

Washington's "Unilateral Use of Force" Anywhere in the World: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

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Distinguished Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is growing evidence of the contradiction between the need for collective, cooperative efforts to provide adequate responses to challenges common to all, and the aspirations of a number of countries for domination and the revival of archaic bloc thinking based on military drill discipline and the erroneous logic of "friend or foe."

The US-led Western alliance that portrays itself as a champion of democracy, rule of law and human rights within individual countries acts from a completely opposite position in the international arena, rejecting the democratic principle of the sovereign equality of states enshrined in the UN Charter and tries to decide for everyone what is good or bad.

Washington has openly declared its right to the unilateral use of force anywhere to uphold its own interests. Military interference has become common, even despite the dismal outcome of the use of power that the US has carried out in recent years.

The sustainability of the international system has been severely shaken by NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia, intervention in Iraq, the attack against Libya and the failure of the operation in Afghanistan. Thanks only to intensive diplomatic efforts, an aggression against Syria was averted in 2013. There is the involuntary impression that the goal of various "colour revolutions" and other goals to change unsuitable regimes is to provoke chaos and instability.

Today, Ukraine has fallen victim to such an arrogant policy. The situation there has revealed the remaining deep-rooted systemic flaws of the existing architecture in the Euro-Atlantic area. The West has embarked upon a course towards "the vertical structuring of humanity" tailored to its own hardly inoffensive standards. After they declared victory in the Cold War and the "end of history," the US and the EU opted for expanding the geopolitical area under their control without taking into account the balance of legitimate interests of all the people of Europe. Our Western partners did not heed our numerous alerts on the unacceptability of the violation of the principles of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, and time and again avoided serious cooperative work to establish a common space of equal and indivisible security and cooperation from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The Russian proposal to draft a European security treaty was rejected. We were told directly that only the members

of the North Atlantic Alliance could have the legally binding guarantees of security, and NATO expansion to the East continued in spite of the promises to the contrary given previously. NATO's change toward hostile rhetoric and to the drawdown of its cooperation with Russia even to the detriment of the West's own interests, and the additional build-up of the military infrastructure at Russian borders made the inability of the alliance to change its genetic code embedded during the Cold War era obvious.

The US and the EU supported the coup in Ukraine and reverted to outright justification of any act by the self-proclaimed Kiev authorities that used suppression by force on the part of the Ukrainian people that had rejected the attempts to impose an anti-constitutional way of life to the entire country and wanted to defend its rights to a native language, culture and history. It was precisely the aggressive assault on these rights that compelled the population of Crimea to take destiny into its own hands and make a choice in favour of self-determination. This was an absolutely free choice no matter what has been invented by those who were, in the first place, responsible for the internal conflict in Ukraine.

The attempts to distort the truth and to hide the facts behind blanket accusations have been undertaken at all stages of the Ukrainian crisis. Nothing has been done to track down and prosecute those responsible for February's bloody events at Maidan and the massive loss of human life in Odessa, Mariupol and other regions in Ukraine. The scale of appalling humanitarian disaster provoked by the acts of the Ukrainian army in southeastern Ukraine has been deliberately underscored. Recently, new horrible facts have been brought to light as mass graves were discovered in the outskirts of Donetsk. Despite UNSC Resolution 2166 a thorough and independent investigation of the circumstances into the loss of the Malaysian airliner over the territory of Ukraine has been protracted. The culprits of all these crimes must be identified and brought to justice. Otherwise it is unrealistic to expect a national reconciliation in Ukraine.

Russia is sincerely interested in the restoration of peace in our neighbouring country and this should be well understood by all who are even slightly acquainted with the history of the deep-rooted and fraternal ties between our two peoples. The way towards political settlement is well known: last April Kiev had already taken upon itself an obligation in the Geneva Declaration of Russia, Ukraine, the US and the EU to immediately initiate an all-encompassing national dialogue with the participation of every region and political force in Ukraine with a view to carrying out constitutional reform.

The implementation of this obligation would allow all Ukrainians to agree on how to live in accordance with their traditions and culture and restore Ukraine's organic role as a binding link between the various parts of the European space, which naturally implies the preservation and respect of its neutral and non-bloc status. We are convinced that in the presence of good will and denial of support for the "party of war" in Kiev, which is trying to push the Ukrainian people into the abyss of national catastrophe, the way out of crisis is within reach.

The way to overcoming the crisis has been opened with the achievement of the cease-fire agreement in southeastern Ukraine based on initiatives by Presidents Pyotr Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin. With the participation of the representatives of Kiev, Donetsk, Lugansk, the OSCE and Russia, practical measures are being agreed upon for the successive implementation of this understanding, including the separation of the parties to the conflict, the pulling back of the Ukrainian army's heavy weapons and militia forces, and setting up

monitoring through the OSCE. Russia is ready to continue to actively promote this political settlement under the framework of the tried and tested Minsk process, as well as in other formats. However, it should be clear that we are doing this for the sake of the peace and wellbeing of the Ukrainian people rather than to cater to someone else's ambitions. The attempts to put pressure on Russia and to compel it to abandon its values, truth and justice have no prospects whatsoever.

Let me recall the not too distant past. As a condition for establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1933 the U.S. government demanded of Moscow the guarantees of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the US and obligations not to take any actions with a view to changing political or social order in America. At that time Washington feared a revolutionary virus and the above guarantees were put on record and were based on reciprocity. Perhaps, it makes sense to return to this item and reproduce that demand of the US government on a universal scale. Shouldn't the General Assembly adopt a declaration on the unacceptability of interference into the domestic affairs of sovereign states and non-recognition of a coup as a method for changing power? The time has come to exclude from international interaction the attempts of illegitimate pressure of some states on others. The meaningless and counterproductive nature of unilateral sanctions is obvious if we review the US blockade of Cuba.

The policy of ultimatums and philosophy of supremacy and domination do not meet the requirements of the 21st century and run counter to the objective process of development for a polycentric and democratic world order.

Russia is promoting a positive and unifying agenda. We always were and will be open to discussion of the most complex issues no matter how unsolvable they would seem in the beginning. We will be prepared to search for compromises and the balancing of interests and go as far as to exchange concessions provided only that the discussion is respectful and equal.

The Minsk understandings of 5 and 19 September on the ways out of the Ukrainian crisis and the compromise on the timeline of the entry into force of the Association Agreement between Kiev and the EU are good examples to follow, the same as the finally declared willingness of Brussels to begin negotiations on establishing an FTA between the European Union and the Customs Union of Russia, Belorussia and Kazakhstan as was proposed by Vladimir Putin back in January of this year.

Russia has consistently called for the harmonisation of integration projects in Europe and Eurasia. The agreement on political benchmarks and the timelines of such a "convergence of integrations" would become a real contribution to the work of the OSCE on the topic of the "Helsinki+40." Another crucial area of this work would be to launch a pragmatic discussion free of ideology on the politico-military architecture in the Euro-Atlantic, so that not only NATO and CSTO members but all the countries of the region including Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia can enjoy equal and indivisible security and not have to make the false choice that you're either for us or against us.

New dividing lines in Europe should not be allowed, even more so given that under globalisation these lines can turn into a watershed between the West and the rest of the world. It should be stated honestly that no one has a monopoly on truth and that no one can tailor global and regional processes to one's own needs. There is no alternative today to the development of consensus regarding the rules of sustainable global governance under new

historical circumstances – with full respect for cultural and civilizational diversity in the world and the multiplicity of the models of development. It will be a difficult and perhaps tiresome task to achieve such a consensus on every issue. Nevertheless the recognition of the fact that democracy in every state is the “worst form of government, except for all the others” also took time to break through, until Winston Churchill passed his verdict. The time has come to realise the inevitability of this axiom including in international affairs where today there is a huge deficit of democracy. Of course someone will have to break up centuries-old stereotypes and abandon the claims to eternal uniqueness. But there is no other way. Consolidated efforts can only be built on the principles of mutual respect and by taking into account the interests of each other as is the case, for example, under the framework of BRICS and the SCO, the G20 and the UN Security Council.

The theory of the advantages of cooperative action has been supported by practice: this includes progress in the settlement of the situation around the Iranian nuclear program and the successful conclusion of the chemical demilitarisation of Syria. Also, regarding the issue of chemical weapons, we would like to obtain authentic information on the condition of the chemical arsenals in Libya. We understand that our NATO colleagues, after bombing this country in violation of a UNSC Resolution, would not like to “stir up” the mayhem they created. However, the problem of uncontrolled Libyan chemical arsenals is too serious to turn a blind eye to. The UN Secretary General has an obligation to show his responsibility on this issue as well.

What is important today is to see the global priorities and avoid making them hostages to a unilateral agenda. There is an urgent need to refrain from double standards in the approaches to conflict settlement. Everybody largely agrees that it is a key issue to resolutely counter the terrorists who are attempting to control increasingly larger territories in Iraq–Syria, Afghanistan and the Sahara-Sahel area. If this is the case then this task should not be sacrificed to ideological schemes or a desire to retaliate. Terrorists, no matter what their slogans, should remain outside the law.

Moreover, it goes without saying that the fight against terrorism should be based solidly on international law. The unanimous adoption of a number of UNSC Resolutions including those on the issue of foreign terrorist operatives became an important stage in this fight. And conversely, the attempts to act against the Charter of our Organisation do not contribute to the success of cooperative efforts. The struggle against terrorists in Syria should be structured in cooperation with the Syrian government, which has clearly stated its willingness to join it. Damascus has already proven its ability to work with the international community by delivering on its obligations under the programme to dispose of its chemical weapons.

From the very beginning of the “Arab spring” Russia urged the involved parties not to leave it to extremists and to establish a united front to counter the growing terrorist threat. We warned against a temptation to make allies with almost anybody who proclaimed himself an enemy of Bashar al-Assad: be it Al Qaeda, Jabhat an Nusra or other “fellow travellers” seeking a change of regime, including ISIL, which today is in the focus of our attention. As the saying goes, it is better late than never. This is not the first time that Russia will make a real contribution to the fight against both ISIL and other terrorist factions in the region. We have sent large supplies of weapons and military equipment to the governments of Iraq, Syria and other MENA countries and will continue to support their efforts to suppress terrorists.

The terrorist threat requires a comprehensive approach if we want to eradicate its root causes rather than be condemned to react to the symptoms. ISIL is just a part of the problem. We propose to launch, under the auspices of the UN Security Council, an in-depth study on the extremist and terrorist threats in all their aspects across the MENA area. This integrated approach also implies that long standing conflicts should be examined, primarily the Israeli-Arab conflict. The absence of a settlement in the Palestinian issue over several decades remains a widely recognised factor in the instability of the region that helps the extremists to recruit more and more new Jihadists.

Another pressing area for cooperation is the joining of our efforts to implement the decisions of UNGA and the UNSC on the fight against the Ebola virus. Our doctors are already working in Africa. There are plans to send additional humanitarian assistance, equipment, medical instruments, medicines and teams of experts to assist the UN programs in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

The United Nations, established on the ruins of World War II, enters its seventieth anniversary. It is an obligation for all of us to celebrate in an appropriate manner the jubilee of the Great Victory and pay tribute to the memory of all those who died for freedom and the right of all people to determine their own destiny.

The lessons of that terrible war and the course of events in today's world demand that we join our efforts and forget about unilateral interests and national electoral cycles when it comes to countering the global threats to all humanity. We should not allow national egotism to prevail over our collective responsibility.

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