

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Citizens of Russia, citizens of the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, residents of the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions, deputies of the State Duma, senators of the Russian Federation,

As you know, referendums have been held in the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics and the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions. The ballots have been counted and the results have been announced. The people have made their unequivocal choice.

Today we will sign treaties on the accession of the Donetsk People's Republic, Lugansk People's Republic, Zaporozhye Region and Kherson Region to the Russian Federation. I have no doubt that the Federal Assembly will support the constitutional laws on the accession to Russia and the establishment of four new regions, our new constituent entities of the Russian Federation, because this is the will of millions of people. *(Applause.)*

It is undoubtedly their right, an inherent right sealed in Article 1 of the UN Charter, which directly states the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

I repeat, it is an inherent right of the people. It is based on our historical affinity, and it is that right that led generations of our predecessors, those who built and defended Russia for centuries since the period of Ancient Rus, to victory.

Here in Novorossiia, [Pyotr] Rumyantsev, [Alexander] Suvorov and [Fyodor] Ushakov fought their battles, and Catherine the Great and [Grigory] Potyomkin founded new cities. Our grandfathers and great-grandfathers fought here to the bitter end during the Great Patriotic War.

We will always remember the heroes of the Russian Spring, those who refused to accept the neo-Nazi coup d'état in Ukraine in 2014, all those who died for the right to speak their native language, to preserve their culture, traditions and religion, and for the very right to live. We remember the soldiers of Donbass, the martyrs of the "Odessa Khatyn," the victims of inhuman terrorist attacks carried out by the Kiev regime. We commemorate volunteers and militiamen, civilians, children, women, senior citizens, Russians, Ukrainians, people of various nationalities; popular leader of Donetsk Alexander Zakharchenko; military commanders Arsen Pavlov and Vladimir Zhoga, Olga Kochura and Alexei Mozgovoy; prosecutor of the Lugansk Republic Sergei Gorenko; paratrooper Nurmagedov Gadzhimagomedov and all our soldiers and officers who died a hero's death during the special military operation. They are heroes. *(Applause.)* Heroes of great Russia. Please join me in a minute of silence to honour their memory.

(Minute of silence.)

Thank you.

Behind the choice of millions of residents in the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, in the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions, is our common destiny and thousand-year history. People have passed this spiritual connection on to their children and grandchildren. Despite all the trials they endured, they carried the love for Russia through the years. This is something no one can destroy. That is why both older generations and young people – those who were born after the tragic collapse of the Soviet Union – have voted for our unity, for our common future.

In 1991 in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, representatives of the party elite of that time made a decision to terminate the Soviet Union, without asking ordinary citizens what they wanted, and people suddenly found themselves cut off from their homeland. This tore apart and dismembered our national community and triggered a national catastrophe. Just like the government quietly demarcated the borders of Soviet republics, acting behind the scenes after the 1917 revolution, the last leaders of the Soviet Union, contrary to the direct expression of the will of the majority of people in the referendum of 1991, destroyed our great country, and simply made the people in the former republics face this as an accomplished fact.

I can admit that they didn't even know what they were doing and what consequences their actions would have in the end. But it doesn't matter now. There is no Soviet Union anymore; we cannot return to the past. Actually, Russia no longer needs it today; this isn't our ambition. But there is nothing stronger than the determination of millions of people who, by their culture, religion, traditions, and language, consider themselves part of Russia, whose ancestors lived in a single country for centuries. There is nothing stronger than their determination to return to their true historical homeland.

For eight long years, people in Donbass were subjected to genocide, shelling and blockades; in Kherson and Zaporozhye, a criminal policy was pursued to cultivate hatred for Russia, for everything Russian. Now too, during the referendums, the Kiev regime threatened schoolteachers, women who worked in election commissions with reprisals and death. Kiev threatened millions of people who came to express their will with repression. But the people of Donbass, Zaporozhye and Kherson weren't broken, and they had their say.

I want the Kiev authorities and their true handlers in the West to hear me now, and I want everyone to remember this: the people living in Lugansk and Donetsk, in Kherson and Zaporozhye have become our citizens, forever. *(Applause.)*

We call on the Kiev regime to immediately cease fire and all hostilities; to end the war it unleashed back in 2014 and return to the negotiating table. We are ready for this, as we have said more than once. But the choice of the people in Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporozhye and Kherson will not be discussed. The decision has been made, and Russia will not betray it. *(Applause.)* Kiev's current authorities should respect this free expression of the people's will; there is no other way. This is the only way to peace.

We will defend our land with all the forces and resources we have, and we will do everything we can to ensure the safety of our people. This is the great liberating mission of our nation.

We will definitely rebuild the destroyed cities and towns, the residential buildings, schools, hospitals, theatres and museums. We will restore and develop industrial enterprises, factories, infrastructure, as well as the social security, pension, healthcare and education systems.

We will certainly work to improve the level of security. Together we will make sure that citizens in the new regions can feel the support of all the people of Russia, of the entire nation, all the republics, territories and regions of our vast Motherland. *(Applause.)*

Friends, colleagues,

Today I would like to address our soldiers and officers who are taking part in the special military operation, the fighters of Donbass and Novorossiia, those who went to military recruitment offices after receiving a call-up paper under the executive order on partial mobilisation, and those who did this voluntarily, answering the call of their hearts. I would like to address their parents, wives and children, to tell them what our people are fighting for, what kind of enemy we are up against, and who is pushing the world into new wars and crises and deriving blood-stained benefits from this tragedy.

Our compatriots, our brothers and sisters in Ukraine who are part of our united people have seen with their own eyes what the ruling class of the so-called West have prepared for humanity as a whole. They have dropped their masks and shown what they are really made of.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the West decided that the world and all of us would permanently accede to its dictates. In 1991, the West thought that Russia would never rise after such shocks and would fall to pieces on its own. This almost happened. We remember the horrible 1990s, hungry, cold and hopeless. But Russia remained standing, came alive, grew stronger and occupied its rightful place in the world.

Meanwhile, the West continued and continues looking for another chance to strike a blow at us, to weaken and break up Russia, which they have always dreamed about, to divide our state and set our peoples against each other, and to condemn them to poverty and extinction. They cannot rest easy knowing that there is such a great country with this huge territory in the world, with its natural wealth, resources and people who cannot and will not do someone else's bidding.

The West is ready to cross every line to preserve the neo-colonial system which allows it to live off the world, to plunder it thanks to the domination of the dollar and technology, to collect an actual tribute from humanity, to extract its primary source of unearned prosperity, the rent paid to the hegemon. The preservation of this annuity is their main, real and absolutely self-serving motivation. This is why total de-sovereignisation is in their interest. This explains their aggression towards independent states, traditional values and authentic cultures, their attempts to undermine international and integration processes, new global currencies and technological development centres they cannot control. It is critically important for them to force all countries to surrender their sovereignty to the United States.

In certain countries, the ruling elites voluntarily agree to do this, voluntarily agree to become vassals; others are bribed or intimidated. And if this does not work, they destroy entire states, leaving behind humanitarian disasters, devastation, ruins, millions of wrecked and mangled human lives, terrorist enclaves, social disaster zones, protectorates, colonies and semi-colonies. They don't care. All they care about is their own benefit.

I want to underscore again that their insatiability and determination to preserve their unfettered dominance are the real causes of the hybrid war that the collective West is waging against Russia. They do not want us to be free; they want us to be a colony. They do not want equal cooperation; they want to loot. They do not want to see us a free society, but a mass of soulless slaves.

They see our thought and our philosophy as a direct threat. That is why they target our philosophers for assassination. Our culture and art present a danger to them, so they are trying to ban them. Our development and prosperity are also a threat to them because competition is growing. They do not want or need Russia, but we do. (*Applause.*)

I would like to remind you that in the past, ambitions of world domination have repeatedly shattered against the courage and resilience of our people. Russia will always be Russia. We will continue to defend our values and our Motherland.

The West is counting on impunity, on being able to get away with anything. As a matter of fact, this was actually the case until recently. Strategic security agreements have been trashed; agreements reached at the highest political level have been declared tall tales; firm promises not to expand NATO to the east gave way to dirty deception as soon as our former leaders bought into them; missile defence, intermediate-range and shorter-range missile treaties have been unilaterally dismantled under far-fetched pretexts.

And all we hear is, the West is insisting on a rules-based order. Where did that come from anyway? Who has ever seen these rules? Who agreed or approved them? Listen, this is just a lot of nonsense, utter deceit, double standards, or even triple standards! They must think we're stupid.

Russia is a great thousand-year-old power, a whole civilisation, and it is not going to live by such makeshift, false rules. (*Applause.*)

It was the so-called West that trampled on the principle of the inviolability of borders, and now it is deciding, at its own discretion, who has the right to self-determination and who does not, who is unworthy of it. It is unclear what their decisions are based on or who gave them the right to decide in the first place. They just assumed it.

That is why the choice of the people in Crimea, Sevastopol, Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporozhye and Kherson makes them so furiously angry. The West does not have any moral right to weigh in, or even utter a word about freedom of democracy. It does not and it never did.

Western elites not only deny national sovereignty and international law. Their hegemony has pronounced features of totalitarianism, despotism and apartheid. They brazenly divide the world into their vassals – the so-called civilised countries – and all the rest, who, according to the designs of today's Western racists, should be added to the list of barbarians and savages. False labels like “rogue country” or “authoritarian regime” are already available, and are used to stigmatise entire nations and states, which is nothing new. There is nothing new in this: deep down, the Western elites have remained the same colonisers. They discriminate and divide peoples into the top tier and the rest.

We have never agreed to and will never agree to such political nationalism and racism. What else, if not racism, is the Russophobia being spread around the world? What, if not racism, is the West's dogmatic conviction that its civilisation and neoliberal culture is an indisputable model for the entire world to follow? “You're either with us or against us.” It even sounds strange.

Western elites are even shifting repentance for their own historical crimes on everyone else, demanding that the citizens of their countries and other peoples confess to things they have nothing to do with at all, for example, the period of colonial conquests.

It is worth reminding the West that it began its colonial policy back in the Middle Ages, followed by the worldwide slave trade, the genocide of Indian tribes in America, the plunder of India and Africa, the wars of England and France against China, as a result of which it was forced to open its ports to the opium trade. What they did was get entire nations hooked on drugs and purposefully exterminated entire ethnic groups for the sake of grabbing land and resources, hunting people like animals. This is contrary to human nature, truth, freedom and justice.

While we – we are proud that in the 20th century our country led the anti-colonial movement, which opened up opportunities for many peoples around the world to make progress, reduce poverty and inequality, and defeat hunger and disease.

To emphasise, one of the reasons for the centuries-old Russophobia, the Western elites' unconcealed animosity toward Russia is precisely the fact that we did not allow them to rob us during the period of colonial conquests and forced the Europeans to trade with us on mutually beneficial terms. This was achieved by creating a strong centralised state in Russia, which grew and got stronger based on the great moral values of Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism, as well as Russian culture and the Russian word that were open to all.

There were numerous plans to invade Russia. Such attempts were made during the Time of Troubles in the 17th century and in the period of ordeals after the 1917 revolution. All of them failed. The West managed to grab hold of Russia's wealth only in the late 20th century, when the state had been destroyed. They called us friends and partners, but they treated us like a colony, using various schemes to pump trillions of dollars out of the country. We remember. We have not forgotten anything.

A few days ago, people in Donetsk and Lugansk, Kherson and Zaporozhye declared their support for restoring our historical unity. Thank you! (*Applause.*)

Western countries have been saying for centuries that they bring freedom and democracy to other nations. Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead of bringing democracy they suppressed and exploited, and instead of giving freedom they enslaved and oppressed. The unipolar world is inherently anti-democratic and unfree; it is false and hypocritical through and through.

The United States is the only country in the world that has used nuclear weapons twice, destroying the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. And they created a precedent.

Recall that during WWII the United States and Britain reduced Dresden, Hamburg, Cologne and many other German cities to rubble, without the least military necessity. It was done ostentatiously and, to repeat, without any military necessity. They had only one goal, as with the nuclear bombing of Japanese cities: to intimidate our country and the rest of the world.

The United States left a deep scar in the memory of the people of Korea and Vietnam with their carpet bombings and use of napalm and chemical weapons.

It actually continues to occupy Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea and other countries, which they cynically refer to as equals and allies. Look now, what kind of alliance is that? The whole world knows that the top officials in these countries are being spied on and that their offices and homes are bugged. It is a disgrace, a disgrace for those who do this and for those who, like slaves, silently and meekly swallow this arrogant behaviour.

They call the orders and threats they make to their vassals Euro-Atlantic solidarity, and the creation of biological weapons and the use of human test subjects, including in Ukraine, noble medical research.

It is their destructive policies, wars and plunder that have unleashed today's massive wave of migrants. Millions of people endure hardships and humiliation or die by the thousands trying to reach Europe.

They are exporting grain from Ukraine now. Where are they taking it under the guise of ensuring the food security of the poorest countries? Where is it going? They are taking it to the self-same European countries. Only five percent has been delivered to the poorest countries. More cheating and naked deception again.

In effect, the American elite is using the tragedy of these people to weaken its rivals, to destroy nation states. This goes for Europe and for the identities of France, Italy, Spain and other countries with centuries-long histories.

Washington demands more and more sanctions against Russia and the majority of European politicians obediently go along with it. They clearly understand that by pressuring the EU to completely give up Russian energy and other resources, the United States is practically pushing Europe toward deindustrialisation in a bid to get its hands on the entire European market. These European elites understand everything – they do, but they prefer to serve the interests of others. This is no longer servility but direct betrayal of their own peoples. God bless, it is up to them.

But the Anglo-Saxons believe sanctions are no longer enough and now they have turned to subversion. It seems incredible but it is a fact – by causing explosions on Nord Stream's international gas pipelines passing along the bottom of the Baltic Sea, they have actually embarked on the destruction of Europe's entire energy infrastructure. It is clear to everyone who stands to gain. Those who benefit are responsible, of course.

The dictates of the US are backed up by crude force, on the law of the fist. Sometimes it is beautifully wrapped sometimes there is no wrapping at all but the gist is the same – the law of the fist. Hence, the deployment and maintenance of hundreds of military bases in all corners of the world, NATO expansion, and attempts to cobble together new military alliances, such as AUKUS and the like. Much is being done to create a Washington-Seoul-Tokyo military-political chain. All states that possess or aspire to genuine strategic sovereignty and are capable of challenging Western hegemony, are automatically declared enemies.

These are the principles that underlie US and NATO military doctrines that require total domination. Western elites are presenting their neocolonialist plans with the same hypocrisy, claiming peaceful intentions, talking about some kind of deterrence. This evasive word

migrates from one strategy to another but really only means one thing – undermining any and all sovereign centres of power.

We have already heard about the deterrence of Russia, China and Iran. I believe next in line are other countries of Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, as well as current US partners and allies. After all, we know that when they are displeased, they introduce sanctions against their allies as well – against this or that bank or company. This is their practice and they will expand it. They have everything in their sights, including our next-door neighbours – the CIS countries.

At the same time, the West has clearly been engaged in wishful thinking for a long time. In launching the sanctions blitzkrieg against Russia, for example, they thought that they could once again line up the whole world at their command. As it turns out, however, such a bright prospect does not excite everyone – other than complete political masochists and admirers of other unconventional forms of international relations. Most states refuse to "snap a salute" and instead choose the sensible path of cooperation with Russia.

The West clearly did not expect such insubordination. They simply got used to acting according to a template, to grab whatever they please, by blackmail, bribery, intimidation, and convinced themselves that these methods would work forever, as if they had fossilised in the past.

Such self-confidence is a direct product not only of the notorious concept of exceptionalism – although it never ceases to amaze – but also of the real "information hunger" in the West. The truth has been drowned in an ocean of myths, illusions and fakes, using extremely aggressive propaganda, lying like Goebbels. The more unbelievable the lie, the quicker people will believe it – that is how they operate, according to this principle.

But people cannot be fed with printed dollars and euros. You can't feed them with those pieces of paper, and the virtual, inflated capitalisation of western social media companies can't heat their homes. Everything I am saying is important. And what I just said is no less so: you can't feed anyone with paper – you need food; and you can't heat anyone's home with these inflated capitalisations – you need energy.

That is why politicians in Europe have to convince their fellow citizens to eat less, take a shower less often and dress warmer at home. And those who start asking fair questions like "Why is that, in fact?" are immediately declared enemies, extremists and radicals. They point back at Russia and say: that is the source of all your troubles. More lies.

I want to make special note of the fact that there is every reason to believe that the Western elites are not going to look for constructive ways out of the global food and energy crisis that they and they alone are to blame for, as a result of their long-term policy, dating back long before our special military operation in Ukraine, in Donbass. They have no intention of solving the problems of injustice and inequality. I am afraid they would rather use other formulas they are more comfortable with.

And here it is important to recall that the West bailed itself out of its early 20th century challenges with World War I. Profits from World War II helped the United States finally overcome the Great Depression and become the largest economy in the world, and to impose on the planet the power of the dollar as a global reserve currency. And the 1980s crisis –

things came to a head in the 1980s again – the West emerged from it unscathed largely by appropriating the inheritance and resources of the collapsed and defunct Soviet Union. That's a fact.

Now, in order to free itself from the latest web of challenges, they need to dismantle Russia as well as other states that choose a sovereign path of development, at all costs, to be able to further plunder other nations' wealth and use it to patch their own holes. If this does not happen, I cannot rule out that they will try to trigger a collapse of the entire system, and blame everything on that, or, God forbid, decide to use the old formula of economic growth through war.

Russia is aware of its responsibility to the international community and will make every effort to ensure that cooler heads prevail.

The current neocolonial model is ultimately doomed; this much is obvious. But I repeat that its real masters will cling to it to the end. They simply have nothing to offer the world except to maintain the same system of plundering and racketeering.

They do not give a damn about the natural right of billions of people, the majority of humanity, to freedom and justice, the right to determine their own future. They have already moved on to the radical denial of moral, religious, and family values.

Let's answer some very simple questions for ourselves. Now I would like to return to what I said and want to address also all citizens of the country – not just the colleagues that are in the hall – but all citizens of Russia: do we want to have here, in our country, in Russia, “parent number one, parent number two and parent number three” (they have completely lost it!) instead of mother and father? Do we want our schools to impose on our children, from their earliest days in school, perversions that lead to degradation and extinction? Do we want to drum into their heads the ideas that certain other genders exist along with women and men and to offer them gender reassignment surgery? Is that what we want for our country and our children? This is all unacceptable to us. We have a different future of our own.

Let me repeat that the dictatorship of the Western elites targets all societies, including the citizens of Western countries themselves. This is a challenge to all. This complete renunciation of what it means to be human, the overthrow of faith and traditional values, and the suppression of freedom are coming to resemble a “religion in reverse” – pure Satanism. Exposing false messiahs, Jesus Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” These poisonous fruits are already obvious to people, and not only in our country but also in all countries, including many people in the West itself.

The world has entered a period of a fundamental, revolutionary transformation. New centres of power are emerging. They represent the majority – the majority! – of the international community. They are ready not only to declare their interests but also to protect them. They see in multipolarity an opportunity to strengthen their sovereignty, which means gaining genuine freedom, historical prospects, and the right to their own independent, creative and distinctive forms of development, to a harmonious process.

As I have already said, we have many like-minded people in Europe and the United States, and we feel and see their support. An essentially emancipatory, anti-colonial movement against unipolar hegemony is taking shape in the most diverse countries and societies. Its

power will only grow with time. It is this force that will determine our future geopolitical reality.

Friends,

Today, we are fighting for a just and free path, first of all for ourselves, for Russia, in order to leave dictate and despotism in the past. I am convinced that countries and peoples understand that a policy based on the exceptionalism of whoever it may be and the suppression of other cultures and peoples is inherently criminal, and that we must close this shameful chapter. The ongoing collapse of Western hegemony is irreversible. And I repeat: things will never be the same.

The battlefield to which destiny and history have called us is a battlefield for our people, for the great historical Russia. (*Applause.*) For the great historical Russia, for future generations, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We must protect them against enslavement and monstrous experiments that are designed to cripple their minds and souls.

Today, we are fighting so that it would never occur to anyone that Russia, our people, our language, or our culture can be erased from history. Today, we need a consolidated society, and this consolidation can only be based on sovereignty, freedom, creation, and justice. Our values are humanity, mercy and compassion.

And I want to close with the words of a true patriot Ivan Ilyin: “If I consider Russia my Motherland, that means that I love as a Russian, contemplate and think, sing and speak as a Russian; that I believe in the spiritual strength of the Russian people. Its spirit is my spirit; its destiny is my destiny; its suffering is my grief; and its prosperity is my joy.”

Behind these words stands a glorious spiritual choice, which, for more than a thousand years of Russian statehood, was followed by many generations of our ancestors. Today, we are making this choice; the citizens of the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics and the residents of the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions have made this choice. They made the choice to be with their people, to be with their Motherland, to share in its destiny, and to be victorious together with it.

The truth is with us, and behind us is Russia!