

Russia's FM Sergey Lavrov's interview with the newspaper Argumenty i Fakty

Another important dispatch from The Greanville Post. Be sure to share it widely.

This essay is part of our special series on disgusting imperialists



[The Saker](#)



[Original interview in Russian](#)

Question: Can an improvement in the relations with the United States be expected in the near future?

Sergey Lavrov: An improvement will hardly materialise any time soon, since it is anything but easy to sort out the mess that our relations are in, which is not our fault. After all, bilateral relations require reciprocal efforts. We have to meet each other half way.

Russia is ready to move in this direction, as we have said on a number of occasions. We proceed from the premise that Russia and the United States bear special responsibility. We are the two largest nuclear powers, the founding members of the United Nations and permanent members of its Security Council. Cooperation between our two countries is key to ensuring stability and predictability in international affairs. However, not everything depends on us. It takes two to tango,

as the saying goes.

The situation is quite complicated on the American side. On the one hand, President Donald Trump talks about seeking to be on good terms with Russia, but this attitude is far from prevalent in Washington. We see this in unfriendly steps, such as various groundless accusations Russia faces, imposing financial and economic sanctions, seizing diplomatic property, kidnapping Russian nationals in third countries, opposing Russia's foreign policy interests, as well as attempts to meddle in our domestic affairs. We are seeing system-wide efforts to reach out to almost all countries around the world and persuade them to scale back their relations with Russia.

Many US politicians are trying to outshine each other in ramping up anti-Russia phobias and they are using this factor in their domestic political struggles. We understand that they will only escalate in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election. Nevertheless, we will not give up in despair. We will continue to look for common ground with the US despite all the challenges that there are.

It is essential that the Russian and US presidents both understand that there is a need to end the deadlock in our relations. During their June meeting which took place in Osaka the two leaders spoke out in favour of stepping up economic cooperation, combining efforts to settle regional crises, resuming dialogue on strategic stability, and also said that they appreciated dialogue on combatting terrorism. Vladimir Putin invited Donald Trump to Moscow to take part in the events to mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in WWII.

All in all, it has to be recognised that Washington has been inconsistent and quite often unpredictable in its actions. For this reason, trying to predict anything in our relations with the US is a fruitless task. Let me reiterate that as far as Russia is concerned we are ready to patiently work on improving our relations. Of course, this will be possible only

if Russia's interests are respected, and based on equality and mutual respect.

Question: Our diplomats' access to several Russian properties in San Francisco has been restricted. What practical actions are you taking to protect our property?

Sergey Lavrov: Washington has actually expropriated six Russian buildings which have been registered with the US Department of State as diplomatic property. These are two buildings of the Russian Consulate General in San Francisco, the Consul General's residence in Seattle, the countryside facilities of the Russian Embassy and Trade Mission in New York, as well as our Trade Mission in Washington. We have no diplomatic presence on the West Coast, where tens of thousands of Russian citizens and compatriots live. We have been denied the right to visit these places by the US State Department. All this is a flagrant violation of the United States' international legal obligations.

We have responded to these openly coercive actions. We have shut down the US Consulate General in St Petersburg, which incidentally was not a US property. We are mulling over a choice of possible methods to reclaim the illegally seized Russian property. We regularly raise the subject of Washington's violation of its obligations at the bilateral level and also at multilateral platforms. We will continue to do this.

Question: The United States abducts and hunts down Russian citizens around the world, imprisoning them under far-fetched pretexts, whereas we appear to be afraid of giving an appropriate response to these international bandits.

Sergey Lavrov: We are not afraid of anything. But we will not act like bandits either, because we respect international law.

The hunt for Russian citizens in other countries is nothing other than an instrument of US pressure on Russia. Washington

has flatly refused to cooperate with our law enforcement agencies on the basis of the 1999 Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters. Instead, it puts pressure on its allies and other states to arrest Russian citizens on their territory and subsequently to extradite them to the United States. This is being done quietly, furtively and without any reliable proof [of these people's guilt]. Some of our citizens have been abducted, as it happened to Konstantin Yaroshenko in Liberia in 2010 and to Roman Seleznev in the Maldives in 2014.

Of course, we will not leave our citizens alone with their problems. We carefully examine all the cases of Russian citizens detained at Washington's request. The Russian authorities are working on measures to enhance the effectiveness of the legal protection of our citizens abroad. The Foreign Ministry and Russian diplomats in the United States are taking all possible measures to protect the rights and interests of our compatriots in distress. We are doing our best to ensure that Russian detainees have access to consular and legal assistance around the clock, as well as to improve their detainment conditions. In our contacts with the Americans, we invariably demand that our citizens be released and returned home as soon as possible. This also concerns the widely publicised cases of Viktor Bout and Maria Butina.

We raise this question at multilateral platforms, including the UN Human Rights Council, as well as in our contacts with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

Unfortunately, knowing the aggressive methods of the American system, which does not just stop at using illegal methods, we cannot guarantee that nothing bad will happen to Russian citizens abroad. In this context, I would like to use this occasion to recommend that our citizens thoroughly consider the risks of foreign trips, especially ones to the countries

that have extradition agreements with the United States.

Question: Why would Russia pay for PACE membership if it is constantly subject to the assembly's provocations?

Sergey Lavrov: Just to clarify, there are no separate fees for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Our country makes payments to the Council of Europe's budget pursuant to the council's Statute and Russian law. PACE-related expenses account for a small fraction of the Council of Europe's common budget.

Strictly speaking, Council of Europe membership is a source of a number of benefits for our citizens and the country in general. They include refining our national legal system, solving a whole range of social and humanitarian issues, and fighting corruption. Every single ministry and agency that is part of the Inter-Agency Commission on Russia's Council of Europe Membership (around 20 in total) confirm the importance of proactive participation in this organisation, including mechanisms of over 60 conventions that our country joined.

As concerns provocations, they are engineered by the aggressive Russophobic minority egged on by the United States, an observer in the Council of Europe. Of course, this sours the atmosphere and does not bode well for constructive PACE work. But then again, the sensible majority of PACE members who support Russia's return to the fold of this parliamentary structure is sick and tired of this meaningless vagary. This is indicated by the fact that at the June session, the assembly issued a resolution to restore Russia's powers without any reservations, thus meeting the condition of Russia's resuming payments.

Question: It is outrageous to watch the Ukrainian army's rampage against LPR and DPR residents. Innocent civilians, children and defenders of these two republics are being killed. It was reported that local people addressed Russian

President Vladimir Putin with a request to send in troops. Why not do it and force Ukraine to make peace as was the case with Georgia?

Sergey Lavrov: True, the situation in Donbass remains extremely disturbing. To this day, hardly anything has been done to cease fire and shelling continues. Of course, the suffering of the people in these two unrecognised republics strikes a painful chord in our hearts.

The signals that President Vladimir Zelensky sent during his election campaign and right after being elected were rather contradictory. We hope that Kiev's recent pledge to fully comply with the Minsk Agreements will take the shape of a practical policy after the pre-term Verkhovna Rada elections. The most important thing is to end the war and hear the people in southeastern Ukraine who want peace to be restored, who want to freely speak their native Russian language and their socioeconomic rights to be observed. All this was committed to writing in the Package of Measures.

I really hope that the new Ukrainian leadership will not continue the disastrous course of Poroshenko's regime and will successfully convert the credit of trust it has into actual efforts to restore civil peace in Ukraine. The long-awaited disengaging of forces and equipment that began in late June in Stanitsa Luganskaya that had been blocked by the previous administration for two and a half years is a convincing indication that where there is political will there can be progress.

Question: Does Russia intend to officially recognise the DPR and the LPR as independent states?

Sergey Lavrov: Our position on this matter is well known. According to the Minsk Package of Measures, where Russia acts as a guarantor, Donbass has to be granted special status that is permanently enshrined in Ukraine's constitution. We believe

in the need to focus at this point in time on implementing the Minsk Agreements as approved by a UN Security Council resolution, which makes them a binding instrument.

The Ukrainian leadership must look its own citizens straight in the face and renounce the policy of putting Donbass in an economic chokehold, recognise the right of Donetsk and Lugansk residents to speak their native language and celebrate the dates and public holidays they hold as sacred, and honour the memory of their national heroes. Without this it would not be serious, to say the least, to talk about restoring trust among DPR and LPR residents toward official Kiev. Of course, establishing meaningful and direct dialogue between Kiev and the unrecognised people's republics is the central condition of the Minsk Agreements. This requires streamlining the work of the Contact Group formed by Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk representatives and supported by Russia and the OSCE. In this case, the Normandy Format can also be effective in facilitating the work of the Contact Group. There can also be other ways to support the settlement process in Donbass from the outside, as long as they are acceptable for all sides, and, of course, do not water down the tenets of the Minsk Agreements. President Vladimir Putin was abundantly clear in reaffirming his position, including during his telephone conversation with President Vladimir Zelensky on July 10.

Question: What is Russia's Foreign Ministry doing to liberate Russian journalist Kirill Vyshinsky from detention in Kiev? He has spent more than a year in prison, in essence, for his professional activity. Why cannot Russia put pressure on Ukraine to free him?

Sergey Lavrov: The court proceedings in the case of RIA Novosti Ukraine editor-in-chief resemble the theatre of the absurd. There is no doubt that the journalist was subject to an illegal arrest, just for working for a Russian media outlet and honestly reporting on the ongoing developments. Even Ukrainian prosecutors seem to understand this, since they have

been postponing hearings under the pretext of studying the investigative materials.

Russia demands that Kiev immediately release Kirill Vyshinsky and fully restore all his rights. Our diplomats maintain close contacts with the journalist's lawyers, since Ukraine declined consular access. We do everything we can to reach out to our foreign partners, including on international platforms, calling on them to work with Kiev in order to bring about a positive resolution as soon as possible.

Question: What measures should the Georgian government take in order to prevent individuals who are a disgrace for Georgia from holding anti-Russia demonstrations near the country's parliament?

Sergey Lavrov: Relations between the government and the opposition are Georgia's internal affair. We have no intention to interfere in this process. However, we are definitely concerned about any attempts made by some radical representatives of the Georgian political elite to whip up Russophobic sentiment and pit our peoples against one another. I doubt that these individuals thought about the damage their action was causing to their country and the prosperity of its people, which depends to a significant extent on the state of economic and humanitarian relations with Russia.

We expect the Georgian leadership to recognise as soon as possible the detrimental nature and danger of further efforts to fan anti-Russia hysteria. After all, it is essential that official Tbilisi found the strength to condemn the shameful actions of a local television network that offended the President of Russia, causing misgivings even within the Georgian society.

We hope that the Georgian authorities will be able to restore social and political stability in the country and remove the existing security threats Russians currently face there.

Should this happen, the necessary conditions will be created in order to look into the possibility for removing the precautionary measures Russia has taken, including a ban on air travel to Georgia. We want to be friends and to cooperate so that Russians and Georgians can benefit.

Question: The Chinese media have recently started referring to Siberia as “Chinese land.” Some 12 million Chinese currently live in Russia’s Far East and Siberia. Can it happen that China actually takes over Siberia and Russia’s Far East in the near future?

Sergey Lavrov: Border disputes between Russia and China were settled for good a long time ago. The bilateral Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation adopted in 2001 states that there are no territorial claims between the two countries. Against this backdrop, those who have misgivings over the constructive development of Russian-Chinese relations seek to spread the myth of the Chinese threat.

As for the 12 million Chinese who allegedly live in the Far East and Siberia, I have great doubts about the accuracy of this figure. The associated fears are clearly blown out of proportion.

The policy by Russia and the People’s Republic of China to strengthen their neighbourly relations is a multifaceted and long-term effort that cannot be affected by short-term fluctuations. Sino-Russian cooperation is not aimed against anyone. Its main purpose is to facilitate socioeconomic development and prosperity for our countries and peoples. As Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping said following the June 5 talks in Moscow, the two countries are entering a new era in their comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation. The growing mutual trust in military and political affairs, record-high trade figures and expanding cultural and humanitarian contacts, as well as better coordination with Beijing on international affairs speak volumes of the positive

momentum in our bilateral dialogue.

Question: Relations with Iran are essential for Russia's geopolitics. However, Iran has indulged in unacceptable aggressive rhetoric against the state of Israel on numerous occasions and went beyond words. How is Russia's position any different from that of European countries in the 1930s when they encouraged Hitler's anti-Soviet stance?

Sergey Lavrov: Russia sees intrinsic value in its relations with Iran, Israel and all other Middle East countries. Russia has a multipronged foreign policy that is free from the principle of "being friends against someone." In our contacts with the leaders of all regional countries we are consistent in calling on our partners to find peaceful solutions to the problems that may arise and renounce the use or threat of force.

The escalating tension in the region we are witnessing today is the direct result of Washington and some of its allies raising the stakes in their anti-Iranian policy. The US is flexing its muscles by seeking to discredit Tehran and blame all the sins on the Islamic Republic of Iran. This creates a dangerous situation: a single match can start a fire. The responsibility for the possible catastrophic consequences will rest with the United States.

As for the historical aspect of your question, it is not appropriate to project what happened in Europe in the 1930s on the current developments in the Middle East. As we all know, Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier sought to appease Hitler in order to direct the German military might against the USSR. We are not seeing anything of this kind today.

Iran regularly reaffirms to us its interest in regional stability through dialogue with all the interested countries, including the Gulf Arab states. In addition to this, Tehran has always stressed that it did not intend to undertake any

aggressive action.

As far as Russia is concerned, we are taking steps to de-escalate tensions. We are proactive in promoting the concept of collective security in the Persian Gulf implying a stage-by-stage approach to resolving conflicts and devising confidence building and control mechanisms. We are working with our partners to preserve the multilateral agreements to promote a settlement on the Iranian nuclear programme.

Question: Do you think that we are geopolitically losing in Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia and allowing a belt of "Russia's enemies" to build up around us from among some of the former "brotherly nations" who earn money in Russia and on Russia, repatriate it and still consider us if not enemies, definitely not friends?

Sergey Lavrov: The political processes in Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia concern us, there is no question about it, because they are our brotherly peoples and we are tied by a long history of relations, including being part of one state.

Unfortunately, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union the West came to believe that it was the end of history and the West can now blatantly interfere with the affairs of any country and presumptuously call the shots in its domestic politics. Ukraine is perhaps the most flagrant example.

Armenia is a different story. This country is Russia's key partner in the South Caucasus with whom we have strong strategic relations and an alliance. We are engaged in an extensive political dialogue and cooperate between parliaments and on the international scene. Russia is Armenia's leading economic partner. Our links in the education, culture, investment, military and technical sector are on the rise.

As concerns Georgia, I am certain that Georgians do not see us Russians as enemies. Unfortunately, right now we see certain politicians in Georgia competing in anti-Russian rhetoric to

achieve their mercenary and opportunistic goals. I am sure that everything will be ironed out sooner or later and that our countries will again enjoy neighbourly relations.

Broadly speaking, our agenda in the post-Soviet space has a unifying nature and is aimed at stimulating the socioeconomic development of respective countries, promoting and harmonising integration in the region, strengthening collective security and the potential of our coordinated response to threats and challenges.

Question: What is the status of the talks with Iraq over bringing back our women and children from prisons? What are the prospects of them returning back home?

Sergey Lavrov: So far, we have managed to bring back home 90 children. According to our records, some 30 more children remain in Iraq. We plan to bring them back within the next months.

Unfortunately, the situation is more complicated when it comes to their mothers. All of them are convicted for breaking Iraqi law, by illegally crossing the border, staying in the country illegally and participating in terrorist activities. Sixty-six Russian nationals are currently in prison. The Russian Embassy in Baghdad is constantly monitoring their cases and providing necessary help.

To recap, we started working on the humanitarian operation to return our minor citizens back to Russia in the autumn of 2017 when Iraqi officials informed us that Russian women and children were detained during a counter-terrorist operation in Mosul.

The office of the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Anna Kuznetsova established a commission to coordinate the operation. The commission involves representatives of competent government bodies, including the Foreign Ministry. Together with the Iraqi authorities we agreed on a course of

action to locate the children and prepare the necessary documents for their repatriation. Russian specialists collected the children's and mothers' biological material for DNA relationship testing. Meanwhile, we were looking for relatives to establish formal guardianship. Then we received rulings of the Baghdad Central Court on returning the children.

We continue to work hard on this matter.

Question: What is the reason for facilitating access to Russian citizenship for people living abroad?

Sergey Lavrov: These decisions are based above all on humanitarian considerations. This is why we have adopted a facilitated procedure for the granting of Russian citizenship to the residents of certain districts in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. The procedure was formalized in April of this year by a presidential executive order.

Kiev's blockade has made the living in certain districts of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine unbearable. The people have been deprived of everything, including social payments, pensions, wages, as well as the national system of banking, education and healthcare services. They have been stripped of their voting rights, as neither election commissions nor polling stations were established in their districts. In other words, Kiev has de facto turned these people into stateless persons.

It was our duty to provide assistance to these people in that situation. Russian citizenship will allow them to tackle their current problems, give them freedom of movement as well as access to healthcare services, education, banking services and transportation.

At the same time, Russia is not forcing anyone to adopt its citizenship or abandon the Ukrainian citizenship. Each resident of Donbass makes the decision independently.

Besides, this is not a new practice at all. A number of European countries, for example, Poland, Hungary and Romania, have been doing this for years.

The general procedure for granting Russian citizenship is regulated by a federal law, which says that the basic condition is the applicant's residence in Russia. But the law also stipulates preferences for foreign nationals living outside Russia if at least one of their parents is a Russian citizen living in Russia. An exception has been made for the stateless persons who used to hold Soviet citizenship and are living in the former Soviet republics. They can receive Russian citizenship without taking up residency in Russia. In addition to this, parents holding Russian citizenship can register their children born in mixed marriages as Russian citizens. We are working to improve this procedure.

In reality, Russian offices abroad issue Russian passports to some 50,000 people every year. Over half of them are children born in mixed marriages. Their parents usually write in their applications that they want to maintain the legal and spiritual connection to Russia.

Question: Have you ever developed good personal relations with foreign colleagues even though you may have political differences with their home countries? Can you provide an example of such friendship?

Sergey Lavrov: Good and trust-based personal relations are extremely important in the diplomatic profession. In some cases communications are maintained and solutions to problems are found only thanks to such personal relations. In general, I believe that the ability to maintain close contacts, avoid emotional decision-making and never forget about your country's strategic interests when dealing with short-term concerns are the required qualities of all diplomats irrespective of rank and post.

Of course, partners and counterparts do change. For example, as a Foreign Minister I have worked with five US Secretaries of State. But this does not mean [personal] ties are broken off when my colleagues retire or are appointed to another position. After all, this is a small world.

As for giving examples, I would not like to name anyone now, including out of respect for the other colleagues. After all, friendship is a very personal matter. Besides, many of my friends are still working in the diplomatic service or are prominent in the socio-political sphere.

Question: What quality distinguishes a real diplomat from a fake one?

Sergey Lavrov: As for the qualities a professional diplomat must have, I would say that the most important of them is a deep understanding of your country's development goals and foreign policy interests. Of course, this calls for special training, good knowledge of history, constant involvement in all aspects of life, as well as colossal erudition. Diplomats routinely work with people from other countries, ethnicities and cultures. So they must be well-versed in a country's specifics. Of course, it is very important to have a knowledge of foreign languages, which is, by the way, a strong point when it comes to our diplomacy. Overall, diplomatic work consists of active contacts with people, which is why a real diplomat must make a good impression, find common language with others in any situation, as well as be able not only to hear but also to listen to what the counterparts say.

Don't forget to pass on at least
ONE article from the Greenville Post every day.

**WINNING THE BATTLE OF COMMUNICATIONS AGAINST THE
EMPIRE IS UP TO YOU !**

send to a friend • talk it up • send to a relative •
repost in other blogs

The best way to get around the internet censors and make sure you see the stuff we publish is to subscribe to the mailing list for our [website](#), which will get you an email notification for everything we publish.

About the author(s)

SOURCE: [THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY](#)



THIS WORK IS LICENSED UNDER A [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#)

*Have you
forgotten?*



Radical journalists and alternative sites like this give you the information you need to defend yourself.

Support them! Please donate today!

CLICK HERE



Be sure to get the most unique history of the Russo-American conflict now spanning almost a century! The book that every American should read.



Nuclear Armageddon or peace? That is *the* question. And here's the book that answers it.

How did we come to be in this horrid pickle? Join the discussion! Read Ron Ridenour's provocative bestseller **The Russian Peace Threat**, the most scathing and irrefutable exposé of US foreign policy and its malignant obsession with the elimination of Russia as a countervailing force in world

affairs. Buy it today direct from us. You don't have to patronize **Amazon**. Just click on the bar below.

[.CLICK HERE to buy The Russian Peace Threat.](#)

Please comment on our Facebook Page!

All captions, images, pullquotes & annotations by the editor

DON'T BLAME THE AUTHOR