

Interview with Tucker Carlson

Vladimir Putin answered questions from Tucker Carlson, a journalist and founder of the video platform Tucker Carlson Network.

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T. Carlson (as translated) : Mr. President, thank you very much.

On February 24, 2022, you addressed your country and nation when the conflict began in Ukraine. You said that you are acting because you have come to the conclusion that with the help of NATO, the United States can launch a surprise attack, an attack on your country. For Americans, this is like paranoia.

Why do you think that America could deliver an unexpected blow to Russia? How did you come to this conclusion?

Vladimir Putin: The point is not that America was going to deliver an unexpected blow to Russia, I never said so. Are we on a talk show or are we having a serious conversation?

T. Carlson: This is a wonderful quote. Thank you. We're having a serious conversation.

Vladimir Putin: Your basic education is in history, as far as I understand, right?

T. Carlson: Yes.

Vladimir Putin: Then I will allow myself – just 30 seconds or one minute – to give a little historical background. Do you mind?

T. Carlson: Please, of course.

Vladimir Putin: Look, how did our relations with Ukraine begin, where did it come from, Ukraine?

The Russian state began to gather as a centralized one, this is considered the year of the creation of the Russian state - 862, when the Novgorodians - there is a city of Novgorod in the north-west of the country - invited Prince Rurik from Scandinavia, from the Varangians, to reign. 862 In 1862, Russia celebrated the 1000th anniversary of its statehood, and in Novgorod there is a monument dedicated to the 1000th anniversary of the country.

In 882, Rurik's successor, Prince Oleg, who essentially served as a regent for Rurik's young son, and Rurik had died by this time, came to Kyiv. He removed from power two brothers who, apparently, were once members of Rurik's squad, and thus Russia began to develop, having two centers: in Kyiv and Novgorod.

The next, very significant date in the history of Russia is 988. This is the Baptism of Rus', when Prince Vladimir, the great-grandson of Rurik, baptized Rus' and accepted Orthodoxy - Eastern Christianity. From that time on, the centralized Russian state began to strengthen. Why? A single territory, single economic ties, one language, and after the baptism of Rus' - one faith and the power of the prince. A centralized Russian state began to take shape.

But for various reasons, after the introduction of succession to the throne - also in ancient times, the Middle Ages - by Yaroslav the Wise, a little later, after he passed away, the succession to the throne was complex, it was passed not directly from father to eldest son, but from the deceased the life of the prince to his brother, then to his sons along different lines. All this led to the fragmentation of Rus' - a single state, which began to take shape as a single one. There is nothing special about this; the same thing happened in Europe. But the fragmented Russian state became easy prey for the empire that Genghis Khan once created.

His successors, Batu Khan, came to Rus', plundered almost all the cities, and destroyed them. The southern part, where Kyiv was, by the way, some other cities, they simply lost their

independence, and the northern cities retained part of their sovereignty. They paid tribute to the Horde, but retained part of their sovereignty. And then a single Russian state began to take shape with its center in Moscow.

The southern part of the Russian lands, including Kyiv, began to gradually gravitate towards another “magnet” - towards the center that was taking shape in Europe. This was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was even called Lithuanian-Russian, because Russians made up a significant part of this state. They spoke Old Russian and were Orthodox. But then a unification occurred - the union of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. A few years later, another union was signed in the spiritual sphere, and some Orthodox priests submitted to the authority of the Pope. Thus, these lands became part of the Polish-Lithuanian state.

But for decades, the Poles have been engaged in the Polishization of this part of the population: they introduced their language there, they began to introduce the idea that these are not entirely Russians, that since they live on the edge, they are Ukrainians. Initially, the word “Ukrainian” meant that a person lives on the outskirts of the state, “at the edge,” or is engaged in border service, in fact. It did not mean any particular ethnic group.

So the Poles did everything they could to polish and, in principle, treated this part of the Russian lands quite harshly, if not cruelly. All this led to the fact that this part of the Russian lands began to fight for their rights. And they wrote letters to Warsaw, demanding that their rights be respected, so that people would be sent here, including to Kyiv...

T. Carlson: When did this happen, in what years?

Vladimir Putin: This was in the 13th century.

I will now tell you what happened next and give the dates so that there is no confusion.

And in 1654, a little earlier even, the people who controlled power in this part of the Russian lands turned to Warsaw, I

repeat, demanding that people of Russian origin and the Orthodox faith be sent to them. And when Warsaw, in principle, did not answer them anything and practically rejected these demands, they began to turn to Moscow so that Moscow would take them in.

So that you don't think that I came up with something, I will give you these documents...

T. Carlson: I don't think you're making something up, no.

Vladimir Putin: And yet, these are documents from the archive, copies. Here are letters from Bohdan Khmelnytsky, then the man who controlled power in this part of the Russian lands that we now call Ukraine. He wrote to Warsaw demanding respect for their rights, and after being refused, he began writing letters to Moscow asking him to take them under the strong hand of the Moscow Tsar. Here [in the folder] are copies of these documents. I will leave them for you as a good memory. There is a translation into Russian, then you will translate it into English.

Russia did not agree to accept them immediately, because it assumed that a war with Poland would begin. Still, in 1654, the Zemsky Sobor - it was a representative body of power of the Old Russian state - made a decision: this part of the Old Russian lands became part of the Muscovite kingdom.

As expected, the war with Poland began. It went on for 13 years, then a truce was concluded. And just after the conclusion of this act of 1654, 32 years later, in my opinion, peace was concluded with Poland, "eternal peace," as it was said then. And these lands, the entire left bank of the Dnieper, including Kyiv, went to Russia, and the entire right bank of the Dnieper remained with Poland.

Then, during the time of Catherine II, Russia returned all its historical lands, including the south and west. This all continued until the revolution. And before the First World War, taking advantage of these ideas of Ukrainization, the Austrian General Staff very actively began to promote the idea of Ukraine and Ukrainization. Everything is clear why: because on the eve of the world war, of course, there was a

desire to weaken a potential enemy, there was a desire to create favorable conditions for ourselves in the border zone. And this idea, once born in Poland, that the people living in this territory are not entirely Russian, they are supposedly a special ethnic group, Ukrainians, began to be promoted by the Austrian General Staff.

Theorists of Ukrainian independence also emerged in the 19th century, who spoke about the need for Ukrainian independence. But, it's true, all these "pillars" of Ukrainian independence said that it should have very good relations with Russia, they insisted on this. Nevertheless, after the revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks tried to restore statehood, and a Civil War broke out, including [the war] with Poland. A peace was signed with Poland in 1921, according to which the western part, on the right bank of the Dnieper, again went to Poland.

In 1939, after Poland collaborated with Hitler, and Hitler proposed - we have all the documents in the archives - to conclude peace with Poland, a treaty of friendship and alliance, but demanded that Poland give back to Germany like this called the Danzig Corridor, which connected the main part of Germany with Königsberg and East Prussia. After World War I, this part of the territory was given to Poland, and the city of Gdansk replaced Danzig. Hitler begged them to surrender peacefully, but the Poles refused. But nevertheless, they collaborated with Hitler and together began to divide Czechoslovakia.

T. Carlson: May I ask? You say that parts of Ukraine have actually been Russian lands for hundreds of years. Why didn't you just take them when you became President, 24 years ago? You also had a weapon. Why did you wait so long then?

Vladimir Putin: I'll tell you now that I'm already finishing this historical information. It's boring, maybe, but it explains a lot.

T. Carlson: She's not boring, no.

Vladimir Putin: Well, great. Then I am very pleased that you appreciated it so much. Thanks a lot.

So, before the Second World War, when Poland collaborated with Germany, refused to fulfill Hitler's demands, but nevertheless participated with Hitler in the division of Czechoslovakia, but since it did not give up the Danzig corridor, the Poles nevertheless forced it, they played too hard and forced Hitler to start The Second World War started with them. Why did the war start on September 1, 1939 from Poland? She turned out to be intractable. Hitler had no choice in implementing his plans to start with Poland.

By the way, the Soviet Union - I read archival documents - behaved very honestly, and the Soviet Union asked Poland for permission to send its troops to help Czechoslovakia. But through the mouth of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland it was said that even if Soviet planes fly towards Czechoslovakia through the territory of Poland, they will shoot down over the territory of Poland. Nevermind. But the important thing is that the war began, and now Poland itself became a victim of the policy that it pursued towards Czechoslovakia, because according to the well-known Molotov-Ribbentrop protocols, part of these territories went to Russia, including Western Ukraine. Russia, under the name of the Soviet Union, thus returned to its historical territories.

After the victory in the Great Patriotic War, as we say, this is the Second World War, all these territories were finally assigned to Russia, to the Soviet Union. And Poland, as compensation, it must be assumed, received western, originally German, territories - the eastern part of Germany, part of the lands, these are the western regions of Poland today. And, naturally, they again returned access to the Baltic Sea, again returned Danzig, which began to be called in Polish. This is how this situation developed.

During the formation of the Soviet Union, this is already 1922, the Bolsheviks began to form the USSR and created Soviet Ukraine, which until now did not exist at all.

T. Carlson: That's right.

V. Putin: At the same time, Stalin insisted that these republics that were being formed should be included as autonomous entities, but for some reason the founder of the Soviet state, Lenin, insisted that they have the right to secede from the Soviet Union. And, also for unknown reasons, he endowed the emerging Soviet Ukraine with lands, people living in these territories, even if they had never been called Ukraine before; for some reason, during its formation, all this was "infused" into the Ukrainian SSR, including the entire Black Sea region, which was received during the time of Catherine II and, in fact, never had any historical relation to Ukraine.

Even if we remember, let's go back to 1654, when these territories returned to the Russian Empire, there were three or four modern regions of Ukraine, there was no Black Sea region there. There was simply nothing to talk about.

T. Carlson: In 1654?

Vladimir Putin: Yes, exactly.

T. Carlson: You have encyclopedic knowledge. But why didn't you talk about this for the first 22 years of your presidency?

V. Putin: So, Soviet Ukraine received a huge number of territories that never had anything to do with it at all, primarily the Black Sea region. Once upon a time, when Russia received them as a result of the Russian-Turkish wars, they were called Novorossiia. But it is not important. The important thing is that Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, created Ukraine exactly like this. And for many decades, the Ukrainian SSR developed as part of the USSR, and the Bolsheviks, also for unknown reasons, were engaged in Ukrainization. Not only because there were immigrants from Ukraine in the leadership of the Soviet Union, but in general there was such a policy - "indigenization" it was called. This concerned Ukraine and other union republics. National

languages and national cultures were introduced, which in general, in principle, of course, is not bad. But this is how Soviet Ukraine was created.

And after World War II, Ukraine received another part of not only the Polish territories before the war - today Western Ukraine, part of the Hungarian territories and part of the Romanian ones. Part of the territories was also taken from Romania and Hungary, and they, these territories, became part of Soviet Ukraine and are still there. Therefore, we have every reason to say that, of course, Ukraine, in a certain sense, is an artificial state created by the will of Stalin.

T. Carlson: Do you think Hungary has the right to take back its lands? And can other nations take back their lands and, perhaps, return Ukraine to the borders of 1654?

Vladimir Putin: I don't know about the borders of 1654. The time of Stalin's reign is called the Stalinist regime, everyone says that there were many violations of human rights, violations of the rights of other states. In this sense, of course, it is quite possible, if not to say that they have the right to this - to return these lands of theirs, then, in any case, it is understandable...

T. Carlson: Have you told Orban about this, that he can regain part of the lands of Ukraine?

Vladimir Putin: I never said so. Never, not once. He and I didn't even have any conversations about this. But I know for sure that the Hungarians who live there, of course, want to return to their historical homeland.

Moreover, I will now tell you a very interesting story, I will digress, this is a personal story. Somewhere in the early 80s, I took a car from what was then Leningrad, from St. Petersburg, and just went on a trip around the Soviet Union - through Kyiv, stopped in Kiev, and then went to Western Ukraine. I entered the city, it's called Beregovo, and there all the names of cities and villages are in Russian and in a language that is incomprehensible to me - in Hungarian. In

Russian and Hungarian. Not in Ukrainian - in Russian and Hungarian.

I'm driving through a village, men in black three-piece suits and black top hats are sitting near the houses. I say: are these some kind of artists? They tell me: no, these are not artists, these are Hungarians. I say: what are they doing here? Why, this is their land, they live here. All titles! In Soviet times, in the 80s. They retain the Hungarian language, names, and all national costumes. They are Hungarians and feel like Hungarians. And of course, when infringement occurs now...

T. Carlson: Yes, I think this happens a lot. Most likely, many countries were unhappy with the change in borders during the changes in the 20th century and before. But the fact is that you did not state anything like this earlier, until February 2022. And you said that you felt a physical threat from NATO, in particular a nuclear threat, and this prompted you to act. Do I understand you correctly?

V. Putin: I understand that my long dialogues are probably not included in this genre of interviews. That's why I asked you at the beginning: will we have a serious conversation or a show? You said it was a serious conversation. So don't be offended by me, please.

We have come to the moment when Soviet Ukraine was created. Then there was 1991 - the collapse of the Soviet Union. And everything that Ukraine received as a gift from Russia, "from the master's shoulder," she took with her. I am now coming to a very important point today. After all, this collapse of the Soviet Union was initiated, in fact, by the Russian leadership. I don't know what guided the Russian leadership then, but I suspect that there were several reasons to think that everything would be fine.

Firstly, I think that the Russian leadership proceeded from the fundamental principles of relations between Russia and Ukraine. In fact, there was a common language, more than 90 percent there spoke Russian; family ties, every third

person there has some kind of family or friendly connections; general culture; general history; finally, a common religion; general presence within a single state for centuries; the economy is very interconnected - all these are such fundamental things. All this underlies the inevitability of our good relations.

The second thing is very important, I want you as an American citizen and for your viewers to hear about this too: the previous Russian leadership proceeded from the fact that the Soviet Union ceased to exist, no more ideological dividing lines exist. Russia even voluntarily and proactively agreed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and proceeds from the fact that this will be understood by the so-called - already in quotes - "civilized West" as a proposal for cooperation and alliance. This is what Russia expected from both the United States and the so-called collective West as a whole.

There were smart people, including in Germany. Egon Bahr was a major political figure in the Social Democratic Party who insisted personally in conversations with the Soviet leadership before the collapse of the Soviet Union, saying that it was necessary to create a new security system in Europe. We need to help Germany unite, but create a new system that will include the United States, Canada, Russia, and other Central European countries. But there is no need for NATO to expand. That's what he said: if NATO spreads, everything will be the same as during the Cold War, only closer to the borders of Russia. That's all. Grandfather was smart. Nobody listened to him. Moreover, he got angry somehow - this conversation is also in our archives: if, he says, you don't listen to me, I will never come to Moscow again. Angry at the Soviet leadership. He was right, everything happened as he said.

T. Carlson: Yes, of course, his words came true, you have spoken about this many times, it seems to me that this is absolutely fair. And many in the States also thought that relations between Russia and the United States would be

normal after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the opposite happened.

However, you never explained why you think this happened, why it happened. Yes, the West may be afraid of a strong Russia, but the West is not afraid of a strong China.

V. Putin: The West fears a strong China more than a strong Russia because there are 150 million people in Russia, and one and a half billion in China, and the Chinese economy is developing by leaps and bounds - more than five percent a year, it was even more. But this is enough for China. Bismarck once said: the main thing is potentials. China's potential is colossal; it is the first economy in the world today in terms of purchasing power parity and economic volume. They have already overtaken the United States for quite some time, and the pace is growing.

Now we won't say who is afraid of whom, let's not talk in such categories. Let's talk about the fact that after 1991, when Russia expected to be taken into the fraternal family of "civilized peoples," nothing like that happened. You deceived us - when I say "you," I don't mean you personally, of course, but the United States - you promised that there would be no NATO expansion to the east, but this happened five times, five waves of expansion. We endured everything, persuaded everything, said: no need, we are now our own, as they say, bourgeois, we have a market economy, there is no power of the Communist Party, let's come to an agreement.

Moreover, I also already spoke about this publicly - now let's take the Yeltsin era - there was a moment when "a gray cat ran by." Before this, Yeltsin traveled to the United States, remember, he spoke in Congress and said wonderful words: God bless America. He said everything, these were signals: let us in.

No, when the events began in Yugoslavia... Before that, Yeltsin was praised and praised - as soon as the events in Yugoslavia began and when he raised his voice for the

Serbs, and we could not help but raise our voices for the Serbs, in their defense... I understand that there were complex processes there, Understand. But Russia could not help but raise its voice for the Serbs, because the Serbs are also a special nation, close to us, with an Orthodox culture and so on. Well, such a long-suffering people for generations. Well, it doesn't matter, but the important thing is that Yeltsin spoke out in support. What did the United States do? In violation of international law and the UN Charter, the bombing of Belgrade began.

The United States has let the genie out of the bottle. Moreover, when Russia objected and expressed its indignation, what was said? The UN Charter and international law are outdated. Now everyone refers to international law, but then they started saying that everything is outdated, everything needs to be changed.

Indeed, something needs to change, because the balance of power has changed, it's true, but not in this way. Yes, by the way, they immediately began to throw mud at Yeltsin, pointing out that he was an alcoholic, did not understand anything, did not understand anything. He understood everything and made sense of everything, I assure you. OK then. I became President in 2000. I thought: okay, that's it, the Yugoslav issue is over, we need to try to restore relations, still open this door that Russia was trying to get through. And moreover, I spoke about this publicly, I can repeat, at a meeting here in the Kremlin with the outgoing Bill Clinton - right here next to each other, in the next room - I told him, asked a question: listen, Bill, how are you? Do you think that if Russia raised the question of joining NATO, do you think it would be possible? Suddenly he said: you know, this is interesting, I think so. And in the evening, when we met at dinner, he said: you know, I talked to my people, to my team - no, now this is impossible. You can ask him, I think he will hear our interview and confirm it. I would never have said anything like that if it hadn't happened. Okay, now it's impossible.

T. Carlson: Were you sincere then? Would you join NATO?

Vladimir Putin: Listen, I asked a question: is this possible or not? And I received the answer: no. If I was insincere in my desire to find out the position of management...

T. Carlson: And if he said yes, would you join NATO?

V. Putin: If he had said “yes,” the process of rapprochement would have begun, and ultimately this could have happened if we saw the sincere desire of the partners to do this. But it didn't end there. Well, no, no, okay, fine.

T. Carlson: Why do you think? What are the motives for this? I sense that you feel bitter about this, I understand. But why do you think the West rejected you so much then? Where does this hostility come from? Why couldn't the relationship improve? What were the motives for this, from your point of view?

Vladimir Putin: You said that I feel bitter about the answer. No, this is not bitterness, this is simply a statement of fact. We are not the bride and groom, bitterness, resentment are not the substances that take place in such cases. We just realized that they weren't waiting for us there, that's all. Well okay. But let's build relationships differently, let's look for common ground. Why did we receive such a negative response, you ask your leaders. I can only guess why: the country is too big with its own opinion and so on. And the United States - I saw how issues are resolved in NATO...

I will now give one more example, concerning Ukraine. The US leadership “pressed” - and all NATO members vote obediently, even if they don't like something. Now I will tell you in this regard what happened to Ukraine in 2008, although this is being discussed, I won't tell you anything new here.

Nevertheless, then, after that, we tried to build relationships in different ways. For example, there were events in the Middle East, in Iraq, we very gently and calmly built relations with the States.

I have repeatedly raised the question that the United States should not support either separatism or terrorism in the North Caucasus. But they continued to do it anyway. And political support, information support, financial support, even military support came from the United States and its satellites in relation to terrorist groups in the Caucasus.

I once raised this issue with my colleague, also the President of the United States. He says: it can't be, do you have evidence? I say yes. I was ready for this conversation and gave him this evidence. He looked and you know what he said? I apologize, but it happened, I'll quote, he said: well, I'll kick their ass. We waited and waited for an answer - there was no answer.

I say to the director of the FSB: write to the CIA, is there any result of the conversation with the President? I wrote once, twice, and then received an answer. We have the answer in the archives. The answer came from the CIA: we worked with the opposition in Russia; We believe that this is correct and we will continue to work with the opposition. Funny. OK. We realized that there would be no conversation.

T. Carlson: Opposition to you?

Vladimir Putin: Of course, in this case we meant the separatists, the terrorists who fought with us in the Caucasus. That's what we were talking about. They called it opposition. This is the second point.

The third point, very important, is the moment of creation of the US missile defense system, the beginning. We spent a long time trying to persuade the United States not to do this. Moreover, after Bush Jr.'s father, Bush Sr., invited me to visit him on the ocean, a very serious conversation took place there with President Bush and his team. I proposed that the United States, Russia and Europe jointly create a missile defense system, which we believe, created unilaterally, threatens our security, despite the fact that the United States has officially said that it is being created

against missile threats from Iran. This was also the justification for the creation of missile defense. I suggested that the three of them work together – Russia, the USA, Europe. They said it was very interesting. They asked me: are you serious? I say absolutely.

T. Carlson: When was this, in what year?

Vladimir Putin: I don't remember. This is easy to find out on the Internet when I was in the USA at the invitation of Bush Sr. It's even easier to find out now, I'll tell you from whom. They told me: this is very interesting. I say: just imagine if we together solve such a global strategic task in the field of security. The world will change. We will probably have disputes, probably economic and even political, but we will radically change the situation in the world. He says [in response]: yes. They asked me: are you serious? I say: of course. We need to think about it, I was told. I say: please. Then Secretary of Defense Gates, former director of the CIA, and Secretary of State Rice came here to this office where we are now talking. Here, at this table, on the contrary, you see this table, they sat on this side. I, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defense of Russia are from the other side. They told me: yes, we thought, we agree. I say: thank God, great. - "But with some exceptions."

T. Carlson: So you twice described how American presidents made some decisions, and then their teams derailed these decisions?

Vladimir Putin: That's right. In the end we were sent away. I won't tell you the details, because I think it's incorrect; after all, it was a confidential conversation. But it is a fact that our proposal was rejected.

Then, it was then that I said: look, but then we will be forced to engage in retaliatory measures. We will create strike systems that will certainly overcome the missile defense system. The answer was this: we are not doing it against you, and you do what you want, based on the fact that it is not against us, not against the United States. I say:

good. Let's go. And we have created hypersonic systems, with intercontinental range, and we continue to develop them. We are now ahead of everyone in the creation of hypersonic strike systems: both the United States and other countries - they are being improved every day. But we didn't do it, we suggested going a different way, but they pushed us aside.

Now regarding NATO's expansion to the east. Well, they promised: there will be no NATO to the east, there will be no inch to the east, as we were told. And what's next? They said: well, we haven't recorded it on paper, so we'll expand it. Five expansions, including the Baltic states, all of Eastern Europe, and so on.

And now I'm moving on to the main thing: we got to Ukraine. In 2008, at the summit in Bucharest, they announced that the doors to NATO were open for Ukraine and Georgia.

Now let's talk about how decisions are made there. Germany and France seemed to be against it, as well as some other European countries. But then, as it turned out later, President Bush, and he is such a strong guy, a strong politician, as they told me later: he put pressure on us, and we were forced to agree. It's funny, just like in kindergarten. Where are the guarantees? What kind of kindergarten is this, what kind of people are these, who are they? You see, they were "pressed" and agreed. And then they say: Ukraine will not be in NATO, you know. I say: I don't know; I know that you agreed in 2008, but why won't you agree in the future? "Well then they pressed us." I say: why won't they put pressure on you tomorrow - and you will agree again. Well, that's some nonsense. I just don't understand who to talk to there. We're ready to talk. But with whom? Where are the guarantees? None.

This means that they began to develop the territory of Ukraine. Whatever was there, I told the background, how this territory developed, what kind of relations there were with Russia. Every second or third person there has always had

some kind of connection with Russia. And during the elections in an independent, sovereign Ukraine, which gained independence as a result of the Declaration of Independence, and, by the way, it is written there that Ukraine is a neutral state, and in 2008 the doors, or gates, to NATO were suddenly opened for it. This is an interesting movie!

We didn't agree that way. So, all the presidents who came to power in Ukraine relied on the electorate, which in one way or another had a good attitude towards Russia. This is the southeast of Ukraine, this is a large number of people. And it was very difficult to "kill" this electorate, which had a positive attitude towards Russia.

Viktor Yanukovich came to power, and how: for the first time he won after President Kuchma - they organized a third round, which is not provided for in the Constitution of Ukraine. This is a coup d'état. Imagine, someone didn't like it in the USA.

T. Carlson: In 2014.

Vladimir Putin: No, before. No, no, this happened before. After President Kuchma, Viktor Yanukovich won the elections. But his opponents did not recognize this victory; the United States supported the opposition and scheduled a third round. What is it? This is a coup d'état. The USA supported him, and he came to power as a result of the third round... Imagine that in the USA someone didn't like something - they organized a third round, which is not provided for in the US Constitution. But nevertheless, they did it there [in Ukraine]. Okay, Viktor Yushchenko, who was considered a pro-Western politician, came to power. Okay, but we also established relations with him, he went to Moscow on visits, we went to Kyiv, and I went. We met in an informal setting. Western is Western - so be it. Let it be, but people work. The situation must develop internally, in independent Ukraine itself. After he led the country, the situation worsened, and Viktor Yanukovich finally came to power.

Maybe he was not the best president and politician - I don't know, I don't want to make judgments - but the question of association with the European Union arose. But we have always been very loyal to this: please. But when we read this association agreement, it turned out that this is a problem for us, because we have a free trade zone with Ukraine, open customs borders, and Ukraine, according to this association, had to open its borders to Europe - and everything would flow into our market.

We said: no, then this won't work, we will then close our borders with Ukraine, our customs borders. Yanukovich began to calculate how much Ukraine would win and how much it would lose, and announced to his counterparties in Europe: I have to think again before signing. As soon as he said this, destructive actions began among the opposition, supported by the West, and everything reached the Maidan and the coup in Ukraine.

T. Carlson: So he traded more with Russia than with the European Union, Ukraine?

Vladimir Putin: Of course. It's not even a matter of trade volumes, although it's more. The point is the cooperative ties on which the entire Ukrainian economy stood. Cooperation ties between enterprises have been very tight since the times of the Soviet Union. There, one enterprise produced components for final assembly in both Russia and Ukraine, and vice versa. There were very close ties.

They carried out a coup d'etat, although we from the United States, I won't go into detail now, I think it's incorrect, but still it was said: you calm Yanukovich there, and we will calm the opposition; let everything follow the path of political settlement. We said: okay, we agree, let's do it that way. Yanukovich did not use, as the Americans asked us, either the armed forces or the police. And the armed opposition in Kyiv carried out a coup. What does it mean? Who are you anyway? – I wanted to ask the then leadership of the United States.

T. Carlson: With the support of whom?

Vladimir Putin: With the support of the CIA, of course. An organization that I understand you once wanted to work for. Maybe thank God they didn't take you. Although this is a serious organization, I understand that my former colleagues, in the sense that I worked in the First Main Directorate, is the intelligence service of the Soviet Union. They have always been our opponents. Work is work. Technically, they did everything right, achieved what they wanted - they changed the government. But from a political point of view this is a colossal mistake. Here, of course, the political leadership did not do its job properly. The political leadership should have seen what this would lead to.

So, in 2008, Ukraine's doors to NATO were opened. In 2014, they carried out a coup d'etat, while those who did not recognize the coup d'etat, and this is a coup d'etat, began to be persecuted and created a threat to Crimea, which we were forced to take under our protection. They started the war in Donbass in 2014, using aviation and artillery against civilians. After all, this is where it all began. There is a video recording of planes striking Donetsk from above. They undertook one large-scale military operation, another one, failed - they are still preparing it. And still against the backdrop of the military development of this territory and the opening of doors to NATO.

Well, how can we not show concern about what is happening? On our part it would be criminal carelessness - that's what it would be. It's just that the political leadership of the States drove us to a line beyond which we could no longer cross, because it would destroy Russia itself. And then we could not throw our co-religionists and, in fact, part of the Russian people under this military machine.

T. Carlson: That is, it was eight years before the start of the conflict. What provoked this conflict when you decided that you still needed to take this step?

Vladimir Putin: Initially, the conflict was provoked by the coup d'état in Ukraine.

By the way, representatives of three European countries arrived: Germany, Poland and France - and were guarantors of the signed agreement between the Yanukovich government and the opposition. They put their signatures as guarantors. Despite this, the opposition carried out a coup d'etat, and all these countries pretended that they did not remember anything about the fact that they were the guarantors of a peaceful settlement. They immediately threw it into the oven, no one remembers.

I don't know if the United States knows anything about this agreement between the opposition and the authorities and about the three guarantors who, instead of returning this whole process to the political field, no, supported the coup. Although there was no point in it, believe me. Because President Yanukovich agreed with everything and was ready for early elections, which he had no chance of winning, to be honest, he had no chance. Everyone knew this. But why a coup d'état, why sacrifices? Why threats to Crimea? Why then began operations in Donbass? This is what I don't understand.

This is where the miscalculation lies. The CIA completed its job in implementing the coup d'état. And, in my opinion, one of the Deputy Secretary of State said that they even spent a large sum on this, almost five billion [dollars]. But the political mistake is colossal. Why did this have to be done? All the same things could have been done, only legally, without any casualties, without the start of military operations and without the loss of Crimea. And we wouldn't have lifted a finger if it weren't for these bloody events on the Maidan; it would never have occurred to us.

Because we agreed that after the collapse of the Soviet Union everything should be like this - along the borders of the union republics. We agreed with this. But we never agreed with NATO expansion, much less we never agreed that Ukraine would be in NATO. We did not agree that there

would be NATO bases there without any conversations with us. We just begged for decades: don't do this, don't do that.

What was the trigger in recent events? Firstly, today's leadership of Ukraine has stated that they will not implement the Minsk agreements, which were signed, as you know, after the events of 2014 in Minsk, where a plan for a peaceful settlement in Donbass was outlined. No, the leadership of today's Ukraine, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, all other officials, and then the President himself declared that they do not like anything in these Minsk agreements. In other words, they are not going to comply. And the former leaders of Germany and France said directly today - a year and a half ago - they said directly, honestly, to the whole world that yes, they signed these Minsk agreements, but they never intended to implement them. We were simply led by the nose.

T. Carlson: Have you spoken with the Secretary of State and the President? Maybe they were afraid to talk to you? And did you tell them that if they continue to pump Ukraine with weapons, then you will act?

Vladimir Putin: We talked about this constantly. We appealed to the leadership of the United States and European countries to stop this process immediately and to ensure that the Minsk agreements are implemented. Frankly, I didn't know how we would do it, but I was ready to do it. They are difficult for Ukraine, there are a lot of elements of independence for Donbass, it was provided for these territories, this is true. But I was absolutely sure, I will tell you now: I sincerely believed that if we managed to persuade those people who live in Donbass - they still had to be persuaded to return to the framework of Ukrainian statehood - then gradually, gradually the wounds would heal . Gradually, when this part of the territory returns to economic life, to the general social environment, when pensions are paid, social benefits - everything will gradually, gradually grow together. No, no one wanted this, everyone wanted to resolve the issue only with the help of military force. But we couldn't allow this.

And it all came to this situation when in Ukraine they announced: no, we will not [perform] anything. We began to prepare for military action. They started the war in 2014. Our goal is to stop this war. And we didn't start it in 2022, this is an attempt to stop it.

T. Carlson: Do you think you have managed to stop it now? Have you achieved your goals?

V. Putin: No, we have not yet achieved our goals, because one of the goals is denazification. This refers to the prohibition of all neo-Nazi movements. This is one of the problems that we discussed during the negotiation process, which ended in Istanbul at the beginning of last year, but it did not end on our initiative, because we – the Europeans, in particular – were told: it is imperative to create conditions for the final signing of documents. My colleagues in France and Germany said: "How do you imagine them signing the agreement: with a gun to their head? We must withdraw troops from Kyiv." I say: good. We withdrew our troops from Kyiv.

As soon as we withdrew our troops from Kyiv, our Ukrainian negotiators immediately threw into the trash all our agreements reached in Istanbul and prepared for a long armed confrontation with the help of the United States and its satellites in Europe. Here's how the situation developed. And this is how she looks now.

T. Carlson: What is denazification? What does this mean?

Vladimir Putin: I just want to say about this now. This is a very important question.

Denazification. After gaining independence, Ukraine began to search, as some analysts in the West say, for its identity. And I couldn't think of anything better than to put the false heroes who collaborated with Hitler at the forefront of this identity.

I have already said that at the beginning of the 19th century, when theorists of independence and sovereignty of Ukraine appeared, they proceeded from the fact that an independent Ukraine should have very kind and good relations with Russia. But due to historical development, due to the fact that when these territories were part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Poland, Ukrainians were quite brutally persecuted, confiscated, they tried to destroy this identity, they behaved very cruelly, all this remained in the memory of the people.

When World War II began, some of this extremely nationalistic elite began to collaborate with Hitler, believing that Hitler would bring them freedom. The German troops, even the SS troops, they gave the dirtiest work of exterminating the Polish population, the Jewish population, to the collaborators who collaborated with Hitler. Hence this brutal massacre of the Polish, Jewish population, and Russian too. At the head were persons who are well known: Bandera, Shukhevych. It was these people who were made national heroes. That's the problem. And we are told all the time: nationalism and neo-Nazism exist in other countries. Yes, there are sprouts, but we crush them, and in other countries they crush them. But in Ukraine - no, in Ukraine they have been made into national heroes, monuments are erected to them, they are on flags, their names are shouted by crowds who walk with torches, like in Nazi Germany. These are the people who destroyed Poles, Jews and Russians. This practice and theory must be stopped.

Of course, any nation, it has grown, considers part of the people there... I say that this is part of the common Russian people, they say: no, we are a separate people. Okay, okay. If someone considers themselves a separate people, they have the right to do so. But not on the basis of Nazism, Nazi ideology.

T. Carlson: Will you be satisfied with the territory that you already have?

Vladimir Putin: I'll finish now. You asked a question about neo-Nazism and denazification.

The President of Ukraine came to Canada - this is well known, but is hushed up in the West - and was introduced in the Canadian parliament to a man who, as the speaker of parliament said, fought against the Russians during the Second World War. Well, who fought against the Russians during World War II? Hitler and his minions. It turned out that this man served in the SS troops, he personally killed Russians, Poles, and Jews. The SS troops, formed from Ukrainian nationalists, did this dirty work. The President of Ukraine stood up along with the entire Canadian Parliament and applauded this man. How can you imagine this? By the way, the President of Ukraine himself is a Jew by nationality.

T. Carlson: What will you do about it? Hitler has been dead for 80 years, Nazi Germany no longer exists, this is true. You say that you want to put out this fire of Ukrainian nationalism. How to do it?

Vladimir Putin: Listen to me. Your question is very subtle... And can I tell you what I think? Won't you be offended?

T. Carlson: Of course I won't.

V. Putin: It would seem to be subtle, it is very nasty, this question.

You say: Hitler has been gone for so many years, 80 years. But his work lives on. The people who destroyed Jews, Russians and Poles are alive. And the President, the current President of today's Ukraine, applauds him in the Canadian parliament, gives him a standing ovation! How can we say that we have completely uprooted this ideology if what we see is happening today? This is what denazification is in our understanding. We need to get rid of those people who abandon this theory and practice in life and try to preserve it - that's what denazification is. This is what we mean by it.

T. Carlson: Okay. I am, of course, not defending Nazism or neo-Nazism. But my question is in practical terms: you do not control the whole country, and it seems to me as if you want to control it all. But how can you then uproot ideology, culture, some feelings, history in a country that you do not control? How to achieve this?

V. Putin: And you know, no matter how strange it may seem to you, during the negotiations in Istanbul we nevertheless agreed that - it's all there in written form - neo-Nazism will not be cultivated in Ukraine, including that it will be prohibited at the legislative level.

Mr. Carlson, we agreed on this. This, it turns out, can be done during the negotiation process. And there is nothing humiliating here for Ukraine as a modern civilized state. Is any state allowed to promote Nazi propaganda? No, really? That's all.

T. Carlson: Will there be negotiations? And why have there been no such negotiations – peace negotiations – regarding the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine until now?

Vladimir Putin: They did, they reached a very high stage of agreeing on the positions of a complex process, but still they were almost completed. But after we withdrew the troops from Kyiv, as I already said, the other side, Ukraine, threw away all these agreements and took into account the instructions of Western countries - European, the United States - to fight with Russia to the bitter end.

And more than that: the President of Ukraine has legally prohibited negotiations with Russia. He signed a decree prohibiting everyone from negotiating with Russia. But how will we negotiate if he forbade himself and forbade everyone? We know that he is putting forward some ideas about this settlement. But in order to agree on something, you need to conduct a dialogue, right?

T. Carlson: Yes, but you will not talk to the Ukrainian President, you will talk to the American President. When was the last time you spoke with Joe Biden?

Vladimir Putin: I don't remember when I talked to him. I don't remember, you can look it up.

T. Carlson: Don't you remember?

V. Putin: No, what, I have to remember everything, or what? I have a lot of things to do. We have internal political affairs.

T. Carlson: But he is financing the war that you are waging.

V. Putin: Yes, he finances, but when I talked to him, it was before the start of a special military operation, of course, and by the way, I told him then - I won't go into details, I never do this - but I then told him: I believe that you are making a huge mistake of historical proportions, supporting everything that is happening there, in Ukraine, pushing away Russia. I told him about this - I told him more than once, by the way. I think that this will be correct - here, I will limit myself to this.

T. Carlson: What did he say?

Vladimir Putin: Ask him, please. It's easy for you: you are a citizen of the United States, go and ask him. It is inappropriate for me to comment on our conversation.

T. Carlson: But you haven't talked to him since then - after February 2022?

Vladimir Putin: No, we didn't talk. But we have certain contacts. By the way, remember when I told you about my proposal to work together on a missile defense system?

T. Carlson: Yes.

Vladimir Putin: You can ask everyone - thank God, they are all alive and well. Both the former President and

Condoleezza [Rice] are alive and well, and, in my opinion, Mr. Gates, and the current Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. Burns - he was then ambassador to Russia, in my opinion, a very successful ambassador. They are all witnesses to these conversations. Ask them.

The same is true here: if you are interested in what Mr. President Biden answered me, ask him. In any case, he and I talked about this topic.

T. Carlson: I understand this perfectly, but from the outside, for an outside observer, it may seem that all this could result in a situation where the whole world would be on the brink of war, maybe even nuclear strikes would be carried out. Why don't you call Biden and say: let's somehow resolve this issue.

V. Putin: What should we decide? Everything is very simple. We, I repeat, have contacts through various departments. I'll tell you what we are saying about this and what we are conveying to the US leadership: if you really want to stop hostilities, you need to stop the supply of weapons - everything will be over within a few weeks, that's all, and then you can agree on some then, before you do it, stop.

What's easier? Why should I call him? What to talk about or what to beg for? "Are you going to supply such and such weapons to Ukraine? Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid, please don't deliver." What is there to talk about?

T. Carlson: Do you think NATO is concerned that this could escalate into a global war or even a nuclear conflict?

V. Putin: In any case, they talk about it and they try to intimidate their population with an imaginary Russian threat. This is an obvious fact. And thinking people - not ordinary people, but thinking people, analysts, those involved in real politics, just smart people - understand perfectly well that this is a fake. The Russian threat is being inflated.

T. Carlson: Do you mean the threat of a Russian invasion, for example, in Poland or Latvia? Can you imagine a scenario where you send Russian troops to Poland?

V. Putin: Only in one case: if there is an attack on Russia from Poland. Why? Because we have no interests either in Poland or in Latvia - nowhere. Why do we need this? We simply have no interests. Just threats.

T. Carlson: The argument - I think you know well - is this: yes, he invaded Ukraine, he has territorial claims on the entire continent. Are you saying unambiguously that you have no such territorial claims?

Vladimir Putin: This is absolutely excluded. You don't need to be any kind of analyst: it's contrary to common sense to get drawn into some kind of global war. And a global war will bring all of humanity to the brink of destruction. It is obvious. There are, of course, means of deterrence. We kept scaring everyone: tomorrow Russia will use tactical nuclear weapons, tomorrow it will use this - no, the day after tomorrow. So what? These are just horror stories for ordinary people, in order to extract additional money from US taxpayers and European taxpayers in the confrontation with Russia in the Ukrainian theater of military operations. The goal is to weaken Russia as much as possible.

T. Carlson: One of the senior senators, Chuck Schumer, I think said yesterday: we need to continue to fund Ukraine, or in the end American soldiers will have to fight in Ukraine instead of Ukraine. How do you evaluate such a statement?

Vladimir Putin: This is a provocation, and a cheap provocation at that. I don't understand why American soldiers have to fight in Ukraine. There are mercenaries from the United States there. Most of the mercenaries are from Poland, in second place are mercenaries from the United States, in third place are from Georgia. If someone has the desire to send regular troops, this will certainly put humanity on the brink of a very serious, global conflict. It is obvious.

Does the United States need this? For what? Thousands of kilometers from national territory! Don't have anything to do? You have a lot of problems at the border, problems with migration, problems with the national debt - more than 33 trillion dollars. There is nothing to do - you need to fight in Ukraine?

Wouldn't it be better to come to an agreement with Russia? To come to an agreement, already understanding the situation that is developing today, understanding that Russia will fight for its interests to the end, and, understanding this, in fact, return to common sense, begin to respect our country, its interests and look for what -what solutions? It seems to me that this is much smarter and more rational.

T. Carlson: Who blew up Nord Stream?

Vladimir Putin: You, of course. (Laughter.)

T. Carlson: I was busy that day. I didn't blow up Nord Stream.

Vladimir Putin: You personally may have an alibi, but the CIA [CIA] does not have such an alibi.

T. Carlson: Do you have evidence that NATO or the CIA did this?

V. Putin: You know, I won't go into details, but in such cases they always say: look for someone who is interested. But in this case, we need to look not only for someone who is interested, but also for someone who can do it. Because there may be many interested, but not everyone can climb to the bottom of the Baltic Sea and carry out this explosion. These two components must be connected: who is interested and who can.

T. Carlson: But I don't quite understand. This is the largest act of industrial terrorism in history and, moreover, the largest release of CO₂ into the atmosphere. But taking into

account the fact that you and your intelligence services have evidence, why don't you present such evidence and win this propaganda war?

V. Putin: It is very difficult to defeat the United States in the war of propaganda, because the United States controls all the world's media and very many European ones. The ultimate beneficiary of the largest European media is American foundations. Don't you know this? Therefore, you can get involved in this work, but it is, as they say, more expensive for yourself. We can simply expose our sources of information, but we will not achieve results. It is already clear to the whole world what happened, and even American analysts speak directly about it. Is it true.

T. Carlson: Yes, but the question is - you worked in Germany, this is well known, and the Germans clearly understand that their NATO partners did this, of course, this dealt a blow to the German economy - why then are the Germans silent? This confuses me: why didn't the Germans say anything on this issue?

Vladimir Putin: This surprises me too. But today's German leadership is not guided by national interests, but by the interests of the collective West, otherwise it is difficult to explain the logic of their actions or inaction. After all, it's not just about Nord Stream 1, which was blown up. Nord Stream 2 was damaged, but one pipe is alive and well, and it can supply gas to Europe, but Germany does not open it. We're ready, please.

There is another route through Poland, Yamal - Europe is called, a large flow can also be carried out. Poland closed it, but Poland is taking advantage of the Germans, receiving money from pan-European funds, and the main donor to these pan-European funds is Germany. Germany feeds Poland to a certain extent. And they took and closed the route to Germany. For what? I don't understand. Ukraine, to which the Germans supply weapons and give money. The second sponsor after the United States in terms of financial assistance to Ukraine is Germany. Two gas

routes pass through the territory of Ukraine. They took one route and simply closed it, the Ukrainians. Open a second route and please receive gas from Russia. They don't open. Why don't the Germans say: "Listen, guys, we are giving you money and weapons. Unscrew the valve, please, let gas flow from Russia for us. We buy liquefied gas at exorbitant prices in Europe, this reduces the level of our competitiveness and the economy as a whole to zero. Do you want us to give you money? Let us exist normally, let our economy earn money, we give you money from there." No, they don't do that. Why? Ask them. (Knocks on the table.) What's here and what's in their heads is the same thing. The people there are very incompetent.

T. Carlson: Maybe the world is now divided into two hemispheres: one hemisphere with cheap energy, the other not.

I want to ask a question: the world is now a multipolar world. Can you describe the alliances, blocs, who is on which side, in your opinion?

Vladimir Putin: Listen, you said that the world is divided into two hemispheres. The head is divided into two hemispheres: one is responsible for one area of activity, the other is more creative, and so on. But it's still one head. It is necessary for the world to be united, for security to be common, and not designed for this "golden billion". And then - only in this case - the world will be stable, sustainable and predictable. And as long as the head is divided into two parts, it is a disease, a serious disease. The world is going through this period of severe illness.

But it seems to me that thanks, among other things, to honest journalism - they [journalists] work like doctors - maybe it will be possible to somehow connect all this.

T. Carlson: Let me give you one example. The American dollar has united the whole world in many ways. Do you think the dollar will disappear as a reserve currency? How have sanctions changed the place of the dollar in the world?

V. Putin: You know, this is one of the gravest strategic mistakes of the political leadership of the United States - using the dollar as an instrument of foreign policy struggle.

The dollar is the basis of the power of the United States. I think everyone understands this very well: no matter how many dollars you print, they fly all over the world. Inflation in the USA is minimal: in my opinion, three percent, approximately 3.4, absolutely acceptable for the USA. And they print endlessly, of course. What does a debt of 33 trillion say? This is the same issue.

Nevertheless, this is the main weapon for maintaining US power in the world. Once the political leadership decided to use the dollar as a political tool, they attacked this American power. I don't want to use any unliterary expressions, but this is stupidity and a huge mistake.

Look what's happening in the world. Even among US allies, dollar reserves are now dwindling. Everyone looks at what is happening and begins to look for ways to protect themselves. But if in relation to some countries the United States applies such restrictive measures as limiting payments, freezing assets, and so on, this is a huge alarm and a signal for the whole world.

What was going on with us? Until 2022, approximately 80 percent of payments in Russian foreign trade were in dollars and euros. At the same time, dollars accounted for approximately 50 percent of our settlements with third countries, and now, in my opinion, only 13 percent remains. But it was not we who banned the use of the dollar, we did not strive for this. The United States has decided to limit our payments in dollars. I think it's complete nonsense, you know, from the point of view of the interests of the United States itself, the taxpayers of the United States. Because this deals a blow to the US economy and undermines the power of the United States in the world. By the way, payments in yuan were approximately three percent. Now we pay 34 percent in rubles and about the same, a little over 34 percent, in yuan.

Why did the United States do this? I can only attribute this to arrogance. They probably thought that everything would collapse, but nothing collapsed. Moreover, look, other countries, including oil-producing countries, are starting to talk and are already doing, paying for the sale of oil in yuan. Do you understand that this is happening or not? Does anyone understand this in the United States? What are you doing? You are pruning yourself... Ask all the experts, any smart and thinking person in the States: what is the dollar for the USA? You kill him yourself.

T. Carlson: I think this is a really fair assessment. Next question. Maybe you exchanged one colonial power for another, but one that was more gentle? Perhaps BRICS today is in danger of being dominated by a kinder colonial power, China? Is this good for sovereignty, do you think? Does this bother you?

Vladimir Putin: We are well aware of these horror stories. This is a horror story. We are neighbors with China. Neighbors, like close relatives, are not chosen. We have a common border of thousands of kilometers with them. This is the first.

Secondly, we are accustomed to living together for centuries. Third, China's foreign policy philosophy is non-aggressive, China's foreign policy thought is always looking for a compromise, and we see it.

The next point is this. We are told all the time, and you have now tried to present this horror story in a mild form, but nevertheless it is the same horror story: the volume of cooperation with China is growing. The growth rate of cooperation between China and Europe is greater and higher than the growth rate of cooperation with China of the Russian Federation. Ask the Europeans: aren't they afraid? Maybe they are afraid, I don't know, but they are trying to get into the Chinese market at all costs, especially when they are now faced with problems in the economy. And Chinese enterprises are developing the European market. Isn't there a small presence of Chinese business in the

United States? Yes, the political decisions are such that they are trying to limit cooperation with China. Mr. Tucker, you are doing it to your own detriment: by limiting cooperation with China, you are doing it to your own detriment. This is a delicate area, and there are no simple linear solutions here, just like with the dollar.

Therefore, before introducing any illegitimate sanctions - illegitimate from the point of view of the Charter of the United Nations - we need to think carefully. In my opinion, those who make decisions have problems with this.

T. Carlson: You said a minute ago that today the world would be much better if there were no two competing alliances that compete with each other. Maybe the current American administration, as you say, as you believe, is opposed to you, but maybe the next administration in the United States, the government after Joe Biden, will want to establish ties with you and you will want to establish ties with them? Or does it not matter?

Vladimir Putin: I'll tell you now.

But to finish the previous question. We have 200 billion dollars, we set a goal with my colleague, friend, with Chairman Xi Jinping, that this year we should reach 200 billion dollars in trade turnover with China. And we have exceeded this bar. According to our data, this is already 230 billion, according to Chinese statistics - 240 billion dollars, if everything is calculated in dollars, we have trade turnover with China.

And a very important thing: we have a balanced trade turnover, and it complements each other in the high-tech sector, in the energy sector, and in the field of scientific development. It's very balanced.

As for BRICS as a whole - Russia has become the chairman of BRICS this year - the BRICS countries are developing at a very fast pace.

Look, God forbid, so as not to make a mistake, but in 1992, in my opinion, the share of the G7 countries in the world economy was 47 percent, and in 2022 it fell, in my opinion, to something like 30 percent. The share of the BRICS countries in 1992 was only 16 percent, but now it exceeds the level of the “seven”. And this is not connected with any events in Ukraine. The trends in the development of the world and the global economy are as I have just mentioned, and this is inevitable. This will continue to happen: as the sun rises, it is impossible to prevent it, you need to adapt to it.

How is the United States adapting? With the help of force: sanctions, pressure, bombing, the use of armed forces. This has to do with overconfidence. People in your political elite do not understand that the world is changing due to objective circumstances, and you need to make the right decisions competently, on time, in a timely manner in order to maintain your level, excuse me, even if someone wants a level of dominance. Such rude actions, including in relation to Russia, say, and other countries, lead to the opposite result. This is an obvious fact, it has already become obvious today.

You asked me now: will another leader come and change something? It's not about the leader, not about the personality of a particular person. I had a very good relationship with, say, Bush. I know that in the States he was portrayed as some kind of country guy who didn't understand much about anything. I assure you that this is not so. I think that he also made a lot of mistakes regarding Russia. I told you about 2008 and the decision in Bucharest to open doors to NATO in Ukraine and so on. This happened with him, he put pressure on the Europeans.

But overall, on a human level, I had a very kind and good relationship with him. He is no worse than any other American or Russian or European politician. I assure you, he understood what he was doing, just like the others. Trump and I had such a personal relationship.

It's not about the personality of the leader - it's about the mood of the elites. If the idea of domination at any cost, and with the help of force, prevails in American society, then nothing will change - it will only get worse.

And if in the end the realization comes that the world is changing due to objective circumstances, and we must be able to adapt to them in time, using the advantages that the United States still has today, then, probably, something can change.

Look, the Chinese economy has become the first economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity; in terms of volume, they have long overtaken the United States. Then the USA, and then India - one and a half billion people, then Japan, and Russia in fifth place. Over the past year, Russia has become the first economy in Europe, despite all the sanctions and restrictions. Is this normal from your point of view? Sanctions, restrictions, impossibility of making payments in dollars, disconnection from SWIFT, sanctions against our ships carrying oil, sanctions against aircraft - sanctions in everything, everywhere. The largest number of sanctions that are applied in the world are applied against Russia. And we became the first economy in Europe during this time.

The tools the US is using are not working. Well, we need to think about what to do. If this realization comes to the ruling elites, then yes, then the first person of the state will act in anticipation of what voters and people who make decisions at various levels expect from him. Then something might change.

T. Carlson: You describe two different systems, you say that the leader acts in the interests of voters, but at the same time, some decisions are made by the ruling classes. You have been leading the country for many years, what do you think, with your experience, who makes decisions in America?

V. Putin: I don't know. America is a complex country, so, on the one hand, conservative, on the other hand, rapidly changing. It's not easy for us to figure this out.

Who makes decisions in elections? Is it possible to understand this when each state has its own legislation, each state regulates itself, and someone can be excluded from elections at the state level. This is a two-stage electoral system, it is very difficult for us to understand this. Of course, there are two parties that are dominant: Republicans and Democrats. And within the framework of this party system there are centers that make decisions and prepare decisions.

Then, look, why, in my opinion, was such an erroneous, crude, completely unfounded policy of pressure carried out in relation to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union? After all, this is a policy of pressure. The expansion of NATO, support for separatists in the Caucasus, the creation of a missile defense system - these are all elements of pressure. Pressure, pressure, pressure... Then Ukraine was drawn into NATO. It's all pressure, pressure. Why?

I think, also because, relatively speaking, excess production capacity was created. During the fight against the Soviet Union, many different centers were created and specialists on the Soviet Union who could not do anything else. It seemed to them that they were convincing the political leadership: they must continue to hammer Russia, try to further collapse it, create several quasi-state entities on this territory and subjugate them in a divided form, use their combined potential for the future fight with China. This is a mistake, including the excess potential of those who worked to confront the Soviet Union.

We need to get rid of this - there must be new, fresh forces, people who look to the future and understand what is happening in the world.

See how Indonesia is developing! 600 million people. Where can we get away from this? Nowhere. We just have to assume that Indonesia will join, it is already joining, the club

of the world's leading economies, no matter how it is – whether someone likes it or not.

Yes, we understand and are aware that in the United States, despite all the economic problems, there is still a normal situation and decent economic growth - 2.5 percent GDP growth, in my opinion.

But if we ensure the future, then we need to change our approach to what is changing. As I already said, the world will still change regardless of how the events in Ukraine end. The world is changing. In the States themselves, experts write that the States are gradually changing their position in the world - your experts themselves write, I read them. The only question is how this will happen: painfully, quickly or gently, gradually? And this is written by people who are not anti-American - they simply follow development trends in the world. That's all. In order to evaluate them and change policies, we need people who think, look forward, and can analyze and recommend some decisions at the level of political leadership.

T. Carlson: I have to ask. You clearly said that NATO expansion was a violation of promises and is a threat to your country. But before you sent troops to Ukraine, at a security conference, the US Vice President supported the desire of the President of Ukraine to join NATO. Do you think that this also provoked hostilities?

Vladimir Putin: I repeat once again: we have repeatedly, repeatedly proposed to seek a solution to the problems that arose in Ukraine after the 2014 coup d'état by peaceful means. But no one listened to us. And what's more, the Ukrainian leadership, which was under complete control of the United States, suddenly announced that it would not implement the Minsk agreements - they don't like anything there - and continued military activity in this territory. And in parallel, this territory was being developed by NATO military structures under the guise of various centers for training and retraining of personnel. They essentially began to create bases there. That's all.

In Ukraine they announced that the Russians were a non-titular nation, and at the same time passed laws that limited the rights of non-titular nations. In Ukraine. Ukraine, having received all these southeastern territories as a gift from the Russian people, suddenly announced that the Russians in this territory are a non-titular nation. Fine? All this together led to the decision to end the war, which was started by neo-Nazis in Ukraine in 2014, by armed means.

T. Carlson: Do you think that Zelensky has the freedom to negotiate a resolution to this conflict?

V. Putin: I don't know. There are details there, of course, it's difficult for me to judge. But I think that there is, in any case, this was the case. His father fought against the fascists, the Nazis during World War II, I once talked to him about this. I said: "Volodya, what are you doing? Why do you support neo-Nazis in Ukraine today when your father fought against fascism? He is a front-line soldier." I won't say what he answered, this is a separate topic, and I think it's incorrect. But as for freedom of choice - why not? He came to power on the expectations of the Ukrainian population that he would lead Ukraine to peace. He talked about this - because of this, he won the elections with a huge advantage. But then, when I came to power, in my opinion, I realized two things.

Firstly, it is better not to quarrel with neo-Nazis and nationalists, because they are aggressive and very active - you can expect anything from them. And secondly, the West, led by the United States, supports them and will always support those who fight Russia - this is profitable and safe. So he took the corresponding position, despite promising his people to end the war in Ukraine. He deceived his voters.

T. Carlson: Do you think that now, in February 2024, he has the freedom to talk to your Government and try to somehow help his country? Can he even do it himself?

Vladimir Putin: Why not? He considers himself the head of state, he won the elections. Although we in Russia believe that everything that happened after 2014, the primary source of power is a coup d'état, and in this sense, even today's government is flawed. But he considers himself president, and in this capacity he is recognized by the United States, all of Europe, and almost the entire rest of the world. Why not? He can.

We negotiated with Ukraine in Istanbul, we agreed, he knew about it. Moreover, the head of the negotiation group, Mr. Arakhamia, I think, is his last name, he still heads the faction of the ruling party, the party of the president in the Rada. He still heads the presidential faction in the Rada - in the country's parliament, he still sits there. He even put his preliminary signature on this document that I am telling you about. But then he publicly declared to the whole world: "We were ready to sign this document, but Mr. Johnson, then the Prime Minister of Great Britain, came, dissuaded us from this and said that it was better to fight with Russia. They will give us everything so that we can return what was lost during the clashes with Russia. And we agreed with this proposal."

Look, his statement has been published. He said this publicly.

Can they return to this or not? This is the question: do they want it or not? And after that, Mr. President of Ukraine issued a decree prohibiting negotiations with us. Let him cancel this decree, and that's it. We have never refused negotiations. We hear all the time: is Russia ready, ready? Yes, we didn't refuse! They publicly refused. Well, let him cancel his decree and enter into negotiations. We never refused.

And the fact that they submitted to the demands or persuasion of the former British Prime Minister Mr. Johnson, it seems to me that this is absurd and very, how to say, sad. Because, as Mr. Arakhamia said, "a year and a half ago we could have stopped these hostilities, stopped this war,

but the British persuaded us, and we refused this.” Where is Mr. Johnson now? And the war continues.

T. Carlson: This is a good question. Why did he do this?

Vladimir Putin: Who the hell knows, I don't understand it myself. There was a general setup. For some reason, everyone has the illusion that Russia can be defeated on the battlefield - out of arrogance, from a pure heart, but not from a great mind.

T. Carlson: You described the connection between Russia and Ukraine, you described Russia as an Orthodox country, you talked about this. What does this mean for you? You are the leader of a Christian country, as you describe yourself. What effect does this have on you?

V. Putin: You know, as I already said, in 988 Prince Vladimir baptized, he himself was baptized following the example of his grandmother, Princess Olga, and then he baptized his squad, and then gradually, over the course of several years, he baptized all of Russia. It was a long process - from pagans to Christians, it took many years. But ultimately, this is Orthodoxy, Eastern Christianity, it is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Russian people.

When Russia expanded and absorbed other peoples who profess Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism, Russia has always been very loyal to those people who profess other religions. This is her strength. This is absolutely clear.

And the fact is that in all the world religions that I just talked about and which are traditional religions of the Russian Federation, in fact, the main theses, the main values are very similar, if not they are the same. And the Russian authorities have always been very careful about the culture and religion of those peoples who came into the Russian Empire. This, in my opinion, forms the basis of both the security and stability of Russian statehood. Because all the peoples inhabiting Russia basically consider it their Motherland.

If, for example, people move to you from Latin America, or to Europe - an even clearer and understandable example - people come, but they also came from their historical homeland to you or to European countries.

And people who profess different religions in Russia consider Russia their Motherland - they have no other Motherland. We are together, this is one big family. And our traditional values are very similar. When I said “this is one big family”, but everyone has their own family, and this is the basis of our society. And if we say that the Motherland and the specific family are very connected, then so it is. Because it is impossible to ensure a normal future for our children and for our family if we do not provide a normal, sustainable future for the entire country, for the Motherland. That is why patriotism is so developed in Russia.

T. Carlson: If I may, religions are different. The fact is that Christianity is a non-violent religion, Christ says: “turn the other cheek”, “thou shalt not kill” and so on. How can a leader be a Christian if he has to kill someone else? How can you reconcile this within yourself?

Vladimir Putin: It’s very easy when it comes to protecting yourself and your family, your homeland. We don't attack anyone. How did the events in Ukraine begin? Since the coup d'etat and the beginning of hostilities in Donbass - that's where it started. And we protect our people, ourselves, our homeland and our future.

As for religion in general, you know, it’s not about external manifestations, it’s not about going to church every day or hitting your head on the floor. She's in the heart. And we have a people-oriented culture. Dostoevsky, who is very well known in the West as the genius of Russian culture, Russian literature, spoke a lot about this - about the Russian soul. After all, Western society is more pragmatic. Russian people, Russian people think more about the eternal, think more about moral values. I don’t know, maybe you won’t agree with me, but Western culture is still more pragmatic. I’m not saying that this is bad, it makes it possible for today’s

“golden billion” to achieve good success in production, even in science and so on. There's nothing wrong with that - I'm just saying that we kind of look the same, but our minds are built a little differently.

T. Carlson: So you think that something supernatural is at work here? When you look at what is happening in the world, do you see the works of the Lord? Do you tell yourself that here I see the actions of some superhuman forces?

Vladimir Putin: No, to be honest, I don't think so. I think that the world community develops according to its own internal laws, and they are what they are. There is no escape from this; it has always been this way in the history of mankind. Some peoples and countries rose, multiplied, became stronger, and then they left the international arena in the quality to which they were accustomed. I probably don't need to give these examples: starting with the same Horde conquerors, with Genghis Khan, then with the Golden Horde, ending with the great Roman Empire. In the history of mankind, it seems, there was nothing else like the great Roman Empire.

Nevertheless, the potential of the barbarians gradually accumulated, accumulated, and under their blows the Roman Empire collapsed, because there were more barbarians, they began to generally develop well, as we now say, economically, they began to strengthen. And the regime that was imposed on the world by the great Roman Empire collapsed. True, it took a long time to fall apart - 500 years; this process of decomposition of the great Roman Empire lasted 500 years. The difference with today's situation is that the processes of change today are much faster than during the times of the great Roman Empire.

T. Carlson: But when will the empire of AI - artificial intelligence - begin?

Vladimir Putin: You are immersing me in more and more complex issues. In order to answer, you must, of course, be

an expert in the field of large numbers, in the field of this artificial intelligence.

Humanity has many threats: research in the field of genetics, which can create a superman, a special person - a human warrior, a human scientist, a human athlete. Now they say that in the USA, Elon Musk has already implanted a chip in the brain of some person.

T. Carlson: What do you think about this?

V. Putin: I think that Musk cannot be stopped - he will still do what he considers necessary. But we need to somehow negotiate with him, we need to look for some ways to convince him. It seems to me that he is an intelligent person, that is, I am sure that he is an intelligent person. We need to somehow agree with him that this process needs to be canonized, subject to some rules.

Humanity, of course, must think about what will happen to it in connection with the development of these latest research and technologies in genetics or artificial intelligence. You can roughly predict what will happen. Therefore, when humanity felt a threat to its existence from nuclear weapons, all owners of nuclear weapons began to negotiate among themselves, because they understood that their careless use could lead to complete, total destruction.

When there comes an understanding that the unlimited and uncontrolled development of artificial intelligence, or genetics, or some other modern trends that cannot be stopped, these studies will still happen, just as it was impossible to hide what gunpowder is from humanity, and it is impossible to stop research in one area or another, this research will still happen, but when humanity feels a threat to itself, to humanity as a whole, then, it seems to me, the period will come to agree at the interstate level on how we will regulate this.

T. Carlson: Thank you very much for the time you spent. I want to ask one more question.

Evan Gershkovich, he is 32 years old, an American journalist, he has been in prison for more than a year, this is a big story in the USA. I want to ask you: Are you ready, as a gesture of goodwill, to release him so that we can take him to the USA?

Vladimir Putin: We have made so many goodwill gestures that, it seems to me, we have exhausted all limits. No one has ever responded to our goodwill gestures with similar gestures. But we, in principle, are ready to say that we do not exclude the possibility that we can do this with counter-movement from our partners.

And when I say “partners,” I mean primarily representatives of special services. They are in contact with each other and they are discussing this topic. We have no taboo about not solving this problem. We are ready to solve it, but there are certain conditions that are discussed through partner channels between the intelligence services. It seems to me that we can agree on this.

T. Carlson: Of course, everything happens over the course of centuries - a country catches a spy, detains him and then exchanges him for someone. Of course, this is none of my business, but this situation is different in that this person is definitely not a spy - he is just a child. And, of course, he may have violated your laws, but he is not a spy and most definitely did not spy. Maybe he is still in a different category? Perhaps it would be unfair to ask someone else in exchange for it?

Vladimir Putin: You know, you can say whatever you want about what a spy is and what is not a spy, but there are certain things provided for by law. If a person receives secret information and does it on a secret basis, then this is called espionage. This is exactly what he did: he received closed, secret information, and he did it secretly. I don't know, maybe he was drawn in, someone could have drawn him into this matter, maybe he did everything carelessly, on his own initiative. But in fact this is called espionage. And everything has been proven, because he was caught red-

handed when receiving this information. If these were some far-fetched things, invented, unproven, then it would be a different story. He was caught red-handed when he received secret information on a secret basis. Well, what is it?

T. Carlson: Are you saying that he worked for the American government, for NATO, or is he just a journalist who received information that should not have ended up in his hands? It seems to me that there is still a difference between these two categories.

Vladimir Putin: I don't know who he worked for. But I repeat again: obtaining secret information on a secret basis is called espionage, and he worked in the interests of the American intelligence services and some other structures. I don't think he worked for Monaco – it's unlikely that Monaco is interested in receiving this information. It's the intelligence services that have to come to an agreement among themselves, you understand? There are certain developments there, there are people who, in our opinion, are also not connected with the special services.

Listen, I'll tell you: sitting in one country, a country that is an ally of the United States, is a man who, for patriotic reasons, eliminated a bandit in one of the European capitals. During the events in the Caucasus, do you know what he [the bandit] did? I don't want to say it, but I'll say it anyway: he laid out our captured soldiers on the road, and then drove his car over their heads. What kind of person is this and is it a person? But there was a patriot who eliminated him in one of the European capitals. Whether he did it on his own initiative or not is another question.

T. Carlson: Evan Gershkovich didn't do anything like that, that's a completely different story.

Vladimir Putin: He did something else.

T. Carlson: He's just a journalist.

Vladimir Putin: He is not just a journalist, I repeat again. This is a journalist who received secret information on a secret basis. Well, yes, that's a completely different story. I'm just talking about those people who are, in fact, under the control of the US authorities, no matter where they are in prison, and there is a dialogue between the intelligence services. This should be resolved quietly, calmly, and on a professional level. There are contacts, let them work. I do not rule out that the person you mentioned, Mr. Gershkovich, may end up in his homeland. Why not? It makes no sense to more or less keep him in prison in Russia. But let the colleagues of our intelligence officers on the American side also think about how to solve the problems that our intelligence services face. We are not closed to negotiations. Moreover, these negotiations are ongoing, and there have been many cases when we reached an agreement. We can come to an agreement now, but we just have to negotiate.

T. Carlson: I hope that you will release it. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Vladimir Putin: I would also like him to go home eventually. I say this sincerely and completely. But, I repeat, the dialogue is ongoing. The more we publicize things like this, the more difficult it is to solve them. Everything should be calm.

T. Carlson: Honestly, with the war, I don't know whether it works or not. If you allow me, I will ask one more question. Maybe you don't want to answer for strategic reasons, but aren't you worried that what's happening in Ukraine could lead to something much bigger and much worse? And how ready are you, are you motivated to call, for example, the States and say: let's negotiate?

Vladimir Putin: Listen, I have already said: we did not refuse negotiations. We are not refusing - this is the Western side, and Ukraine is, of course, a satellite of the United States today. It is obvious. True, I don't want this to sound

like some kind of curse or insult to someone, but we understand, right, what's going on?

Financial support - 72 billion - was given, Germany is in second place, other European countries, tens of billions of dollars go to Ukraine. There is a huge flow of weapons coming.

Tell today's leadership of Ukraine: listen, let's sit down, negotiate, cancel your stupid decree or decree and sit down, talk. We didn't refuse.

T. Carlson: Yes, you have already said this. I understand perfectly well, of course, that this is not a curse. Indeed, it was reported that Ukraine was prevented from signing peace on the orders of the former British Prime Minister, who was acting on orders from Washington. That's why I ask, why don't you directly resolve these issues with the Biden administration, which controls the Zelensky administration in Ukraine?

V. Putin: If the Zelensky administration in Ukraine refused to negotiate, I proceed from the fact that they did this on instructions from Washington. Now let them, if they see in Washington that this is a wrong decision, let them abandon it, find some subtle excuse, not offensive to anyone, and find this solution. We didn't make these decisions - they made the decision, even if they refuse it. That's all. But they made the wrong decision, now we have to look for a way out of this wrong decision, put our tails in, correct their mistakes? They did it, let them correct it. We are for it.

T. Carlson: I want to make sure that I understand you correctly. That is, you want to achieve a negotiated solution to what is happening now in Ukraine, right?

Vladimir Putin: Correct. But we achieved this, we created a large document in Istanbul, which was initialed by the head of the Ukrainian delegation. His signature is there on an excerpt from this agreement - not on everything, but on an excerpt. He put his signature, and then he said: "We were

ready to sign, and the war would have ended a long time ago, a year and a half ago. But Mr. Johnson came and talked us out of it, and we missed this chance.” Well, they missed it, made a mistake - let them come back to it, that’s all. But why should we fuss and correct someone’s mistakes?

I understand, it can be said that it is our mistake that we intensified actions and, with the help of weapons, decided to end this war, as I said, started in 2014 in the Donbass. But I’ll bring you back even deeper, I’ve already talked about this, you and I have just discussed this. Then let’s go back to 1991, when we were promised not to expand NATO, let’s go back to 2008, when the gates to NATO were opened, let’s go back to the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, where it declared itself a neutral state.

Let us return to the fact that NATO bases, American bases, and British ones began to appear on the territory of Ukraine, creating these threats to us. Let’s return to the fact that a coup d’etat was carried out in Ukraine in 2014. Pointless, right? You can roll this ball back and forth endlessly. But they stopped negotiations. Error? Yes. Fix it. We are ready. What else?

T. Carlson: Don’t you think that it would be too humiliating for NATO to now recognize Russia’s control over what was Ukrainian territory two years ago?

Vladimir Putin: But I said: let them think about how to do it with dignity. There are options, but if there is a desire. Until now, they were making noise and shouting: it is necessary to achieve the strategic defeat of Russia, defeat on the battlefield... But now, apparently, the realization is coming that this is not easy to do, if at all possible. In my opinion, this is impossible by definition, this will never happen. It seems to me that now awareness of this has come to those who control power in the West. But if this is so and if this realization has come, now think about what to do next. We are ready for this dialogue.

T. Carlson: Are you ready to say, for example, to NATO: congratulations, you won, let's keep the situation as it is now.

V. Putin: You know, this is the subject of negotiations that no one wants to conduct with us, or, more precisely, they want to, but do not know how. I know what they want - I not only see it, but I know what they want, but they just can't figure out how to do it. We thought of it and brought it to the situation in which we find ourselves. It was not we who brought it to this point, but our "partners" and opponents who brought it to this point. Okay, now let them think about how to turn it the other way. We don't refuse.

It would be funny if it weren't so sad. This endless mobilization in Ukraine, hysteria, internal problems, all this... Sooner or later we will come to an agreement anyway. And guess what? It may even sound strange in today's situation: relations between peoples will be restored anyway. It will take a long time, but it will recover.

I'll give you some unusual examples. There is a clash on the battlefield, a concrete example: Ukrainian soldiers are surrounded - this is a concrete example from life, military operations - our soldiers shout to them: "There is no chance, surrender! Come out, you will be alive, give up!" And suddenly from there they shout in Russian, good Russian: "The Russians don't give up!" - and everyone died. They still feel Russian.

In this sense, what is happening is, to a certain extent, an element of civil war. And everyone in the West thinks that the fighting has forever separated one part of the Russian people from the other. No. The reunion will happen. It hasn't gone anywhere.

Why are the Ukrainian authorities taking away the Russian Orthodox Church? Because it unites not the territory, but the soul, and no one will be able to divide it.

Shall we finish or something else?

T. Carlson: That's all I have then.
Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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