



AP Images
Sergey Lavrov

Lavrov: Russia Can't Trust the West

On January 18, during a press conference regarding Moscow's diplomacy in 2023, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that the Ukraine conflict has helped Russia realize that it cannot trust the West.

Lavrov contended that Russia's military operation against Kyiv has had positive domestic consequences, such as rallying Russian people together. Also, Western sanctions permitted Russia's economy to make great strides in both civilian and military production, according to the Russian diplomat.

The West's "hybrid aggression," which entailed many areas, played a role in "making us understand how to go

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on living,” Lavrov said. “If there had been any illusions left over from the 1990s, that the West would open its arms to embrace us and that democracy would unite us all, they would have been completely dispelled.”

Lavrov’s remarks came after Russian President Vladimir Putin acknowledged last month that he was “naive” early on in his political career, despite having served in the Soviet KGB. He said he believed that there was no fundamental reason for the West and Moscow to be at odds after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, the West was trying to dismantle Russia into various weaker entities, Putin stated. The Russian leader had previously warned that a disintegration of the country could lead to the Russian people ceasing to exist altogether, highlighting that unity is a key condition for the country’s success.

Regarding a U.S. proposal to resume contacts in the arena of nuclear-arms control, Lavrov said that Moscow has declined the offer. He said that for such talks to be held, Washington first needs to amend its current policy toward Russia.

Lavrov asserted that Washington’s push for the revival of nuclear talks has been driven by a desire to restart inspections of Russia’s nuclear weapons sites. He portrayed such U.S. demands as “indecent” in view of Ukraine’s attacks on Russian nuclear-capable bomber bases during the conflict.

“Amid a ‘hybrid war’ waged by Washington against Russia, we aren’t seeing any basis, not only for any additional joint measures in the sphere of arms control and reduction of strategic risks, but for any discussion of strategic stability issues with the U.S.,” he said. “We firmly link such possibility to the West fully renouncing its malicious course aimed at undermining Russia’s security and interests.”

Lavrov said Washington’s push for restarting nuclear-arms talks stems from a desire to “try to establish control over our nuclear arsenal and minimize nuclear risks for itself,” but “those risks are emerging as a result of forceful pressure on our country.”

Furthermore, Lavrov slammed the West for blocking any peace talks and inciting increased attacks on Russia.

“Such encouragement and the transfer of relevant weapons shows that the West doesn’t want any constructive solution,” Lavrov said. “The West is pushing toward the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, and that raises new strategic risks.”

The Russian minister reaffirmed that Russia will pursue what it calls the “special military operation” notwithstanding Western pressure.

“We will consistently and persistently press the goals of the special military operation and we will achieve them,” he said. “They should have no hope that Russia could be defeated in any way. Those in the West who fantasize about it have failed to learn history lessons.”

The foreign minister’s statements came in the wake of Russia-Western hostilities over the nearly two-year Ukraine conflict that displays no signs of abating. That same day, Ukraine claimed that it struck an oil terminal in Saint Petersburg.

A Russian-appointed official in occupied southeastern Ukraine earlier disputed the Ukrainian claim, saying that Ukraine had tried and failed to target a Russian Baltic Sea oil terminal with a drone overnight.

Ukraine’s offensive is rooted in its continuous push to join NATO, with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky asking [for NATO membership](#) at the World Economic Forum’s annual summit.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said at the summit that Kyiv was “closer to NATO than ever before.”

During his press conference, Lavrov said that Ukraine must stop its push to join NATO before any peace talks take place, adding that Western promises to Ukraine are “half-baked” and do not actually include any legal obligations to Kyiv.

Lavrov claimed that, despite signing defense agreements with Kyiv, Western countries do not truly wish to see

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Ukraine become a full-fledged member of NATO or the European Union (EU).

The minister pointed to the numerous disputes among Western countries pertaining to Kyiv's membership in both blocs, noting that many member states of these organizations believe its potential accession to be a "pointless, reckless and risky step for European security."

As for the "historic" security deal with the U.K., Lavrov pointed out that, as far as he knows, these documents, which were signed by Zelensky and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, do not entail any actual legal obligations for London to defend Kiev. Ukraine, meanwhile, would be obligated to defend the U.K. if anyone were to attack its islands, Russia's top diplomat warned.

"I did not see any legally binding provisions in this document, except that Ukraine will have to stand up for Britain," Lavrov said, calling such a scenario a "joke."

Lavrov continued, adding that Moscow was not opposed to other countries signing agreements with Ukraine, but highlighted that such accords would not change the goals of Russia's military operation, noting that Russia will achieve these goals "consistently and persistently."

On January 12, Ukraine and the U.K. declared the signing of a security agreement under which the two countries pledge to defend each other if their territories are ever attacked. The pact also stipulates support for Ukraine's future integration into NATO and guarantees "prevention and active deterrence of, and counter measures against, any military escalation and/or a new aggression by the Russian Federation." London has also pledged to provide Kyiv with £2.5 billion (\$3.2 billion) in military assistance over the next fiscal year.

Moscow, meanwhile, has reiterated that it considers any deployment of British troops to Ukraine as a "declaration of war," based on statements by former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has also stated that the agreement serves as proof that London still has a firm hold on Kyiv's government and is actively working to prevent peace in the country while transforming it into a "bargaining chip."

With regard to the Israel-Hamas war, Lavrov maintained his support for the creation of a Palestinian state, stating that Israel should not think that the suffering of Jews during WWII gives it free rein in foreign policy, especially when it comes to the hostilities in Gaza.

"Israelis can't ... now do anything they want because they suffered during World War II. Yes, there was the Holocaust, it was a terrible crime, but there was also the genocide of all peoples in the Soviet Union."

The failure to create a Palestinian state is one of the main reasons for the current instability in the Middle East and tensions between Palestinians and Israelis, Lavrov added.