame the decline of last year and are gaining momentum.

In China, as far as I know, the growth will already be 6.4 percent - this is a very good indicator. Whoever and whatever says about the slowdown in the Chinese economy, all this is chatter and isolute talk, because China provides these high rates and is in fact one of the leading locomotives of the world economy. The same thing happens in India: there is even more growth - 7.6 percent, in my opinion. Therefore, the countries of the global South are gaining momentum, and our task is to ensure this leader. This is the first one.

The second is in the field of security. We see what's happening in Europe. We see that one of the ways of provocation and creating a crisis in Ukraine was the unrelentless desire of Western countries, and especially the United States, to expand NATO to the borders of the Russian Federation. They do the same in the East, creating various closed military groups. They step there on the same rake that they stepped on in Europe. Therefore, it is important for us to respond to this in a timely manner.

We will also expand our cooperation in the field of security. At the same time, we do not create any blocs against anyone, but we are forced to respond to

what is happening around our states.

We will certainly implement those infrastructure development plans that are related to the construction of a large Eurasia, the Eurasian Economic Union, and the plans of our Chinese friends to develop Chairman Xi Jinping's idea "One Belt, One Road". I've already talked about it - I think it's very promising.

And finally, we have a lot of cooperation planned in the humanitarian spheres: in the field of culture, student exchanges, sports. This is extremely important for neighboring states.

We are already implementing fairly large infrastructure projects bilaterally and will continue to do so. I hope we will discuss all this soon during our meeting with Chairman Xi Jinping within the framework of the forum that the Chairman is holding in Beijing in October this year.

F. Lukyanov: Mikhail Rostovsky.

M. Rostovsky: Vladimir Vladimirovich, Ukraine's accession to NATO is categorically unacceptable for Russia. But, as far as I remember your past speech, you were much less negative about Ukraine's accession to the European Union.

Has your point of view changed over the past year? Will Russia object to Ukraine's accession to the European Union? And do you think such an entry is possible in principle?

Vladimir Putin: We have never objected or expressed any negative position regarding Ukraine's plans to join the European Economic Community, ever.

As for NATO: yes, we have always been against it, and this position has certain serious reasons, since the expansion of NATO directly to our borders

threatens our security - this is a serious challenge to the security of the Russian Federation. This is not only a political bloc - it is a military-political bloc, and the approach of infrastructure poses a serious threat to us.

And as for the economic interaction of any country, economic unions, we do not see any military threat for ourselves, so we do not consider ourselves to have the right to even discuss this topic. This is the business of Ukraine itself and European states.

At one time, President Yanukovich, by the way, without renouncing association with the European Union, said that it is necessary to further study these issues, because he believes that the terms of the agreement on the establishment of this association with the European Union pose certain serious threats to the Ukrainian economy. And in fact, if you read what was written there, he was absolutely right.

There is the opening of borders, the creation of absolutely unacceptable conditions for the functioning of the Ukrainian economy, the Ukrainian real sector of the economy. The goods are more competitive European. The disclosure of the Ukrainian market for these goods was extremely detrimental to the real sector of the economy of Ukraine itself. The involvement of the European Union in the energy structures also deprived Ukraine of certain advantages, so if we analyze only - just analyze objectively - Yanukovich was right. And this was used as a reason for a coup d'état. It's just nonsense, I don't know, it's just a reason. The crime is real.

And today it is no longer relevant, because by and large the Ukrainian economy cannot exist without external recharge, today everything is different. Today, look, everything there is balanced as a whole - externally, and the budget is balanced in Ukraine, macroeconomic indicators are more or less equalized. But at the expense of what? Due to monthly multi-billion dollar injections.

About four to five billion monthly through different channels - these are loans, all sorts of grants and so on - come to Ukraine. If you stop it, that's it, everything will lie down in a week. Everything. The same goes for the defense system: imagine, deliveries will stop tomorrow - there will be a week to live only when the ammunition runs out.

They're also ending in the West. I have already said that the U.S. produces 14 thousand shells of 155 caliber, and Ukrainian troops spend up to five thousand a day, and there they produce 14 [thousand] per month. Do you understand what we're talking about? Yes, they are trying to increase production - to 75 [thousand] by the end of next year, but it still needs to live until the end of next year.

And in Europe, the situation is about the same, they say it themselves. They said that we put everything: all the armored vehicles, ammunition. "We did everything for Ukraine." They said it themselves, it wasn't me who came up with it, they publicly stated: we did everything for this, now it's up to Ukraine - let them counterattack. And then on the sidelines they add: at any cost. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about. So they do it, try to do it at any cost.

This is a question of demilitarization of Ukraine. She's trying to produce something else now, but there's not much already done. Even these unmanned vehicles - both flying and moving by sea - all happen with the help of Western advisers and intermediaries.

Is the European Union ready to accept such an economy? The flag in hand, and go ahead. But in order to maintain the viability of the population, which has already decreased since the beginning of the post-Soviet period from 41 million to 19 and a half, or maybe it is no longer there, but still 19 million need to be fed, it was not easy. Are European countries ready to take such an economy to themselves? Let it take it. We were never against it - and before the aggravation of this crisis, and now we are not against it.

But I've already said what's happening inside the European economy itself. It would be very noble of them to take the economy of Ukraine in its current state. There are also certain funds, certain procedures for equalizing the level of economic development. A colleague from Hungary has been performing now, I don't know how much Hungary receives from these funds now? He won't get anything, of course, because everything will go to Ukraine, and nothing will be enough. No one will get anything, no one.

If the level of well-being has decreased by one and a half percent over the past couple of years, it will fall not only to zero, but will go into the negative. Nevertheless - I don't want to ironize, I don't want to escalate anything, it's just that these are the realities - if this happens, we do not consider ourselves entitled to somehow oppose it and even to speak negatively about it.

F. Lukyanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, is there a line at all, is there still between NATO and the EU? These are the same countries.

Vladimir Putin: I believe that the EU is not a military bloc after all. And why would they transfer all this to the EU site if there is NATO? As you said, these are the same countries. They make appropriate decisions within this organization.

NATO is actually primarily an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. So they provoked the conflict to an acute phase in Ukraine, united their allies and satellites around them, in fact, demanded that they take measures in the fight against Russia. They took these measures, and immediately the United States took advantage of this situation in the economic sphere, imposed expensive energy resources on its own energy resources, and made decisions related to increasing the attractiveness of its economy and its markets. And what? It's the same fact: many industrial enterprises in Europe and Germany decide to move to the United States. Here is the end result of this whole chain.

I know and I'm sure: many people don't like it in the same Europe. Everyone sees and understands it, but they can't do anything. And today's European elites, apparently, are not ready to fight for their interests, they simply cannot, are not ready: the dependence is very large in the field of economy. In part, they can even be understood.

I'm sure everything will gradually even out. The same states, in my opinion, are making a colossal strategic mistake, just a colossal one. I said at public events of various kinds: they press their allies, and then such questions arise, as from a colleague from Germany: here [the party] AfD, "Alternative for Germany," raises its head. So, of course, they will raise it, because none of the ruling class is fighting for the interests of Germany, that's why it happens. Don't you understand, don't you? That's an obvious thing.

Let's see how this situation will develop. Ukrainians want to join the EU - let them join, Europeans are ready to accept them - let them accept them.

F. Lukyanov: The day before yesterday was the Day of German Unity, and I read in some newspaper that there was a big problem: Gerhard Schroeder came to the event, and all current politicians solved the problem of how not to be next to him, because he is your friend. Do you still have friends in Germany, by the way?

Vladimir Putin: You know, it's not about whether I have friends in Germany, although I have friends there, and the number of them is growing, strange as it may seem. (Applause.)

F. Lukyanov: At the expense of those Stefan is talking about, no?

Vladimir Putin: It doesn't matter. First of all, at the expense of those who pursue the interests of their own people and do not want to serve other people's interests.

As for Schroeder, Germany should be proud of people like him. He is a real son of his people, he primarily thinks about the interests of the German people. I assure you: with every decision, it always first of all at the forefront, when discussing any issue that we discussed with him, put the interests of the German economy and the German state.

What's going on today? After all, it was him who built Nord Stream 1 and actually started Nord Stream 2. They started doing it with him. These infrastructure systems were blown up, and where is the German economy now? Where is she? So those who try to get away from him would think about what he did for the interests of his people and what they are doing today and what the result is.

F. Lukyanov: Rakhim Oshakbayev.

Vladimir Putin: Sorry.

What surprises me? To be honest, I'm surprised that there are still such people and politicians [like Gerhard Schroeder] in Europe in general that they have survived. That's surprising, I'm telling you sincerely, because the generation of people who are able to protect national interests, in my opinion, just self-liquidated, disappeared somewhere.

R.Oshakbayev: Good evening!

Here, at the Valdai club, there were a lot of discussions that stated the imperfection of the injustice of the world monetary economic system - world finance, the world economy. Many experts had high hopes for BRICS Plus.

Could you share your vision of the desired, and most importantly, possible structure of the world monetary economic system? And what discussions do you have inside BRICS? And about the single currency.

Thank You.

Vladimir Putin: As for the global financial system, it is certainly not ideal, balanced and meets the interests of the vast majority of participants in international communication.

Look - I've already talked about it, I'll repeat it again: at the Russia-Africa summit, colleagues, our African friends, said, mentioned that the credit burden of African states - there is over a trillion dollars - such that it is no way to pay these debts, it will simply never be done.

What is this system of international financial relations that gave rise to such a state? It's some kind of indemnity. These are not loans, it is already beyond normal financial and economic relations. And the modern financial system has generated such a state, brought it to this state. That's why I'm joking then - joking! - said that only cowards pay debts, and warned that it's a joke.

But it's not normal when such a situation is created, and, of course, something needs to be changed. This Bretton Woods system was once created on the basis of the dollar, but all this is gradually collapsing. After all, currency is a derivative of the power of the country's economy, which issues this currency.

The share of the American economy in world GDP is declining - this is also an obvious thing, these are statistics. The share of BRICS countries, I also mentioned this, in terms of purchasing power parity in relation to the share of the "single" countries is increasing, especially after the admission of new members to the organization. This is already a serious value, the difference is quite serious.

Yes, the economy of the United States, the eurozone is based on modern technologies, per capita income is much higher than in developing economies. But what's the trend? There everything goes into recession and

minus, and in the BRICS countries such growth - even after the blows to the Russian economy. And, apparently, they were designed for the fact that the country would simply collapse, and the economy would collapse, and the country Russia would fall apart.

We not only overcame all the difficulties of last year, but also went into the plus: under three percent - economic growth, unemployment - three percent, debts are reduced. We have significantly reduced external debts. All our companies service all their debt obligations. Yes, we have problems, we see them: non-return of revenue, weakening of the national currency. We see it, both the Central Bank and the Government are reacting to it. I am sure that the steps are correct and the results will be good.

But as for BRICS, we now need not to create a single currency, but we need to establish a system of calculations, create financial logistics in order to ensure settlements between our states, switch to settlements in national currencies, while understanding what is happening with our national currencies, the macroeconomic indicators of our economies to keep in mind, exchange rate differences, inflation processes. It's not an easy situation, but it's solvable: we need to work on it.

Yesterday, our experts and I discussed this issue, including the possibility of creating a single BRICS currency. Theoretically - yes, it is probably possible, but in order to approach this one day, it is necessary to achieve a certain parity in the development of the economies of our countries, but this is a very long-term prospect.

At one time, as my colleagues told me, the eurozone moved to the euro, to a single currency, without thinking about how it would work for countries with different levels of economic development, and problems arose. Why should we step on the same rake? Such an issue is not even on the agenda. But we, of course, must and will work on improving the entire financial system - both world finance and financial relations within the framework of BRICS.

F. Lukyanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, we have been working for three hours. Aren't you tired of us yet?

Vladimir Putin: How can I say that?

F. Lukyanov: I see. The right answer.

Vladimir Putin: But it's probably time to finish slowly.

F. Lukyanov: Okay, we'll be done soon.

Mr. de Gaulle.

P. de Gaulle (as translated): Mr. President, I am Pierre de Gaulle, Chairman of the MIR France and Francophonie Association. I am a true friend of your country. Like my family, I stand for friendship between Russia and France. More and more people in France, in Europe share the same points of view.

Friendship and partnership between Russia and France was one of the pillars of my grandfather's [Charle de Gaulle] policy, I want to restore it. France is based on fundamental values, such as family, patriotism and spiritual responsibility - this is what is now leaving in the Western world. It seems to me that these fundamental values are very important for the creation of peace and for mutual understanding between peoples.

Therefore, it seems to me that the conflict in Ukraine is an ideological conflict, it is even a conflict of civilizations. Because, on the one hand, there is a Western world that has lost its soul, which has exchanged everything for the ego, for momentary enjoyment. History has shown us that civilization cannot live like this. On the other hand, there is a multipolar world under the auspices of Russia, China, India, African countries, Arab countries. These people, these peoples are ready to fight for their traditional values,

fundamental values. For me, Mr. President, this is an ideological conflict. That's why I believe that it will continue and expand.

What do you think?

Vladimir Putin: First of all, I want to say that it is a great honor for us to receive the grandson of General de Gaulle in Russia.(Applause.)

We once casually touched on some issues with the current President, and I said - I can repeat myself here, there is no secret: I do not want to give any historical assessments, everything was very difficult, but for us, in Russia, despite the difference in military rank, the hero is not Marshal Peten, but General de Gaulle, because he personified France and its desire for freedom, independence, dignity, and the heroes-pilots of the Normandy-Neman squadron.

Yes, today the situation is different, today France is headed by completely different people - and it's not about age, but about views on the role, on the importance of France, even, maybe, on its history, on its future. I will not give assessments - it's not our business, it's the business of the French people themselves. But I know that there are a lot of people with the views you represent, true friends of Russia in France, and their number is growing.

Will this situation be further aggravated in terms of the development of the situation in the world, given that, as you said, such an ideological confrontation will continue? It will never end, it's obvious. These different currents, no matter what appearance they take, they will, of course, always fight among themselves, it is obvious. But, in my opinion, still, awareness of the importance, the enduring importance of national values and traditions will gradually gain momentum both in European countries and in the United States themselves.

And in this sense, I think that yes, the ideological confrontation will continue,

but still the future belongs to the nationally oriented forces in the world. And the balance between them on the world stage should be achieved, as I said in my speech, by seeking compromises between civilizations.

F. Lukyanov: Dear colleagues, our time is really tight, let's blitz. Please, please, very short questions.

Vladimir Putin: Please try a short question.

K. Starysh: I'll try. Thank You.

Konstantin Starysh, Republic of Moldova, parliamentary opposition.

I have this question. Sooner or later, this conflict will end anyway, and, I want to believe, some kind of reconfusion of relations between Russia and the West will begin. I speak very selfishly, because when this kind of confrontations occur, countries like Moldova are very feverish - feverish both economically and politically.

So I want to believe that such a process of reconfiguring relations, which will determine the fate of big Europe for decades to come, will still begin.

In your opinion, Vladimir Vladimirovich, what role can countries like Moldova play in this process? And what place can they take in this future construction, which will arise as a result of this process?

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: It depends on the people of Moldova. I'll explain now.

If the people of Moldova vote for those people who want to give a significant part of their sovereignty to other countries and weave at the tail of these

interests, then in accordance with this they will have a certain role: they will not be seen or heard.

And if they go along the path of preserving sovereignty, national dignity, preserving their national traditions, then, as I said in my speech, we will strive to ensure that all countries, regardless of their size, economic condition, have an equal voice, that everyone treats each other as equals. I don't know how it will turn out, but our position is this, and that's what we will strive for.

Please.

K. Rakhimov: Kubat Rakhimov, Kyrgyz Republic. A short question.

We see a successful case of creating a gas union between Russia and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. This year, in October, Uzbekistan will receive Russian gas. But we have two more problems in Central Asia: water and energy.

How do you, Vladimir Vladimirovich, assess the prospects for creating a water and energy union in which Russia would act as an active player and moderator of processes in order to avoid social instability and even armed conflicts?

Thank You.

Vladimir Putin: As for energy and energy supplies, we have never supplied gas from Russia to Central Asia. In Soviet times, everything was different there: two pipeline systems were supplied from Central Asia.

But now, taking into account the growth of needs, the growth of our friends' economy in Central Asia and climate change - this year in Kazakhstan, in Tashkent in general there was minus 21, minus 24, in my opinion, no one

ever remembers this at all, it's just incredible, but it was, and therefore it can be repeated - they asked us a question, asked to think about starting to start supplying Russian gas to these countries. Without these deliveries, it is difficult, we understand.

We worked it out together. Our Kazakhstani friends have engaged in and implemented a plan to restore their part of the pipeline system, the same was done on the territory of Uzbekistan. And Gazprom had to do it on the territory of the Russian Federation, including reconfigure some of our technical capabilities. Because, I repeat once again, gas was supplied in Soviet times in one direction, and now it needs to be supplied in the other.

We will do it, technically it has already been done. In October this year, full-fledged deliveries will begin in a small volume, but this is critical for both the economy of Kazakhstan and the economy of Uzbekistan. We will serve three billion cubic meters per year, and then we can increase it.

Yes, there are other problems: this is energy in the broad sense, hydropower, water - these are all solvable issues. They are not easy from an economic and financial point of view, but solvable. But when solving all these issues, of course, we should not forget about ecology. This is all in our sight, including with our Kyrgyz friends. We know about it, we're working on it. And we are constantly discussing this with the current Prime Minister. I hope we will see him at the CIS summit in the near future and will also talk about it. So everything is on the agenda, we understand that this is important for our countries.

By the way, as for the supply of our gas to Moldova. I once noticed that one of the Moldovan officials said that Moldova no longer buys Russian gas. Frankly speaking, I was a little surprised, because the conditions under which we supply gas to Moldova are Moldovan conditions: it was the Moldovans who asked us for such a formula of supply and pricing, it was the Moldovan proposal. And we went to meet, despite all the contradictions in the field of

politics. We chose the proposal of the Moldovan side. But it is necessary to solve, of course, issues related to debt obligations, here this is an obvious thing.

Despite the statement of Moldovan officials that Moldova has stopped receiving our gas, I asked [Alexey] Miller yesterday what they are doing, what they are doing - they don't need gas? He says: no, as we delivered, so we deliver everything, nothing has changed at all. What kind of people are these? They talk with their tongue, it is not clear why they do it and, in my opinion, only damage the economy of Moldova.

Yes, please.

A. Prokhanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, Pyotr Stolypin, addressing the troublemakers, said his famous phrase: "We need a great Russia - you need great upheavals." Then the great upheavals did not pass Russia. The last time these upheavals came to us was in 1991. Today, Russia is moving from great upheavals to greatness.

What is the greatness of Russia for you?

Thank You.

Vladimir Putin: We all know you as a writer, a patriot of Russia and such a fundamentalist, I would say, of Russian statehood.

As for the greatness of Russia, you know, the greatness of Russia today is to strengthen its sovereignty, and sovereignty is based on self-sufficiency in technology, in finance, in the economy as a whole, in the field of defense and security.

And here's what I would like to say in this regard. Those people who for some

reason began to fight Russia today after 1991, I partly said this in my speech... I don't understand why they did it at all - only because of self-confidence and because of stupidity, I can't say otherwise. I keep asking myself: why? After all, we spread our hands: we want, we're here. No, they started trying to finish it off. Why? Nevertheless, they started doing it. This led us to the only choice - to strengthen our sovereignty in the field of economy, finance, technology, security.

So those people who began to do it and brought to today's stage of such a confrontation are already hot, began to impose sanctions on us, they achieved the opposite of the expected result. We are experiencing a very obvious change in the structure of the Russian economy. I have already said: in the structure of GDP, we have added three percent from oil and gas, and from processing industries, including, of course, "defense", but not only, I have already said, it is electronics, optics, mechanical engineering - 43 percent. They left our market, apparently, they thought that everything would collapse, but no: everything is only strengthening.

Yes, inflation has increased a little bit. Yes, the ruble fluctuates itself. We see these problems. But the structure of the economy is changing: it becomes more high-tech on its own basis, and we need to maintain this trend. And we will definitely do it, and on the basis of this we will continue to strengthen our defense capabilities. We also see the questions that arise, sorry, frankly, during the hostilities. We see what we still lack, but we are increasing this production, and in some areas directly at times - not in some percentage, but at times.

If we continue all these trends, and we will certainly do so, and we will rely on the support and trust of our people, which is also reflected in the fact that we have a wide flow of volunteers going to the Armed Forces. To date, we already have 335 thousand people who voluntarily came and signed contracts with the Ministry of Defense, and about five thousand more, a little more even, of the so-called volunteers. Although they are all volunteers - they come

voluntarily, but it's just another category - contracts are signed for a shorter period. In general, it's already about 350 thousand. And this is a manifestation of people's trust in the policy of the Russian state.

Because everyone sees that we don't deal with any momentary issues. We can not do everything as we would like, but the vast majority of citizens see that everything is aimed at strengthening the Russian state, the Russian statehood. It is multi-component, but the trend is quite obvious - very positive, correct. Our task is to hold these trends, and we will do it.

Thank You.

(Applause.)

F. Lukyanov: Vladimir Vladimirovich, can I shake one thing, since you touched on volunteers? Just recently, during the year that passed, among other things, there was one very dramatic event - an attempt at a military rebellion. You recently met with a representative...

Vladimir Putin: I wanted to finish it on the positive - it doesn't.

F. Lukyanov: And this is positive. I just wanted to ask: now we know how to deal with private military companies?

Vladimir Putin: You know, we had a journalistic name - "private military company." There are no private military companies in Russia, because there is no law on private military companies. We don't have them and didn't exist.

The experience that was, it was so clumsy, because it was not based on the law. Yes, it was caused by the need for the current conjuncture, frankly, on the battlefield. And when the Ministry of Defense offered part of this company to come and participate in hostilities, I did not object, because people acted

voluntarily, and we saw that they fought heroically. But the interests of even ordinary members of this company and the management of this company do not always coincide. Not everyone, in my opinion, received income, 840 billion rubles from food supplies to the Armed Forces. There were other problems related to the purely economic component, but I don't want to go into it now.

We do not yet have a consensus in Russia on whether we need such formations or not, but today I can say for sure that several thousand fighters of this company have already signed contracts with the Armed Forces. They want - and if they want, then they will take part in hostilities. This is the first one.

Second. They do this on the basis of signed individual contracts, which was not the case before. And it was a big mistake, because it did not guarantee people social protection: if there is no contract, then there are no social obligations on the part of the state. What to hide, everyone already knows well: the money was paid in cash. How is it, in cash? Honestly, it's my fault, I couldn't imagine - how could it be? And if in cash, then to whom they gave, to whom they didn't - who determines who deserves what? That's the question. Therefore, if you do it, you should do it on the basis of the law. This process is not easy, complicated. We're discussing, thinking about it.

In many countries, such companies exist, actively work, and above all they work abroad, of course, we all know it well. Whether we need them or not, we'll think about it. But now we see what's happening on the line of contact. There, Russian troops feel confident, moving in many directions.

Yesterday, along the entire line of contact at 12 sites - we simply do not pay such fundamental attention to this, but it matters - we have advanced in 12 directions: somewhere 300, 400, 500 [meters], in two sections - 1500, 1600 meters to a depth. It's just called improving your position on the battlefield, these are such tactical things, but they still matter. So do we need private

military companies here? We need those people who want to fight and defend the interests of the Motherland, to fight for the Motherland - there are such people, including from the company you mentioned.

Well, to make it quite... I know, there must be a question in the air: what happened to the company's management and so on? We know about the plane crash, the head of the Investigative Committee [Alexander Bastrykin] reported to me just the other day: fragments of hand grenades were found in the bodies of those killed in the plane crash. There was no external impact on the aircraft - this is already an established fact, the result of the examination carried out by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation. But the investigation is not complete. Yes, unfortunately, no examination was carried out about the presence of alcohol or drugs in the blood of the victims, although we know that after the well-known events in the [office] of the company ["Wagner"] in St. Petersburg, the FSB found not only 10 billion in cash, but also five kilograms of cocaine. But, I repeat once again, in my opinion, it would be necessary to conduct such an examination, but it was not carried out. What is, I told you.

I want to say right away that I asked the Chairman of the Investigative Committee whether it can be said publicly. He says: yes, you can, it's an established fact. So that way.

Let's have another question then.

F. Lukyanov: In order not to finish on this.

Margarita Simonyan, maybe?

Vladimir Putin: Yes, Margarita, please. Although you can, you would give the floor to our foreign [guests].

F. Lukyanov: Decide.

M. Simonyan: I'm fast, Vladimir Vladimirovich.

Vladimir Putin: Okay.

M. Simonyan: You said about Karabakh. As an ethnic Armenian, I cannot but react and allow myself to assure you that all normal Armenians understand everything perfectly - and understand perfectly well that Pashinyan was brought to power in his time precisely to surrender Karabakh and to raise such questions as quoted by our leading European politicians. Normal Armenians understand that if it were not for Russia, there would be no Armenian people - both at the beginning of the XIX century, when Griboyedov saved them, and at the beginning of the XXI century, when peacekeepers in Karabakh are saved. It's a remark.

The question is short. Our guest from Hungary does not want to ask about our Odessa, but I want to, because Odessa is a Russian city, a beautiful city. And it seems to us that Russian cities should live in Russia. In this regard, the question is: where would you like us to stay?

Thank You.

Vladimir Putin: The first part of your speech. I cannot agree with you - that Prime Minister Pashinyan was brought to power by someone from the outside and in order to surrender Karabakh. After all, it was the choice of the Armenian people. Yes, you can treat electoral processes differently, but it's a fact. That's why I don't agree with you here. This is the first one.

The second thing is that he sought to surrender Karabakh, I also disagree. I communicated with him, communicated tightly: both during this conflict in 2020 and earlier, of course. After all, let's remember: when he came to power, he said that Karabakh is part of Armenia. No one has ever said that before him. However, then his position changed dramatically. Why is it no longer a question for me. And then during the conflict of 2020 - I

communicated with him, and, in my opinion, he sincerely sought to keep the situation, to preserve it.

I'm not saying now: the right decisions were, the wrong ones - it's not my business to judge it. But I consider it unfair to say that he purposefully handed over Karabakh.

Now about [where] where we should stay. You will know, it's not about the territories, it's about the guarantees of security of the peoples of Russia and the Russian state, and this is a more complex issue than any territory, about the safety of people who consider Russia their homeland, and we consider them our people. It's a complex question that requires conversation. I'm afraid to talk to your husband, he's such, if not an extremist, then a man of extreme convictions. But we'll discuss it with you later.

M. Simonyan: Thank you.

M.A. Javed (as translated): Mr. President!

My name is Muhammad Atar Javed. I work in Islamabad and would like to return to [your] performance.

We raised very important issues, we are talking about the positions of the West and the need for dialogue, constructive interaction of civilizations. You keep saying: who are they to ask us questions or dictate to us? And we understand that military Alliances have really changed the entire balance of forces in the Middle East by attacking different countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq and so on.

But there's a serious question. If we really build a multipolar world, it must be based on economic aspects. You were talking about energy. You look at competition in the markets, and you see that for the population, for example, it is impossible to provide a lower price, and then it is a crime against their

own consumers.

And that's my question. Is it possible to see an opportunity for Russia to create a new economic world order during the crises? I'm a political scientist, and it seems to me that it's all about economic order. The one who controls natural resources, the one who controls all our transportation routes, has all the levers of control. And is there any new project, how can we resist the sanctions?

Sanctions really strangle not only Russia, but also many other countries. Russia survives because Russia has a lot of resources. But there are other countries, for example, in Africa and Asia, and we face serious challenges.

Can you formulate your own opinion, how would you determine whether it is possible to form a new economic world order led by Russia in the future?

Vladimir Putin: I fully associate myself with what you just said. This is true - the future world order will certainly be based on the future economic and monetary and financial system. And it should be more balanced, it should meet the interests of the vast majority of participants in international communication - so it is.

Are there any prospects that this will eventually happen? It's a very complicated process. Judging by the behavior of our opponents - so we will call them, since we are now talking about the economy, we will not operate with any other terms - but they cling to their privileges at all costs.

I have already said, and many believe that the Bretton Woods system is outdated. After all, it's not me, it's Western experts. It needs to be changed. Of course, it leads to such ugly phenomena as, say, the debt obligations of developing economies, of course, it is the unconditional, complete rule of the dollar in the world system. It's already happening, it's a matter of time.

But with their, let's say, to put it mildly, unprofessional actions, their stubbornness and their disregard for all other participants in international economic communication, say, the political and financial authorities, the U.S. economic authorities shoot themselves in the foot. After all, when they limit calculations in dollars - well, what should we do? We are forced then, we just have to pay in national currencies. We have to discuss the issues that I have already mentioned, answering one of the questions of my colleagues, to create a new logistics of these currency calculations.

Thus, the scope of the dollar is naturally shrinking, but it is shrinking as the United States is a huge economy, and the country is huge and great, without any doubt, there can be no doubt, we do not underestimate anything here and do not exaggerate anything - but it itself reduces its sphere of influence in the world economy. That is, this is already happening for objective reasons - the growth of emerging markets, developing economies, at what rate Asia is developing. That's what happens. And the States, based on the political situation of today, are accelerating these processes. But, I'm sorry, but it's, to put it mildly... You know, there's such a similar expression: it's worse than a crime, it's a mistake. That's true, in this case it is.

Are there any projects? There are those that will create a new economic and logistics base. Yes, of course. Here is Chairman Xi Jinping proposes one of such projects - "One Belt, One Road". It's a unifying slogan - "One belt, one road," all together. And we do the same during the construction of the Eurasian Economic Community: together we think about how to unite. And if the BRICS countries, SCO countries are still involved here - listen, this is joint work - Pakistan is also involved in this - in the search for a solution. Of course, this is a difficult task, it will take time. But the realization that this is beneficial to everyone will push this process forward.

And I will end with what I started with: in this sense, the strengthening of a multipolar world is inevitable.

Thank you very much for your attention.

F. Lukyanov: Thank you very much, Vladimir Vladimirovich. We are waiting for you in a year, at the 21st Valdai.

Vladimir Putin: And I am also waiting for all of you at events of this kind and I want to thank you for your participation.

Thank you very much.

Material status

Published in the sections: News, Speeches and transcripts

Date of publication: October 5, 2023, 20:25

Ссылка на материал: kremlin.ru/d/72444
