



# EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM THROUGH THE DEFENSE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE UN CHARTER

*Posted on May 1, 2023 by Sergey Lavrov*



Mr. Secretary-General,

Colleagues,

It is symbolic that we are holding our session on the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace that was introduced into the List of International Days by a UN General Assembly resolution on December 12, 2018.

In two weeks, we will celebrate the 78th anniversary of Victory in World War II. The defeat of Nazi Germany, the decisive contribution to which was made by my country with allied support, made it possible to lay the foundation for the postwar international order. Legally, it was based on the UN Charter while the UN that embodied true multilateralism acquired a central, coordinating role in world politics.

For a little less than 80 years of its existence, the UN has been carrying out the important mission entrusted to it by its founders. For several decades, a basic understanding by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council as regards the supremacy of the charter's goals and principles guaranteed global security. By doing this, it created the conditions for truly multilateral cooperation that was regulated by the universally recognized standards of international law.

Today, our UN-centric system is going through a deep crisis. The main reason is a striving by some UN members to replace international law and the UN Charter with a certain "rules-based" order. Nobody has seen these rules. They have not been discussed in transparent international talks. They are being invented and used to counter the natural process of the forming of new independent development centres that objectively embody multilateralism. Attempts are made to curb them through illegal unilateral measures – by denying them access to modern technology and financial services, excluding them from supply chains, seizing their property, destroying their critical infrastructure and manipulating universally accepted norms and procedures. This leads to the fragmentation of global trade, a collapse of market mechanisms, paralysis of the WTO and the final – now open – conversion of the IMF into an instrument for reaching the goals of the US and its allies, including military goals.

In a desperate attempt to assert its dominance by way of punishing the disobedient, the United States

has gone as far as destroying globalisation which it has for many years touted as a great benefit for humankind serving the needs of the global economy's multilateral system. Washington and the rest of the obeisant West is using these rules as needed to justify illegitimate steps against the countries that build their policies in accordance with international law and refuse to follow the "golden billion's" self-serving interests. Those who disagree are blacklisted based on the precept that "he who is not with us is against us."

Our Western colleagues have been inconvenienced by holding talks based on universal formats, such as the UN, for a long time now. In order to provide an ideological substantiation for the course on undermining multilateralism, they initiated a concept of united "democracies" as opposed to "autocracies." In addition to "summits for democracy," the list of participants, which is determined by this self-proclaimed hegemon, other "elite clubs" are being created in circumvention of the UN.

Summits for Democracy, the Alliance for Multilateralism, the Global Partnership on AI, the Media Freedom Coalition, the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace – all these and other non-inclusive projects were designed to thwart talks on the corresponding matters under the auspices of the UN and to impose non-consensual concepts and solutions that benefit the West. First, they agree on something privately as a small group, and then they present the things they agreed on as an "international community position." Let's call it what it is: no one authorised the Western minority to speak on behalf of all humankind. Please act decently and respect all members of the international community.

By imposing a rules-based order, the quarters behind it arrogantly reject the UN Charter's key principle which is the sovereign equality of states. The "proud" statement by the head of EU diplomacy Josep Borrell to the effect that Europe is a "garden" and the rest of the world is a "jungle" said it all about their world of exceptionality. I would also like to quote the Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation of January 10 which runs as follows: The United West "will further mobilise the combined set of instruments at our disposal, be they political, economic or military, to pursue our common objectives to the benefit of our one billion citizens."

The collective West has set out to reshape the processes of multilateralism at the regional level to suit its needs. Recently, the United States called for reviving the Monroe Doctrine and wanted the Latin American countries to cut down on their ties with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. However, this policy ran into an obstacle from the countries of this region who resolved to

strengthen their own multilateral structures, primarily the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), while upholding their legitimate right to establish themselves as a pillar of the multipolar world. Russia fully supports fair aspirations of that kind.

The United States and its allies have deployed significant forces to undermine multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific region where an ASEAN-centered successful and open economic and security cooperation system has been taking shape for decades. This system helped them develop consensus approaches that suited the 10 ASEAN members and their dialogue partners, including Russia, China, the United States, India, Japan, Australia, and the Republic of Korea, thus ensuring genuine inclusive multilateralism. Washington then advanced its Indo-Pacific Strategy in an effort to break up this established architecture.

At last year's summit in Madrid, the NATO countries spoke about their global responsibility and indivisible security in the Euro-Atlantic region and in the so-called Indo-Pacific region, even though they have always made it a point to persuade everyone that they aspired to peace and that their military programmes were purely defensive. This means NATO's boundaries as a defensive organisation are being moved towards the western coastal regions of the Pacific. This bloc-oriented policy that is eroding ASEAN-centred multilateralism manifests itself in the creation of the AUKUS military organisation, with Tokyo, Seoul and several ASEAN countries being drawn into it. The United State is leading the effort to develop mechanisms to interfere in maritime security in a move to protect the unilateral interests of the West in the South China Sea region. Josep Borrell, whom I referred to earlier, promised yesterday to send EU naval forces to this region. No one is hiding the fact that this Indo-Pacific strategy is seeking to contain China and isolate Russia. This is how our Western colleagues interpret the concept of effective multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific Region.

As soon as the Warsaw Treaty Organisation was dissolved and the Soviet Union vanished from the political arena, many entertained the hope that the principle of genuine multilateralism without dividing lines across the Euro-Atlantic area could be brought to life. However, instead of tapping the OSCE's potential on an equal, collective basis, the Western countries not only kept NATO but, despite their firm pledges to the contrary, pursued a brazen policy of bringing the neighbouring areas under control, including those that are and always have been of vital interest to Russia. As then US State Secretary James Baker said talking to President George W. Bush, the OSCE is the main threat to NATO. On our behalf, I would add that today both the UN and the UN Charter's provisions also pose a threat to Washington's global ambitions.

Russia patiently tried to achieve mutually beneficial multilateral agreements relying on the principle of indivisible security which was solemnly declared at the highest level in OSCE summit documents in 1999 and 2010. It states unambiguously in black and white that no one should strengthen their security at the expense of the security of others and no state, group of states or organisation can be assigned primary responsibility for maintaining peace in the organisation's region or consider any part of the OSCE region its sphere of influence.

NATO didn't care one bit about the obligations of the presidents and prime ministers of its member countries and began to do exactly the opposite, having declared its "right" to arbitrary actions of any kind. The illegal bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, which included the use of depleted uranium warheads that later led to a surge in cancer cases among Serbian citizens and NATO military members is another glaring case in point. Joseph Biden was a senator then and said on camera, not without pride, that he personally called for bombing Belgrade and destroying bridges on the Drina River. Now, US Ambassador to Serbia Christopher Hill is using the media to call on the Serbs to turn the page and "set aside their grievances." The United States has an extensive track record of "setting aside grievances." Japan has long been bashfully silent about who bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. School textbooks don't mention it. Recently, at a G-7 meeting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken condescendingly grieved over the suffering of the victims of those bombings, but failed to mention who was behind them. These are the "rules," and no one dares to disagree.

Since World War II, Washington has pulled off dozens of reckless criminal military operations without even trying to secure multilateral legitimacy. Why bother, with their set of arbitrary "rules?"

The disgraceful invasion of Iraq by the US-led coalition in 2003 was carried out in violation of the UN Charter, just like the aggression against Libya in 2011. Both led to the destruction of statehood, hundreds of thousands of lost lives and rampant terrorism.

The US intervention in the domestic affairs of the post-Soviet countries also came as a flagrant violation of the UN Charter. "Colour revolutions" were concocted in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, and a bloody coup was staged in Kiev in February 2014. Attempts to seize power by force in Belarus in 2020 are part of the same approach.

The Anglo-Saxons who are at the helm of the West not only justify these lawless adventures, but flaunt them in their policy for "promoting democracy," while doing so according to their own set of rules as

well, where they recognised Kosovo's independence without a referendum, but refused to recognise Crimea's independence even though a referendum was held there; according to British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, the Falklands/Malvinas are not an issue, because there was a referendum there. That's amusing.

In order to avoid double standards, we call on everyone to follow the consensus agreements that were reached as part of the 1970 UN Declaration on Principles of International Law which remains in force. It clearly declares the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states that conduct "themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as described above and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory." Any unbiased observer can clearly see that the Nazi Kiev regime can in no way be considered as a government representing the residents of the territories who refused to accept the results of the bloody February 2014 coup against whom the putschists unleashed a war. Just like Pristina cannot claim to represent the interests of the Kosovo Serbs to whom the EU promised autonomy, Berlin and Paris similarly promised a special status for Donbass. We are well aware of how these promises play out eventually.

In his message to the second Summit for Democracy on March 29, 2023, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, said some great words: "Democracy flows from the United Nations Charter. Its opening invocation of 'We the Peoples,' reflects the fundamental source of legitimate authority: the consent of the governed." I will emphasise the word "consent" once again.

Multilateral efforts were made to stop the war unleashed in the east of Ukraine as a result of a government coup. These efforts towards peaceful settlement were embodied in a UN Security Council resolution that unanimously approved the Minsk agreements. Kiev and its Western bosses trampled these agreements underfoot. They even cynically admitted with a tinge of pride that they never planned to fulfil them but merely wanted to gain time to fill Ukraine with weapons to use against Russia. In doing this they publicly announced the violation of a multilateral commitment by UN members as per the UN Charter, which requires all member countries to comply with Security Council resolutions.

Our consistent efforts to prevent this confrontation, including proposals made by President of Russia Vladimir Putin in December 2021 on agreeing on multilateral mutual security guarantees were arrogantly rejected. We were told that nobody can prevent NATO from "embracing" Ukraine.

During the years since the state coup and despite our strong demands, nobody from among Kiev's Western bosses pulled Pyotr Poroshenko, Vladimir Zelensky or Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada back when the Russian language, education, the media and, in general, Russian cultural and religious traditions were being consistently destroyed by law. This was a direct violation of the Constitution of Ukraine and universal conventions on the rights of ethnic minorities. In parallel, the Kiev regime was introducing the theory and practice of Nazism in everyday life and adopting related laws. The Kiev regime shamelessly staged huge torchlight processions under the banners of SS divisions in the centre of the capital and other cities. The West kept silent and rubbed its hands together. What was happening fully fit into the US's plans to use the openly racist regime that Washington had created in the hope of weakening Russia across the board. It was part of a US strategic course towards removing rivals and undermining any scenario that implied the assertion of fair multilateralism in global affairs.

Now, all countries understand this, but not all talk about it openly – this is not really about Ukraine but about the future structure of international relations. Will they rest on a sustainable consensus based on the balance of interests or will they be reduced to the aggressive and explosive promotion of hegemony? It is inaccurate to take the Ukraine issue out of its geopolitical context. Multilateralism implies respect for the UN Charter and all of its interconnected principles, as I have already said. Russia has clearly explained the goals it is pursuing in conducting its special military operation – to remove the threat to its security that NATO has been creating for years directly on our borders, and to protect the people who were deprived of the rights that have been declared in multilateral conventions. Russia wanted to protect them from Kiev's public and direct threats of annihilation and expulsion from the territories where their ancestors had lived for centuries. We honestly laid out for what and for whom we were fighting.

I am tempted to ask by contrast, against the backdrop of the US- and EU-fuelled hysteria – what did Washington and NATO do in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya? Were there threats to their security, culture, religion or languages? What multilateral standards were they guided by when they declared Kosovo's independence in violation of OCSE principles and when they were destroying stable and economically wealthy Iraq and Libya that were ten thousand miles away from America's coasts?

The shameless attempts by the Western countries to bring the secretariats of the UN and other international institutions under control came to threaten the multilateral system. The West has always enjoyed a quantitative advantage in terms of personnel, however, until recently the Secretariat tried to remain neutral. Today, this imbalance has become chronic while secretariat employees increasingly

allow themselves politically motivated behaviour that is unbecoming to international officials. We call on His Excellency UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to ensure that all of his staff meet the requirements of impartiality in keeping with Article 100 of the UN Charter. We also call on the secretariat's top officials to be guided – as they prepare initiative documents on the general agenda issues that were mentioned earlier, and the “New Agenda for Peace” – by the need to prompt the member countries on how to find ways of reaching consensus and a balance of interests, instead of playing up to neoliberal concepts. Otherwise, instead of a multilateral agenda, we will see an increasingly wider gap between the golden billion countries and the global majority.

As we speak of multilateralism, we cannot confine ourselves to an international context: in exactly the same way, we cannot ignore this international context as we speak of democracy. There should be no such thing as double standards. Both multilateralism and democracy should be respected within the member countries and in their relations with one another. Everyone knows that the West, while it imposes its understanding of democracy on other nations, opposes the democratisation of international relations based on respect for the sovereign equality of countries. Today, along with its efforts to promote its so-called rules in the international arena, the West is also suppressing multilateralism and democracy at home, resorting to increasingly repressive tools to crush dissent, in much the same way as the criminal Kiev regime is doing with support from its teachers – the United States and its allies.

Colleagues, once again, as in the Cold War years, we have approached a dangerous, and perhaps even a more dangerous, line. The situation is further aggravated by loss of faith in multilateralism where the financial and economic aggression of the West is destroying the benefits of globalisation and where Washington and its allies are abandoning diplomacy and demanding that things be sorted out “on the battlefield.” All of that is taking place within the walls of the UN which was created to prevent the horrors of war. The voices of responsible and sensible forces and the calls to show political wisdom and to revive the culture of dialogue are drowned out by those who set out to undermine the fundamental principles of communication between countries. We must all return to the roots and comply with the UN Charter's purposes and principles in all their diversity and interconnectedness.

Genuine multilateralism today requires the UN to adapt to objective developments in the process of forming a multipolar architecture of international relations. It is imperative to expedite Security Council reform by expanding the representation of countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The inordinate over-representation of the West in this main UN body undermines the principle of multilateralism.



Venezuela spearheaded the creation of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations. We call on all countries that respect the Charter to join it. It is also important to use the constructive potential of BRICS and the SCO. The EAEU, the CIS, and the CSTO are willing to contribute. We stand for using the initiatives advanced by the regional associations of the Global South. The G20 can be useful in maintaining multilateralism if its Western participants stop distracting their colleagues from priority items on its agenda in hopes of downplaying their responsibility for the pile-up of crises in the global economy.

It is our common duty to preserve the United Nations as the hard-won epitome of multilateralism and coordination of international politics. The key to success lies in working together, renouncing claims to anyone's exceptionalism and – to reiterate – showing respect for the sovereign equality of states. This is what we all signed up for when ratifying the UN Charter.

In 2021, President Vladimir Putin suggested convening a summit of the UN Security Council permanent members. The leaders of China and France supported this initiative, but, unfortunately, it has not been brought to fruition. This issue is directly related to multilateralism. It's not because the five powers have certain privileges over the rest, but precisely because of their special responsibility under the UN Charter for maintaining international peace and security. This is exactly what the imperatives of the UN-centric system, which is crumbling before our eyes as a result of the actions of the West, call for.

Concern about this situation can be increasingly heard in multiple initiatives and ideas from the Global South countries ranging from East and Southeast Asia, the Arab and generally the Muslim world all the way to Africa and Latin America. We appreciate their sincere desire to ensure the settlement of current issues through honest collective work aimed at agreeing on a balance of interests based on the sovereign equality of states and indivisible security.

In closing, I would like to let the reporters who are covering our meeting know that their colleagues from the Russian media were not allowed to come here. The US Embassy in Moscow cynically said it was ready to give them their passports with visas in them but only when our plane was taking off. So, I have a huge request for you. Please make up for the absence of Russian journalists. Please see to it that worldwide audiences can use your reports to glean every angle of the comments and assessments.

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