

DER STANDARD INTERVIEW, 3rd JAN, 2023, AUSTRIA

GERMAN TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION

STANDARD: How do you explain that so many people from India want to go to Austria?

Jaishankar: This is not a typical Austrian phenomenon. There is a lot of interest in India to look at the global world of work. About 15 million Indians work abroad.

STANDARD: But Indians have little chance of getting asylum in Austria.

Jaishankar: We promote legal mobility and migration and are against illegal immigration. That is also good for Austria's economy.

STANDARD: Foreign Minister Schallenberg has great expectations of India's G20 presidency. Also the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi's support. What are the Presidency's main priorities in relation to the Ukraine?

Jaishankar: Understandably, the focus in Europe is currently heavily on the Ukraine conflict. But in large parts of the world, people are worried about high energy prices, food shortages and whether there is enough fertilizer for food production. These are concerns that go well beyond the conflict in Ukraine. Especially in the Developing countries that we call the Global South, there is a lot of frustration that their concerns go unheard by much of the world. The G20 should therefore deal with the problems of economic growth in the world.

STANDARD: But India has influence and has been neutral in this war for a long time. In the recent months, however, India has distanced itself more from Russia. Why?

Jaishankar: In the first few weeks and months, our focus was mainly to fly out Indian students who were caught off guard by the conflict. But we have from the beginning said that we are against this conflict and that we are doing so very consistently. But sometimes the press listens only to what they want to hear. In any

case, we believe that dialogue and diplomacy are the right approach. Differences are settled at the negotiating table.

STANDARD: Despite this, there has been no overt criticism and India continues to import arms from Russia and has even increased energy imports. Does India also benefit from the war?

Jaishankar: We've been importing weapons from Russia for over 60 years, that's nothing new.

Default: But the war is.

Jaishankar: Yes, but why are we doing this? During these 60 years, western countries including those in Europe have sold arms to a military dictatorship in Pakistan. The only country that was willing to help us at that time was the Soviet Union. So if we have an arrangement with Russia, it is a direct consequence of Western preference for military regimes in our part of the world. As for today, when you build a military relationship like that, you can't get away with it overnight and say: I am done now. Ultimately, there is the basic obligation of every government to take care of the security of their country. So if there is an expectation in Europe that we will sacrifice our security because Europe has a problem, then I don't think that's a reasonable expectation.

STANDARD: India has even expanded its cooperation on the energy issue.

Jaishankar: In fact, until recently we weren't particularly big importers of Russian energy. This began to change as energy markets became increasingly political as competition was distorted. Even before the Ukraine conflict broke out, our largest source of energy – Iran, was sanctioned. And it became very difficult to get out of Iran import. We had another energy supplier, Venezuela. Venezuela was also imposed with sanctions. Europe at that time continued to import energy from Russia and was very happy with it.

STANDARD: Everyone has interests.

Jaishankar: Exactly. So it cannot be that you have interests and we have principles. We both must find a way to reconcile our principles and interests. What really happened on the energy market? We don't even get answers to our global Tenders because Europe pays top prices and withdraws liquid gas to Europe. As of now, of course

we look at where we can get oil and gas from. And we go where there are possibilities.

STANDARD: Is India the right nation to play an important role in the negotiations between the Ukraine and Russia to play?

Jaishankar: This conflict is a conflict that is of no interest to anyone. The predominant Majority of countries around the world would say the sooner it ends the better. With such a big one and complicated problem, many countries can help somehow. To a certain extent we have already done quite a bit: we got involved in the grain deal. We keep relationships with Russia and Ukraine upright. I think people know that India is not polemical. India is trying to find solutions.

STANDARD: India sees itself as a proud democracy and is also respected for it in the West. What would have to happen that India would fight even more strongly globally with democratic alliances against autocratic regimes like Russia or China?

Jaishankar: For me, there is a need for a very fundamental debate - what the democratic world is. Who aligns with whom? The sharp division between democracy and autocracy is politically practical. You can use them as you need them. For example, India at times has a military dictatorship in the west in Pakistan and one in the east in Myanmar. The one in Myanmar has been sanctioned. The one in Pakistan was considered more important and designated as an ally of NATO. If it fits, it says: let us make changes achieving trade, let's do more business with autocracies, because then we can make them change. Or it says: Let's impose more sanctions on autocracies because they need to learn. At the end of the day, we come back to principles and interests.

STANDARD: There are observers inside and outside India who are concerned about the condition of democratic institutions in India. How do you meet them?

Jaishankar: We are an argumentative society. The fact that criticism was voiced shows that there is a democratic environment. In the Indian society significant change has taken place in the past few decades. We are working very hard to convince people of the

quality of our policy. If we were less democratic - why would we do that? I can speak about any part of the world, including Europe or the US, on a wide range of subjects, pointing out things that concern me: dealing with immigrants, with minorities or the extent of surveillance. There is no country that has no problems.

STANDARD: How worried do we have to be about a possible war between China and India?

Jaishankar: When countries have agreements, they have to abide by those agreements. If countries have differences, they need to discuss those differences. But if it becomes a situation where one side says: I will deploy troops against deals that I signed myself, then there is a kind of message in it for the international community. In this respect, the international community should of course be concerned.