At BRICS Summit, Putin warns Europeans: Dispatching troops to Ukraine would mean war with Russia

President Putin answering a media question at the BRICS summit in New Delhi on Friday.

The leaders of the major emerging markets and developing countries gathered in New Delhi, India late last week for the annual BRICS summit. (The name comes from the first letter of the last names of the four states – Brazil, Russia, India, China – the leaders of which met for the first time in 2009 – and South Africa, which joined a year later. BRICS now has 11 member states.) On Friday, at the conclusion of his first day at the summit, President Putin answered a number of questions, one of which asked how he viewed the result of the recent election in the German state of Saxony Anhalt, in which the xenophobic Alternative for Germany (AfD did well, and the upcoming elections in two other German states in which it's also expected to do well.

He declined to comment on specific internal political developments in Germany. But speaking more broadly of what he called the "globalist West," he said that "following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, they perceived themselves as standing atop the 'summit of Mount Olympus' and evidently concluded that, firstly, they were permitted everything and, secondly, that they themselves were incapable of error. From then on, these mistakes began to accumulate and snowball. In the security sphere…this has taken the form of attempts to put pressure on the Russian Federation, initially through the use of terrorists in the Caucasus and separatists, then via other methods, and now – by means of the neo-Nazi regime in Ukraine. This process continues unabated."

Continuing, he said, "At one time, we were included in the G8. Yet, as I have previously stated, this did not constitute full-fledged membership…. Although on the

surface, all appeared well and all the requisite words were spoken, in practice – I reiterate – they directly supported separatism in the Caucasus and sought to break up Russia. This is a matter of fact. Furthermore, today's crisis in Ukraine was likewise instigated by them. These are persistent and recuring elements of pressure. After all, we have repeatedly stated that NATO's expansion eastward is unacceptable to us. Ultimately, they reached Ukraine. President Yanukovych was removed from office through a coup d'état….Yet he was opposed to Ukraine's accession to NATO. As soon as the regime was changed through, I repeat, a bloody coup d'etat, the objective of pulling Ukraine into NATO was immediately set in motion, and this, in fact, became the root cause of today's tragic events in Ukraine. They, the Western globalist elites, bear responsibility for this, although they persistently seek to shift the blame onto us."

Continuing and speaking of "today's European elites," Putin said, "They now seek to frighten their populations with a mythical Russian threat, purportedly dating back to the Soviet era. But such a threat does not exist and never has. We do not threaten, not do we intend to threaten, European countries – for what reason would we? No one appears to consider that we have no grounds for any conflict with Europe. All issues were resolved by the outcome of the Second World War…. Nonetheless, they persist in this course, demanding certain changes. But what changes do they seek? Are they attempting to revise the results of the Second World War? To what end are they steering their peoples? Toward war with the Russian Federation? Now, they speak of contemplating the dispatch of troops to the territory of Ukraine. This would mean war with Russia. And I presume that European citizens understand what is unfolding."

Putin obviously objects to the Coalition of the Willing, which consists of more than 30 states that have agreed to provide security for Ukraine on the ground and in the air after a ceasefire, because it would obviously make it much more difficult – indeed, perhaps impossible – for Russia to resume the war if the talks following the ceasefire didn't produce a sufficiently favorable outcome from its perspective. And for the same reason, the presence of the Coalition in Ukraine would greatly strengthen Ukraine's bargaining position in the talks.

David R. Cameron
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