

Is Russia on the Brink of Reviving the Grain Deal with Ukraine with the Support of Turkey?

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Global Research, September 03, 2024

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Foreign Minister Lavrov revealed on Monday that Russia was on the brink of reviving the grain deal this spring as a result of Turkish mediation until Ukraine suddenly dropped out of the talks. This disclosure is surprising since that same deal was much-maligned by Russia's supporters at home and [abroad](#) after Russia refused to extend it last summer. Here are Lavrov's exact words on the matter [as reported by TASS](#):

"This spring Turkey attempted to renew the agreement on the protection of food supplies in a modified format. We were ready. At the last minute, the Ukrainians said: 'Let's write a clause - add to the obligations not to touch merchant ships the need to respect the safety of nuclear power plants.' It seems out of place, but we also said: 'Let's do it.'

[Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan really convinced us that this would be a step forward, he was completely sincere and tried to be helpful. We agreed, but then the Ukrainians, who proposed it themselves, said they were not happy with it. Apparently, at that time they already had plans to bomb nuclear power plants.

There's no reason to doubt what he said since he's Russia's top diplomat so all that can be done is to try to make sense of this unexpected news. The grain deal's main criticism was that it was superficial after only around 3% of Ukrainian grain went to the Global South [according to Putin himself](#). He also added that the West never implemented its part of the deal by removing obstacles to Russia's own agricultural exports.

Russia's worsening relations with Ukraine and the West since then suggest that neither of them had any intention of making good on their promises if the deal was revived. Moreover, while the nuclear power plant element might have sounded like a promising addition to the practically symbolic grain pact, there wouldn't have been any guarantee that it too wouldn't have been violated. Ukraine might have even used that to get Russia's guard down ahead of a major preplanned drone attack against such facilities.

If that was the case, then it's a blessing in disguise that this hybrid grain-nuclear deal fell through, but these observations still don't answer the question of why Russia was even considering it. One possible explanation is that Putin sincerely thought that it could have advanced his diplomatic goal of laying the basis for resuming peace talks modeled off of their draft peace treaty from 2022. The reason why this can't be ruled out is due to him bringing that up once again on Monday at a separate event.

He [conditioned](#) this upon the expulsion of Kiev's forces from [Kursk](#), but he also [added](#) that

“The current authorities are clearly not ready for this, they have little chance of being re-elected. That is why they are not interested in ending the fighting, that is why they tried to carry out this provocation in Kursk Region, and before when they tried to carry out the same operation in Belgorod Region.” He might therefore have been hoping that the West would force Ukraine to do this after more so-called ‘goodwill gestures’.

Time and again, he seems to continue placing faith in the West becoming fatigued with this conflict the longer that it drags on for and the more that Russia continues gradually gaining ground in Donbass, which it’s continued to do since the start of the year and has recently [picked up the pace](#). Putin still [won’t radically respond](#) to the spree of provocations against Russia over the past two and a half years out of fear that he’d inadvertently spark the Third World War that he’s thus far worked so hard to avoid.

Agreeing to another grain deal, a hybrid grain-nuclear one, or a [reportedly Qatari-mediated partial ceasefire](#) might thus be seen as a costless means to the end of politically resolving this conflict. So long as he remembers what he [admitted](#) regarding his naivete about the West and doesn’t let his guard down after more ‘goodwill gestures’, then perhaps this plan will succeed. Russia’s supporters should therefore brace themselves for this just in case so that they’re not disappointed if any such deals are agreed to.

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