



The Russian President's press conference on the economic forum in St. Petersburg

NATO and the EU are increasingly and conspicuously less successful in setting the world's political agenda. It does not help to conceal "non-Western events" in the mainstream. They still have an impact.

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Tue 25 Jun 2024

Introduction

Beginning with the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, there was a succession of international events, each of which had its own impact and marked a new era in world history. The NATO meeting in Apulia took place alongside the

forum, followed by the Swiss "peace conference" without any real will to achieve true peace. The offer of negotiations from Moscow, deliberately placed between the NATO meeting and the Swiss conference, revealed the real purpose of these Western events to the whole world.

The West-centered world no longer exists; its multipolar alternatives such as BRICS and SCO are captivating more and more countries, including even close allies of the USA, as Thailand and Turkey are seeing.

The St. Petersburg Economic Forum 2024 is part of this development. We will look back on this event in a loose series of articles.

When press conferences replace government contacts

On the eve of the opening of SPIEF, the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a press conference to selected representatives of international news agencies. The tradition of this media meeting in connection with the SPIEF has existed since 2014, with an interruption in 2020.

In times when governments simply refuse official contact with other states and governments, high-level media meetings take on a different character. They mutate into semi-governmental events through which official messages are addressed more or less openly.

This is also how Russian President Vladimir Putin's press conference in St. Petersburg in 2024 should be understood. This year, it took place late in the evening on June 5 at an exclusive location, in the "Lachta" center newly built by the Russian state-owned company Gazprom, a business center with 87 floors that also houses Gazprom's headquarters.



The Lachta Center, the new landmark of St. Petersburg

16 countries were represented at the meeting by their leading news agencies, including Reuters, AP, AFP, Italy's ANSA and DPA. The BRICS countries China and Iran were invited, as were Russia's important neighbors Belarus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The inclusion of Japan, South Korea and Spain is an indication of the importance that these states nevertheless have in Russian foreign policy, despite the sanctions against Russia that they support. All participants were top-class.

As far as news agencies from the BRICS countries and Russia's neighboring states are concerned, they have the opportunity to speak with leading representatives of Russian politics, including the president, on a more or less regular basis. Therefore, the absence of representatives from the BRICS countries India, Brazil and Egypt should not be overestimated. Important elections took place in Brazil and India a few days ago, which was the reason for the absence of the invited representatives.

The Egyptian representative broke his leg just before leaving, which is why he also had to cancel. It seems that every now and then, big politics finds its master in the lowlands of normal life.

Given this scenario, it is not surprising that a significant part of the press conference was taken up with answers to questions posed by Western agencies. And, predictably, these were almost exclusively related to the Ukraine conflict. It is the hotspot of international politics that influences all other topics.

We want to focus on this part of the issues here, particularly on Germany, especially as the press conference was very long, lasting over three hours in total, which makes it impossible to cover all the issues raised in one article.

Russia does not expect President Trump to change US policy

The answer to the question about the pros and cons of the candidates standing for election in the US presidential election held no surprises. For Vladimir Putin, Biden is more predictable as a possible future president. Trump, on the other hand, was responsible for a significant escalation in the tone between the US and Russia during his presidency through a massive evaluation of sanctions.

The Russian president made it clear that he does not expect the situation in Ukraine to change with a possible President Trump. Ukraine itself does not play a role for the USA, the USA is only interested in the size of the USA. Consequently, nothing will change until the future US administration realigns American foreign policy in general and sees a sense in building normal relations and treating everyone with respect.

Will Russia use nuclear weapons?

The question of a possible use of nuclear weapons by Russia, a possible trigger for such an escalation, followed. Vladimir Putin made it clear that it was not he who had raised this question. He pointed out that it was the USA that was the only country to use nuclear weapons.

It shows the Russian president's understanding of politics that he built a diplomatic bridge for the West with his response, across which all parties could pass. He called not only for nuclear weapons not to be used, but also for the threat of their use to be avoided.

Referring to the Russian nuclear doctrine, he left no doubt that all available means could be used in the event of actions that threaten Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

How the war in Ukraine came about

This was followed by the question of the German DPA, which seems to arise from the current apparent German understanding of journalism and politics.

It is therefore quoted here in full:

"Chancellor Scholz has declared his willingness to supply weapons to Ukraine. Please tell me, if Scholz changes his mind, what would you think? And what do you think will happen to Germany? Did you warn, admonish or threaten the Chancellor in any way when he made the decision to supply weapons to Ukraine?"

It is fair to ask who suggested to news director Martin Romanczyk that he ask the Russian president about possible threats against the German chancellor.

The complex of questions as a whole provided the Russian President with a steep template for a well-founded and detailed lesson on the origins of the war in Ukraine, combined with an equally in-depth analysis of German domestic and foreign policy and economic circumstances. It is up to the reader to compare the Russian president's analyses with statements by the relevant German department heads and to draw conclusions from them.

At first, the Russian president answered the question about possible threats in a statesmanlike manner: "What makes you think we are threatening anyone? We are not threatening anyone, especially not the head of another state."

In order to answer the other aspects of the complex of questions, Vladimir Putin referred to the Ukraine conflict since 2014. He began by explaining that no one in the West is willing to remember how this tragedy came about. It began with a coup d'état supported by the USA. This is the point in time that the Russian president defines as the beginning of the war. And according to Vladimir Putin, Russia bears no responsibility for this coup.

The Russian president was even clearer. He explicitly recalled that the foreign ministers of Poland, Germany and France, as guarantors, signed a document on the peaceful settlement of the crisis in accordance with the Ukrainian constitution. Since these guarantors did nothing to implement this document, they, along with the USA, are to blame for what has happened.

President Putin noted that the secession of Crimea and the resistance of Donbass to the coup d'état only took place afterwards.

With the Minsk agreements, Russia made every effort to contain the crisis and show a way out. To this end, Russia also initiated the inclusion of this agreement in the official UN documents. A document that, according to both the then German

Chancellor Merkel and the French President, no one had any intention of implementing.

Vladimir Putin then turned directly to the head of news at DPA. This passage is also worth reading in full:

"Dear Mr. Romanczyk, how is this to be understood? You have publicly said that you will not comply with the Minsk agreements, but have only signed them in order to arm Ukraine and create conditions for the continuation of hostilities. We have simply been led around by the nose. Is that not the case? How else can you explain what has happened?"

We have spent eight years trying to find a peaceful solution to this problem. Eight years!

The former German Chancellor once said to me: 'You know, in Kosovo, yes, we did, NATO acted without a Security Council decision back then. But blood was shed there in Kosovo for eight years.

And here, when the blood of Russian people was shed in the Donbass, it wasn't blood, but water? Nobody wanted to think about it or take note of it."

The Russian president then explained what had happened at the beginning of 2022. After a long eight years, Russia recognized the Donbass republics in accordance with international standards. It then concluded agreements on cooperation and mutual assistance. This was all done in accordance with UN regulations. The provision of military assistance also complied with Article 51 of the UN Charter. At this point, Vladimir Putin referred to UN Secretary-General Guterres, who publicly expressed the same opinion.

German missiles for Ukraine

The Russian president also spoke about the German arms deliveries. The appearance of German tanks in Ukraine came as a shock to the Russian public, as relations with Germany were considered to be very good in Russia. They changed the perception of Germany in Russian society. However, if Germany, like other NATO states, now approves the delivery of missiles to Ukraine for firing at targets deep in the Russian heartland, this takes on a new quality. This is because the Ukrainian army cannot operate the German missiles without the direct involvement of German personnel. Germany provides the target coordinates because Ukraine does not have the corresponding satellite technology. German

personnel are responsible for programming and maintaining the technology. At most, a Ukrainian soldier presses the launch button. The same applies to the delivery of modern missiles from other NATO countries.

"This will destroy Russian-German relations once and for all," concluded the Russian president.

Lack of German sovereignty - a problem not only for Germany

Russia understands that - in the words of a well-known German politician - the Federal Republic of Germany was never a sovereign state after the Second World War. This politician is not mentioned by name, but everyone knows that it is Wolfgang Schäuble.

It is clear to Vladimir Putin that German politics is trapped, both in the transatlantic corset and in its own thinking. His analysis of Germany's economic situation clearly identifies the country's main problem - a lack of cheap energy. He questions the logic of why Germany accepts gas supplies from Russia via Ukraine and Turkey but not via Poland. He asks why Germany, if it does not want to clear up the Nordstream pipeline, does not at least open up the last undestroyed pipeline for supply.

When discussing the domestic political situation in Germany, the Russian president referred to current polls. The CDU/CSU is at 30 percent, the SPD at around 16 percent and the AfD at 15 percent.

"Everyone else has already crashed. That is the voter's reaction. That is the mood of the Germans, the mood of the German people."

The Russian President on German domestic policy:

"It is even strange that no one in today's German leadership is defending German interests. It is clear - Germany does not have full sovereignty, but they are Germans. Their interests should at least be considered a little."

Concluding remarks

It is clear that the Russian President sees Germany as a key factor for a possible improvement in the situation in Europe, which is why he devoted much more space to the situation in the country than to questions of American policy. He is also

hoping for Italy, which he expressly thanked via the representative of the ANSA press agency for not fueling Russophobia in the country.

During the meeting, the Russian president was confident on every issue. He stated facts, but did not make accusations; he referred directly and indirectly to starting points for improving the situation and thus made it clear: Russia is not closing its doors to anyone, despite everything. It is prepared to cooperate with everyone on an equal footing for mutual benefit.

ARTICLE TAGS:

Press Conference Putin, Vladimir Russia St. Petersburg International Economic Forum

Biden, Joe AFD - Alternative für Deutschland Merkel, Angela Scholz, Olaf

Schäuble, Wolfgang Trump, Donald BRICS NATO Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)